

Lawsuit Targets Pesticides

Groups Say EPA Approved Pesticides Harmful to Animal Species

By Elizabeth Rogers

Tuesday, January 25, 2011

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has neglected to guard against the effects of pesticides on American animal species, according to a lawsuit jointly launched by two nonprofit groups, the Center for Biological Diversity and Pesticide Action Network (PAN) North America.

The suit accuses the EPA and its administrator, Lisa Jackson, of “failing to consult with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service ... regarding the effects of EPA-registered pesticides on endangered and threatened species throughout the United States of America,” according to the court filing.

The filing includes close to 400 pages of endangered and threatened U.S. animals that have allegedly been affected by pesticide use which the EPA should have consulted on. These include Santa Barbara natives such as the California condor, Western snowy plover, and arroyo toad. The lawsuit also includes nine pages of pesticides whose effects should have been studied prior to approval.

These pesticides aren’t just harmful to wildlife. According to a press release from the Center for Biological Diversity, the EPA allowed the re-registration of pesticides like atrazine, an herbicide that has been shown to cause birth defects and cancer in humans as well as chemical castration in male frogs.

PAN codirector Dr. Heather Pilatic said, “Endangered species and biological diversity are strong indicators for the health of the natural-resource base on which we all depend. To the extent that we fail to protect that base we erode the possibility of prosperity for future generations.”

The lawsuit wants protection for 214 species in the United States. Its scope—in terms of both the number of pesticides the plaintiffs want examined, and in the compliance it is demanding from a United States agency—makes it the largest lawsuit of its kind, according to the plaintiffs.