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Wildlife managers to review 31 endangered species

By Don Thompson
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SACRAMENTO, Calif. - Federal wildlife managers said Thursday they'll review the progress of 31 endangered species in California and Nevada. The reviews could result in some species being removed from the endangered or threatened list, though environmental groups say that's unlikely.

The announcement comes after the Pacific Legal Foundation, an activist group that defends private property rights, sued in March on behalf of three agriculture organizations.

They challenged the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's failure to conduct status reviews required by the Endangered Species Act for 193 California species. They are among 298 listed as threatened or endangered in California.

"Obviously Pacific Legal Foundation had a much longer list of species, but this is what we feel we can address in the coming (fiscal) year," said service spokeswoman Alexandra Pitts. She said the decision is "an acknowledgment that five-year reviews need to be done ... but we don't have the people or resources to do it."

All but four of the 31 species are on the foundation's list, said foundation attorney Rob Rivett.

"This is in essence complying with the lawsuit in relation to those 27 species," Rivett said, though he said the decision

won't affect the pending lawsuit on the additional 166 species not slated for immediate review.

ON THE NET

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Sacramento office: <http://www.fws.gov/pacific/sacramento/>

Pacific Legal Foundation: <http://www.pacificlegal.org>

Center for Biological Diversity: <http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/>