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Hydro-plant harming wildlife, trees, groups say

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Three conservation groups are alleging that a hydropower plant in the San Bernardino Mountains is diverting too much water from Mill Creek and harming the trees, fish and other wildlife that depend on it.

The San Bernardino Valley Audubon Society, Caltrout and the Center for Biological Diversity filed an opening brief this week in the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals challenging a decision in 2003 by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to renew a 30-year license for Southern California Edison to continue operating the facility near Forest Falls.

Tamara Young-Allen, a FERC spokeswoman, said Wednesday the agency doesn't comment on lawsuits.

The groups filed a separate notice of intent to sue SoCal Edison, accusing the utility of failing to get proper permits to bulldoze the creek for diversion purposes.

Paul Klein, an Edison spokesman, said the utility hasn't reviewed the

notice, but said normal operations include removing sediment that builds up behind the diversion dam.

The hydro-plant, built in 1904, generates enough power for 1,950 homes, Klein said.

