

Uranium firm fined in solvent spill that killed 40 birds

Cotter Corp. also to pay restitution

By John C. Ensslin, Thursday, March 13, 2008

A U.S. magistrate fined a Denver-based uranium processing company \$15,000 Wednesday and ordered the firm to pay \$15,000 of restitution for a solvent spill that caused the deaths of 40 geese and ducks.

Magistrate Kathleen Tafoya imposed the maximum fine on Cotter Corporation, which owned the uranium processing mill in Canon City where the spill occurred Oct. 21, 2005.

About 4,500 gallons of organic solvent escaped from the processing facility and flowed into a catchment pond.

Cotter employees removed the solvent within a few days, but by then the migratory birds had come into contact with the spill.

The fine and restitution were part of a plea agreement after the company entered a guilty plea to a misdemeanor violation of the U.S. Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

The law prohibits the killing of several hundred species of birds without a prior license or permit.

In addition to the fine and restitution, Tafoya sentenced the company to 12 months of probation and ordered Cotter to prepare and implement an environmental-compliance plan.

The plan is to be aimed at preventing future spills and speeding the cleanup if spills do occur.

A spokesperson for Cotter could not be reached for comment Wednesday evening.