

The following article was published in Physics Today, September 2007

The article "Science-Based Cleanup of Rocky Flats" demonstrates a clear conflict of interest. For the record, the authors worked for Kaiser-Hill Co, the US Department of Energy contractor responsible for cleaning up Rocky Flats; their neutrality is suspect. Independent, scientific reviews of the cleanup have been written by contractors that neighboring municipalities hired, by a consortium of water users, and by DOE-hired experts.¹⁻³ All the reviewers expressed concern about the effectiveness of the remediation.

Plutonium dioxide is known to exist on the site as a finely dispersed solid. In that form it can be carried as part of a colloidal suspension in the groundwater. It will also be suspended in the air if burrowing animals bring it up from the contaminated rubble left on the site. Additionally, no independent evaluation has been conducted of the bedrock under the 10-square-mile site, which is in an earthquake zone. It is questionable that an area of this size will have no fractures in the event of an earthquake. Two unlined 20-acre, 40-foot-deep landfills were left on the site, covered by only a few feet of soil. Not only do they contain radioactive materials but also other carcinogens such as compounds of beryllium and volatile organic compounds that will eventually contaminate the groundwater.

Rocky Flats will be opened to the public for general recreation, and I shudder to think of children playing at this site. As a former member of the Rocky Flats Citizens Advisory Board and a chemist, I find this unacceptable. This isn't a cleanup, it's a cover-up.

References

- 1. GEI Consultants Inc, *Interim Measure/ Interim Remedial Action: For Groundwater at the Rocky Flats* (rep. prepared for the city of Westminster and the city and county of Broomfield, CO), Glastonbury, CT (10 February 2005).
- 2. S. F. Dwyer, *Review of the Original Landfill Closure Design, Specifications, and CQAP for the Rocky Flats Environmental Technology Site, Golden, Colorado* (rep. prepared for the Woman Creek Reservoir Authority), Sandia National Laboratories, Albuquerque, NM (23 May 2005).
- 3. Muller Engineering Co Inc, *Walnut Creek Drainages Pond Reconfiguration Review* (rep. prepared for the city and county of Broomfield, CO), Muller Engineering Co Inc, Lakewood, CO (28 March 2005).

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