found it safe and effective in a test conducted last summer with the Environmental Protection Agency on 70 miles of beach (*Science*, 30 March, p. 1537).

The state is proceeding with extreme caution, allowing application of Inipol on only 30 miles of beaches, which will be comprehensively monitored. Field monitors are to keep the area free of wildlife by various means such as cannons, plastic owls, and alarms. If Inipol's efficacy has not been demonstrated within 6 weeks, officials won't approve its reapplication.

Physics Panel Sets Priorities for 1990s

What's the number one priority of high-energy physicists for the 1990s? What else but the Superconducting Super Collider (SSC). Number two: upgrade Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory's proton-proton Tevatron collider to enable U.S. physicists to hunt down the elusive Top Quark.

Once those are taken care of there's likely to be no room in the budget for any more major facilities, says the Department of Energy's High Energy Physics Advisory Panel, in a report ranking research goals for the '90s in light of a static budget outlook. The panel says fuller use should be made of existing facilities and more support should go to university-based researchers.

The panel declined to endorse construction of an electron-positron storage ring that is much sought after by particle physicists. Both the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center and Cornell University are competing for the 10-billion electron volt facility that would produce B-mesons to search for violations in the symmetry of weak force interactions. The report, which will be available from the DOE next month, said construction of the machine should await more R&D as well as more money.

Rat Fluoride Study "Equivocal"

Sodium fluoride, the chemical that's added to drinking water to prevent tooth decay, got a mixed review from the National Toxicology Program in a long-awaited report issued on 26 April. The conclusion—that male rats in the study were prone to higher rates of cancer—is of keen interest to anti-fluoride crusaders and to the experts who are supposed to tell the federal government what this news means for public policy.

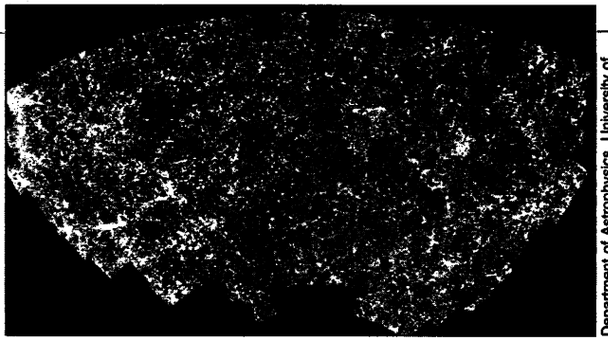
Interpreting the data will be tricky because the evidence is "equivocal," according to NTP. Female rats and mice of both sexes showed no excess cancers. Male rats who received the highest doses of fluoride (100 and 175 parts per million) showed a slight increase in bone cancers when examined after 2 years. But NTP director David Rall said the male rat results could have been produced by chance.

Now that the NTP's lab work is done, the implications will be scrutinized by another federal panel—this one headed by Frank Young, deputy assistant secretary of Health and Human Services for health science and the environment. He and 20 independent advisers will examine the risks and benefits of fluoridated drinking water and report back in July.

NIH: New Rumor List

A new list of people alleged to be on the short list for the NIH director's job circulated around Washington this week as thousands of biomedical scientists gathered for the annual clinical research meetings.

Those in the know say that the names that reportedly have been sent to Health and Human Services Secretary Louis Sullivan by the search committee include Yale medical dean Leon Rosenberg; Dominick Purpura, dean of Einstein; Institute of Medicine president Samuel O. Thier; and Washington University chancellor William Danforth, who rebuffed a previous effort to get him to take the job when a White House staffer said the appointment would be contingent on a firm anti-abortion stance. It is not clear whether any of them would accept the job if offered.



Department of Astrophysics, University of Oxford

View of a "Clumpy" Universe. *Astronomers at Oxford University last month completed a 7-year survey of the galaxies, the largest one ever undertaken. It is the first one detailed enough to confirm the immense size of the long, thin, curving "sheets" of galaxies in space that are separated by voids. The survey covers 2 million galaxies in an area covering 10% of the sky. They are up to 2 billion light-years from Earth, existing in clumps on the order of 150 million light-years across. Oxford investigator Steve Maddox says this survey "is the first reliable confirmation that the distribution of galaxies in the universe becomes uniform on large scales."*

Superconductivity: Japan Versus U.S.

When high-temperature superconducting materials were discovered in 1986, the U.S. government responded admirably, says a new report by the Office of Technology Assessment (OTA). From 1987 to 1990 the feds boosted funding for superconductivity research to $130 million, and now a 10% increase is planned.

But, says OTA, private industry has not responded so well. OTA surveys in the United States and Japan show that Japanese firms are investing 50% more than American ones (about $107 million versus $73 million) on commercial applications of superconductivity, such as superconducting thin films and magnet technologies. Furthermore, in Japan, 20 companies are spending more than $1 million apiece on this kind of R&D, compared with only 14 U.S. companies. A big difference in expectations appeared as well: Japanese firms anticipated that their first commercial product would hit the market (on average) in 2000, while U.S. firms predicted quick payoffs by 1992. The OTA reads this as a sign that the Japanese are making long-term investments while U.S. companies are trimming and hedging.

The congressmen who released the OTA report—Representatives Robert Torricelli (D–NJ), Dave McCurdy (D–OK), and Tom Lewis (R–FL)—questioned whether U.S. business leaders even understand the nature of the competition. "This is not a sprint," said McCurdy, "it's a marathon." Torricelli added, "You can't win the game if you don't understand the rules." All were critical of the Bush Administration's leadership. Citing recent decisions to play down the role of the Defense Advanced Projects Research Agency as an industrial research leader, McCurdy said he fears the "Detroit syndrome" now prevails in DARPA—an attitude that promotes "loyalty over excellence."