
San Jose Mercury News

TUESDAY

April 11, 2006

News briefs from Southern California

SAN BERNARDINO, Calif. (AP) - A conservation group is seeking federal protection for a desert lizard that lives in an area favored by off-road vehicle riders.

to Dumont Dunes could anger the riders, who are still bristling over the closure of nearly 50,000 acres of dunes in Imperial County to protect Piersen's milkvetch, a native plant.

The Center for Biological Diversity filed a formal petition Monday to list the Mojave fringe-toed lizard as threatened or endangered with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The petition seeks protection for the lizard population in the area around the Dumont Dunes Off-Highway Vehicle Area, about 30 miles north of Baker. The site attracts some 140,000 off-road enthusiasts each year.

U.S. wildlife officials have 90 days under the federal Endangered Species Act to decide whether to pursue a full, yearlong review of the species.

It's not clear what it would mean for the off-roaders if the Mojave lizard were listed as endangered.

But any proposal that limits access