

## EPA restricts pesticides that harm rare frogs

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A conservation group has succeeded in making the federal government restrict pesticide use in some areas inhabited by rare red-legged frogs -- including parts of Santa Barbara County.

As a result of a lawsuit filed by the Center for Biological Diversity, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has agreed to ban 66 pesticides from the threatened amphibian's most important habitat, at least temporarily. The agency has three years to examine the potential impacts of those chemicals on the frogs.

"For some of them there's already a really good case for banning them outright," said Jeff Miller of the Center for Biological Diversity in Tucson, Ariz.

The injunction will apply to some areas within the Santa Ynez and Santa Maria valleys.

It covers three of the most commonly used pesticides in Santa Barbara County -- 1,3-dichloropropene, chloropicrin and metam sodium, which are used to fumigate strawberry fields, according to Joe Karl,

the county's deputy agricultural commissioner.

Mr. Miller said pesticide applicators "are going to have to be careful about where they apply them."

Frogs are particularly susceptible to pesticide poisoning, he added, because "they're moving through areas where pesticides tend to accumulate -- in water and sediment," and they readily absorb chemicals through their skin.

Populations of red-legged frogs, reputedly immortalized by Mark Twain in "The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County," have plummeted over the last few decades.

Mr. Miller said research in the Central Valley and Sierra Foothills found a correlation between pesticide drift and localized extinction of red-legged frogs.