

Agency Designates Habitat for 3 Species

The Associated Press

Wednesday, July 18, 2007; 5:25 PM

SAN ANTONIO -- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has designated about 50 acres in Hays and Comal counties as critical habitat for two species of beetles and a shrimp-like crustacean.

The Peck's cave amphipod, the Comal Springs riffle beetle and the Comal Springs dryopid beetle were placed on the federal endangered species list in 1997 and are found in only a few places in Central Texas.

In 2003 the Arizona-based Center for Biological Diversity sued the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service over the designation. The wildlife service designated the acreage as part of a settlement with the center.

Officials at the wildlife service have said that designation of critical habitat has little effect on protecting species.

The habitat is listed as 110 acres but overlaps in many places and totals 50.4 acres.

"We're glad to see that these endangered species have the habitat protection that they need," said Noah Greenwald, conservation biologist at the Center for Biological Diversity. "Habitat is the key to survival of the species."

The three tiny species depend on clean water for survival, said Benjamin N. Tuggle, the service's southwest regional director.