

CBS 5 San Francisco

Friday Midday News Roundup

2/2/2007

A federal agency's decision to refuse to classify squirrels in Washington state as an endangered species was upheld by a U.S. appeals court in San Francisco today.

The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in an appeal filed by three environmental groups over the classification of the western gray squirrel in Washington.

Western gray squirrels were historically widespread throughout Washington, Oregon and California. The appeals court noted that the silvery-gray animals are still fairly common in California, where the western gray squirrel population is estimated at 18 million.

The appeals court upheld a finding by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that even if the Washington population of the squirrels were to become extinct, the loss to the species as a whole would not be significant.

The court said the wildlife service's conclusion was reasonable and was not "arbitrary or capricious."

The appeal was filed by the **Center for Biological Diversity**, the Northwest Ecosystem Alliance and the Tahoma Audubon Society.