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**Speaking Out**

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**Credible Scientific Assessments**

To the editor:

I am new to Cañon City, having moved here about six months ago from Fort Collins. I have a MS degree in radiological health sciences from CSU and have worked in the environmental health physics field for about 15 years. I previously worked as a consultant for Cotter on several environmental assessment projects and have now joined the company in a full-time health physics capacity.

I believe strongly in protecting our environment. I have found Cotter's employees to be talented, knowledgeable and highly skilled workers, many of whom have lived in Fremont County for decades and all of whom share a personal stake in successful mitigation of past problems and prevention of future ones. I have witnessed firsthand just how committed the company is in this regard.

Proponents of recent legislative initiatives aimed at shutting down Cotter have generated lots of recent media coverage. Unfortunately, many of the arguments raised are contrary to what actual data or credible scientific assessments indicate. It's easy to criticize, but unless one understands the science behind the issues and how Cotter applies such knowledge in their remedial efforts, or that these efforts occur on a daily basis by an entire team of employees and local contractors, the credibility of such claims should be questioned.

Under current federal superfund status and state license conditions, Cotter is already held accountable for contamination. The company takes this responsibility seriously and is working diligently to resolve existing issues. Remedial strategies take considerable time to study, develop and implement, and further time to assess their effectiveness. Contrary to claims by anti-Cotter activists, the company is moving as quickly as the science, regulatory approvals, logistics and nature will allow.

The current anti-Cotter legislation would not result in faster or more effective remediation. It could, however, force Cotter out of business and result in the loss of many well-paying jobs in Fremont County. This would only slow clean-up progress. Forcing Cotter to close would ultimately produce a losing outcome for all stake holders, including anti-Cotter activists and the local community at large.

If citizens are interested in seeking out credible information on the many issues surrounding Cotter, the Fremont County Independent Outreach Committee is an excellent resource, [www.fcio.org](http://www.fcio.org).

Randy Whicker,

Cañon City

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