

Colorado environmental groups file federal lawsuit to halt Rocky Flats trail

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Physicians for Social Responsibility and five Colorado advocacy groups are suing Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg, Interior Secretary Deb Haaland and four federal agencies to halt work on a trail through Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge.

The lawsuit, filed in [federal court](#) in the District of Columbia on Monday, claims that the U.S. departments of Transportation and the Interior, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Federal Highway Administration violated the National Environmental Policy Act by not considering alternatives to constructing an 8-mile greenway "through the most heavily plutonium-contaminated portion" of the refuge.

"Although this facility is no longer in operation, the radioactive contaminants, particularly weapons-grade plutonium, that persist in the local ecosystem threaten grave harm to those who live, work or recreate in or near these areas," the complaint states.

"In the absence of intervention by this Court, the health and safety of many individuals will be at risk due to exposure from nuclear contaminants that are far above regulatory limits for radiation and appear to be migrating by air and soil."

The lawsuit repeatedly cites a soil sample found in 2019 along the eastern edge of the refuge that had plutonium levels more than five times above the cleanup standard. Dozens of subsequent soil samples did not have elevated plutonium levels, and federal agencies later declared the area safe for public use.

In addition to not considering alternative trail routes, the lawsuit claims the [federal agencies](#) failed to hold a public hearing or public comment period about the project and that they did not take into account the 2019 elevated plutonium reading.

The [advocacy groups](#) asked the court to find that the agencies violated the National Environmental Policy Act and to halt work on the project until they comply with the law.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Department of Interior declined

to comment on the pending lawsuit. The Department of Transportation could not be reached for comment.

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