

Ask Inspector Sleuth



Dear Inspector Sleuth,
Is Cotter Corporation contaminating the Arkansas River?

Signed,
I Wanna Fish

Dear Mr. Fish,

There has been reference to this in both the evening TV news programs and regional newspapers. So, I did some research of both the news source of information as well as Cotter and CDPHE documentation. Please visit www.fcio.org for the recent news articles and other documentation.

Regarding the news articles, the articles quote individuals who suggest the Arkansas River is being contaminated but the articles do not state that a source exists that proves the contamination exists.

Turning to government and Cotter documents, research of the Arkansas River began in 1989, under the supervision of EPA and CDPHE. Cotter completed the Arkansas River Study as Part 30 of the 1988 Remedial Action Plan (RAP). The river study looked at water, sediments, bugs and fish. The study is available on www.fcio.org under the Topic: Has Cotter contaminated the Arkansas River?

A complication in answering this question is determination of background or naturally occurring concentration of uranium in the river. Because of Fremont County's uranium and thorium rich land and agriculture fertilizer application, surface water run-off and groundwater seepage into the river will have higher concentrations of uranium than other areas of Colorado.

Based on monitoring data on the CDPHE website: <http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/hm/cotter/CMmaps.htm> the concentrations of uranium and molybdenum are below CDPHE and EPA mandated clean-up standards of 30 ppb and 35 ppb respectively. Two sites along the Arkansas River, First Street Bridge and the MacKenzie Street Bridge (locations 907 and 904) have been monitored since 1989. During the river study, monitoring occurred twice a month. Immediately following the study, the river was monitored monthly until 2005 when monitoring reduced to quarterly.

See you down by the river. I'll have my line in after the trout.

Your faithful inspector
Inspector Sleuth

Fremont County Independent Outreach Committee
www.fcio.org fcio@bresnan.net