

## Officials oppose designating fox habitat on islands

### By Staff Reports

Federal officials said Thursday that they would not recommend creating critical habitat areas for endangered island foxes on the Channel Islands.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife officials made their announcement in response to a 2003 lawsuit brought by the Arizona-based Center for Biological Diversity. The center sued the federal government to seek endangered status for the species. Officials agreed in March to list the fox as endangered, said Mike McCrary, Fish and Wildlife's recovery coordinator.

The suit also asked the service to consider designating critical habitat areas for the foxes, or areas on the islands best suited for fox survival.

But the foxes rely on all the islands' habitats for survival, McCrary said, so designating certain areas for them would not help. The foxes, which can be found on four of the six islands, have declined because they've fallen prey to golden eagles, not because they lack appropriate habitat, McCrary said.

Kieran Suckling, policy director for the Biological Diversity center, called the explanation "nonsensical to the extreme."

Fish and Wildlife could declare the entire islands a critical habitat area, giving environmental regulators more resources to save the foxes, Suckling said.

The proposal to not designate habitat areas is subject to public comment until Dec. 6. For more information, visit <http://ventura.fws.gov>.