

**From:** LeRoy Moore <leroymoore@earthlink.net>  
**Subject:** **letter to the editor**  
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**To:** newsroom@milehighnews.com

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To the Editor of the Arvada Sentinel:

The August 16 Arvada Sentinel contains an article entitled "EPA responds to anti-Flats letter." The letter in question was addressed by the Rocky Mountain Peace and Justice Center to Governor Ritter and other elected officials of the state government explaining in detail why the future Rocky Flats wildlife refuge should not be opened for public recreation. Not least among the reasons we cited is the risk that visitors to the refuge could be exposed to plutonium remaining in the Rocky Flats environment after the recently completed "cleanup" of the site of the former nuclear weapons factory. Tiny particles of plutonium moved about by wind or water, if inhaled, ingested, or taken into the body through a cut or scrape, can result years later in cancer or other health problems.

Mark Aguilar, who coordinates EPA's Rocky Flats work, is quoted in your paper as saying categorically: "Plutonium really doesn't move in soil, even if you have flow." He's evidently forgotten the team of scientists whose multi-year research on "actinide migration" at Rocky Flats was relied on heavily by those who designed the "cleanup" done at the site. They said repeatedly that plutonium migrates in soil, but they concluded based on computer simulations rather than direct observation that the migration at Rocky Flats due to wind and water will be minor. One member of their team, however, said at a public meeting on August 20, 1997, that his lab studies showed that 90% of the plutonium in the soil at Rocky Flats would eventually migrate off the site, the only question being the rate of its movement. Neither he nor others on the team ever explained or corrected what he had said. Questions remain -- but not about the fact of plutonium migration.

Mr. Aguilar owes it to the taxpayers for whom he works to go to the library and to find the 27 October 2006 issue of *SCIENCE* which contains an article by Alexander Novikov and colleagues about plutonium migration at a Russian site. If he reads only notes 6 and 8 in this article he will see references to plutonium migration in soil at numerous locations, including several in the US. Maybe he'd not again say that "plutonium really doesn't move in soil."

Plutonium does move in soil, but not simply by the forces of wind and water. At Rocky Flats it is also moved by the action of burrowing animals. Innovative research by Shawn Smallwood demonstrating that this happens constantly and on a large scale at Rocky Flats was not considered by Mr. Aguilar and his colleagues when they planned the level of "cleanup" that would happen at Rocky Flats. They can find references to Smallwood's important study in our letter to the governor. Readers of this article who want to see the letter can go to our web site at [www.rmpjc.org](http://www.rmpjc.org), then scroll down to the final item in the central column and click on "sent a letter." The letter contains far more detail than can be mentioned here.

Yours truly,

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