



ENDANGERED SPECIES: Judge allows enviros to participate in frog lawsuits

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A federal judge will allow two environmental groups to participate in lawsuits brought by property owners in Louisiana who object to their land being designated as critical habitat for an endangered frog.

The ruling gives the environmental groups -- the Center for Biological Diversity and the Gulf Restoration Network -- the right to intervene in lawsuits brought against the Fish and Wildlife Service and other entities over the dusky gopher frog.

"We'll do everything we can to make sure these lawsuits don't interfere with the survival and recovery of these highly endangered frogs," CBD attorney Collette Adkins Giese said in a statement. "Protection of all their remaining essential habitat is absolutely necessary. Every species we lose forever is a loss that can never be undone."

The frog was listed as endangered in 2001.

Frogs no longer live on the designated land west of the Pearl River, but officials said the area is essential for the species' recovery. It contains five ephemeral ponds within hopping distance of one another.

The dusky gopher frogs lay eggs in the temporary ponds because they're free of egg-eating fish. The designated property was the frogs' last known breeding ground in Louisiana.

"The ruling is incorrect as CBD and GRN have no valid interest in the suit and the U.S. Department of Justice lawyers assigned to the case are highly skilled and will ably represent the FWS to uphold the frog rule," said landowner Edward Poitevent in a statement (Robert Rhoden, New Orleans Times-Picayune, June 26). -- MM