

# San Francisco Chronicle

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA'S LARGEST NEWSPAPER

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## Sharp Park workers killed rare frogs, groups say

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San Francisco Chronicle  
Tuesday, March 6, 2012

Environmental groups Monday accused San Francisco of killing California red-legged frogs and illegally moving their eggs during winter flooding at Sharp Park Golf Course, the latest volley in an ongoing scrap over the endangered species that inhabits the city-owned links.

The accusations by the Center for Biological Diversity, Sierra Club and National Parks Conservation Association were filed in U.S. District Court in San Francisco in an attempt to win an immediate judgment against the city for the frog deaths. The complaint alleges that golf course employees or contractors moved stranded frog eggs to another pond to hide evidence that their pumping activities were killing frogs.

"The facts are indisputable, and we'd like the court to immediately rule before trial on the red-legged frog," said Jeff Miller, conservation advocate for the Center for Biological Diversity, who claimed to have photographic evidence of frog deaths and egg removals. "This is the second consecutive year we've caught them and the sixth time in the last 10 years that they've killed red-legged frogs."

The 81-year-old golf course, which was once a vast wetland, is next to a beach in Pacifica. It is owned by San Francisco and maintained by Recreation and Park Department workers, who deny removing eggs or killing frogs. In fact, they argue, the frog population is thriving at the 400-acre park.

Lisa Wayne, the director of the Recreation and Park Department's natural areas program, said

workers diligently protect eggs and tadpoles and suspend golf play when threatened species are spotted. She denied charges that the pumping system harms frogs.

"We monitor throughout the entire frog-breeding and egg-laying season from December through March and we adjust the pump level so that we keep those eggs in contact with water," said Wayne, adding that the restoration plan for Sharp Park includes 19 acres of rehabilitated frog and snake habitat. "I have not tampered with any eggs out there, my staff has not tampered with any egg masses out there, and our consultants have not been authorized to do it and they have not done it."

The environmental groups filed a lawsuit last year claiming hundreds of frog egg sacs were left to wither when storm water was drained from the low-lying golf course. The lawsuit also claimed golf course operations were killing off the San Francisco garter snake. Both species are protected under the U.S. Endangered Species Act.

U.S. District Judge Susan Illston denied a request late last year by the plaintiffs for an injunction, citing evidence that the park's red-legged frog population had actually increased over the last 20 years. She said at that time that she did not believe golf course operations could be harming the San Francisco garter snake because the endangered serpent hadn't been seen in the area since 2008.

The two sides have been battling for years over Sharp Park, which many environmentalists would like to see become part of the National Park Service. Mayor Ed Lee vetoed legislation by supervisors late last year calling for the transfer of the park to the federal government