

October 3rd, 2018

Carmelo Melendez
Office of Legacy Management Director
Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20585

Cynthia Martinez
Chief of National Wildlife Refuge System
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Director Melendez and Chief Martinez,

In the best interest of public health, DOE Legacy Management and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service must immediately halt public recreation at the Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge (“the refuge”).

The refuge is located on the previous buffer zone of the Rocky Flats Plant (1952-1989), which produced 70,000 weapons-grade plutonium pits for the U.S. nuclear weapons arsenal. Activities at the plant led to contaminated soil, sediment, groundwater and surface water due to accidental leakages and serious fires in 1957 and 1969, emitting plutonium into the air. The land where the plant was located is now a federal designated Superfund site.

Remediation from the Rocky Flats Cleanup Agreement was limited to the Central Operable Unit and no action was required for the refuge land. According to Kaiser Hill’s 2006 Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) Facility Investigation, there is plutonium above background level on the refuge.

Scientists and medical doctors around the world have researched the impacts of plutonium and have found significant risks attached to inhaling a microparticle of plutonium, invisible to the human eye. Dr. Tom K. Hei and colleagues at Columbia University found that a single alpha particle traversing a nucleus will have a high probability of resulting in a mutation and highlight the need for radiation protection at low doses.

Further, there is court precedent that contamination remains in the class area east of Rocky Flats. The jury from the Marilyn Cook, et al. v. Rockwell International Corporation. et al. class action lawsuit found that “plutonium will continue to be present on the Class Properties indefinitely.”

Seven school districts have made commitments to not allow field trips to the refuge, protecting nearly 300,000 students from contamination. Dr. Mark Johnson, executive director at Jefferson County Public Health, stated that he thinks it is unwise to open Rocky Flats to the public. Scientists and environmental groups have health concerns about exposing living beings to plutonium.

We call on USFWS and DOE to acknowledge these events and the public opposition to opening the refuge. Considering the health and safety concerns, it is paramount that USFWS and DOE Legacy Management permanently close the Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge.

Sincerely,

Christopher Allred and Brittany Gutermuth
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