

# The Record

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## Frog needs buffer zones, environmental group says

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The famous jumping frogs of Calaveras County need buffer zones so they aren't permanently grounded by pesticides, an environmental group said Monday.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency also needs to warn consumers about the possible effects pesticides have on the critters, said Brent Plater, an attorney for the Center for Biological Diversity.

"It's so imperative that we get some protection on the ground until the EPA comes into compliance with the law," Plater said.

The Center for Biological Diversity sued the EPA in 2002, claiming officials violated federal law by approving pesticides without considering their effects on the endangered red-legged frog, which is native to the Central Valley. Scientists say just a small amount of some pesticides can kill frogs and other amphibians.

Plater said the EPA has done nothing since a federal judge ruled against the agency last year. His group filed a new motion Monday in federal

court.

EPA spokeswoman Eryn Witcher said Monday that the agency had not seen the motion and could not comment. "We're looking into it," Witcher said.

A Bush administration rule change in July 2004 allowed the EPA to approve pesticides without consulting with federal wildlife agencies. But U.S. District Judge Jeffrey White ruled in September that the agency must consider the effects of pesticides on endangered species, setting a legal precedent that could extend to other animals.

Once abundant throughout California, the red-legged frog now occupies only one-third of its former turf. It has been listed as an endangered species since 1996.

The frog is believed to be the star of Mark Twain's short story "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County." It vanished from the area for decades until 2002, when two children spotted a red-legged frog on their family's Calaveras County ranch.