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NORTHERN CALIFORNIA'S LARGEST NEWSPAPER

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## Stronger controls urged on chemicals in water

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Citing the decline in frogs and rise of “frankenfish,” a Bay Area environmental group filed a legal petition Monday for tighter federal standards on pollutants that disrupt the hormones of humans and wildlife.

The Center for Biological Diversity petitioned the U.S. Environmental Agency to beef up criteria under the Clean Water Act for pesticides, pharmaceuticals and other endocrine disruptors that leak through the water-treatment process and contaminate groundwater and drinking-water supplies.

“We’ve found that a very small concentration of these chemicals can have profound reproductive effects,” said Jeff Miller, a conservation advocate for the Center for Biological Diversity in San Francisco.

Over the past two decades or so, scientists have found increasing amounts of endocrine disruptors in the groundwater, and they have seen corresponding effects in wildlife, particularly frogs, fish and other aquatic animals. Almost every native frog species in California is threatened, and scientists are finding fish with both male and female characteristics, Miller said.

The chemicals are found in dozens of household and industrial products, including sunscreen, birth control pills, herbicides, antibiotics, bug spray and painkillers. Miller’s organization says the chemicals interfere with hormone production in people and wildlife, leading to infertility, birth defects and other problems.

The EPA, under the new administration, has recently launched several programs to look more closely at endocrine disruptors and other water

pollutants, said Betsaida Alcantara, EPA deputy press secretary.

EPA administrator Lisa Jackson has called for a comprehensive overhaul of federal toxics laws, which could include tighter restrictions on endocrine disruptors, Alcantara said.

Of particular concern is atrazine, the second most common herbicide in the world, said UC Berkeley biology professor Tyrone Hayes, who specializes in endocrine disruptors and their effect on frogs.

Atrazine, which is banned in Europe, appears to affect estrogen production in frogs and other creatures, leading to fertility problems, cancer and birth defects, he said.

“Frogs are telling us atrazine is something we all have to be worried about,” Hayes said. “We should be smart and follow Europe’s lead and get rid of it.”