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# Environmental groups sue to save habitat for endangered bee

## Friends of Minnesota Scientific and Natural Areas among plaintiffs

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Conservation groups on Wednesday sued the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for refusing to designate critical habitat for the rusty patched bumblebee, which is endangered.

Officials from the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Center for Biological Diversity and the Friends of Minnesota Scientific and Natural Areas filed the lawsuit in U.S. District Court in the District of Columbia.

The bumble bee, once common across the central United States, became the first bee ever listed under the Endangered Species Act in 2017. It is Minnesota's state bee.

The filing of the lawsuit comes six months after the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced that designating critical habitat for the species "would not be prudent."

"The present or threatened destruction, modification, or curtailment of habitat is not the primary threat to the species, and the availability of habitat does not limit the conservation of the rusty patched bumble bee now, nor will it in the future," U.S. Fish and Wildlife officials determined at the time.

Conservation groups decried the decision saying it "contradicted the agency's own findings that habitat loss and degradation have contributed to the bee's decline, worsened by the widespread use of insecticides and herbicides that directly kill the bee and the wildflowers it needs to survive," according to the Natural Resources Defense Council.

"Having to drag the Service to court at every step is getting old," NRDC attorney Lucas Rhodes said in a statement. "They should just do right by the bee in the first place."

Experts [believe the bee is falling prey to habitat loss](#), climate change, diseases and pesticides.

“Certain areas of Minnesota are some of the last places on Earth where this bee can be found,” said Thomas Casey, chairman of the Friends of Minnesota Scientific and Natural Areas board. “We need to do everything we can to preserve and enhance habitat for this endangered pollinator.”

The Endangered Species Act requires the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to designate critical habitat for listed species, subject to narrow exceptions. Conservation groups say designating critical habitat provides an ecosystem where endangered species can repopulate and avoid extinction.

A spokeswoman for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said agency officials could not comment on pending litigation.