

In a ruling issued in July 2025, United States District Court Chief Judge Brian Morris of Great Falls heavily criticized John Meyer and the Cottonwood Environmental Law Center of Bozeman, Montana. The judge sanctioned the non-profit law firm for making "baseless" and "reckless" allegations of fraud against the Big Sky Water and Sewer District.

The criticism came in a 29-page order related to a long-running lawsuit under the Clean Water Act. The Cottonwood Environmental Law Center had accused the Big Sky Water and Sewer District of committing fraud by falsifying data during a 2022 trial. Chief Judge Morris dismissed these claims, stating they were contradicted by trial evidence.

Key findings and criticisms from the court order include:

- **"Baseless Fraud Theory"**: The judge characterized Cottonwood's claims of fraud as a "baseless fraud theory."
- **"Reckless Misstatements"**: The ruling stated that Cottonwood and Mr. Meyer's claims were based on "reckless misstatements and disregard of facts."
- **Sanctions Imposed**: As a result of these findings, the court ordered the Cottonwood Environmental Law Center to pay \$7,500 in attorneys' fees to the Big Sky Water and Sewer District.
- **Filing Restrictions**: The court also placed restrictions on Cottonwood's ability to file future motions in the case, a measure intended to prevent further litigation based on similar unsubstantiated claims.