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# Restraining order sought in case on prairie dogs

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RAPID CITY Eight groups that have sued to prevent federal agencies from starting a program to poison and shoot black-tailed prairie dogs on federal land in southwestern South Dakota have asked a judge for a temporary restraining order.

Last month, U.S. Interior Secretary Gale Norton removed prairie dogs from the list of candidates being considered for designation as endangered species, allowing states to take more steps to control prairie dogs.

South Dakota and federal officials then announced an agreement that calls for poisoning and shooting prairie dogs in the Conata Basin area of the Buffalo Gap National Grasslands to prevent them from spreading to private land.

The Predator Conservation Alliance, Forest Guardians and six other groups filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court in Denver last week. The groups said that since the endangered black-footed ferret preys on prairie dogs, poisoning could reduce the food source for the ferrets, which were reintroduced into Conata Basin in the 1990s.

"We will fight the government tooth and nail to prevent this massive poisoning from taking place," Nicole Rosmarino of New Mexico-based Forest Guardians said in a release.

The other groups seeking the temporary restraining order are Biodiversity Conservation Alliance of Wyoming, Center for Biological Diversity of Colorado, Center for Native Ecosystems of Colorado, Great Plains Restoration Council of South Dakota, The Humane Society of the U.S., and Prairie Hills Audubon Society of South Dakota.