

BY: MICHAEL DE YOANNA
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Are Colorado's Water-Quality Regulations Too Stringent for Uranium Miners? Powertech and Cotter Think So

In August, state mining regulators required the groundwater below the proposed Centennial Project uranium mine in northern Colorado be kept clean. Now, the Powertech Uranium Corporation, which hopes to extract the element from the area, is suing the state in U.S. District Court in Denver, claiming Colorado's rules are too stringent. The suit also alleges that several state legislators broke the law by attempting to control how mining officials implemented two 2008 anti-pollution and public transparency laws meant to protect the state's groundwater, writes the [Fort Collins Coloradoan](#).

Powertech is required to fully decontaminate—to the starting-point baseline—the water it uses in its proposed mine operation 15 miles northeast of Fort Collins, but the company says it is irrational for the state to ask such a thing. The cleanup of the groundwater is too expensive, according to the company, and would require the use of too much water from somewhere else.

This is the second suit against the state involving uranium miners in recent months. In September, the Cotter Corporation sued the state mining board over cleanup orders at the Schwartzwalder Mine, which drains into Denver Water supplies on Ralston Creek near Golden, reports [The Denver Post](#). Jeff Parsons, a lawyer for the Western Mining Action Project, who represented community groups that backed the new rules, says the "uranium mining industry in Colorado is wrong to keep fighting water-quality protections and better public involvement." The mining industry, however, says exploration for the chemical is in high demand as the nation seeks fuel for nuclear power plants.

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