

EPA to study effects of pesticides on frog species

by CHUCK SQUATRIGLIA
Chronicle Staff Writer

SAN FRANCISCO -- The federal Environmental Protection Agency has agreed to work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to determine whether 66 pesticides used in California harm the endangered California red-legged frog, and it will limit the use of those chemicals while it conducts that research.

The EPA's decision comes 13 months after a federal judge in San Francisco, ruling on a lawsuit filed by the environmental group Center for Biological Diversity, said the agency violated the Endangered Species Act by approving the pesticides without examining their impact on the amphibians Mark Twain made famous in "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County."

U.S. District Court Judge Jeffrey S. White ordered the EPA to

perform such a review "at the earliest possible time."

The EPA and the Center for Biological Diversity reached a settlement this week that requires the EPA to complete its review within 36 months. During that time, the EPA will prohibit use of the chemicals within or adjacent to the animal's habitat.

The California red-legged frog, named for the color of its lower abdomen and the underside of its rear legs, was once abundant throughout the state but has vanished from 70 percent of its historic range, Miller said. It is now found primarily within the Bay Area and the Central Coast, he said.