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BAY AREA CONGRESS MEMBERS CHALLENGE ADMINISTRATION'S ATTEMPT TO WEAKEN THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT:

Proposed Rules Remove Science from Pesticide Analysis

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Washington, D.C. - Six members of the San Francisco Bay Area's Congressional delegation are demanding that the Bush administration halt its rollback of protections for endangered species from pesticides. In a letter signed by 66 members of the House of Representatives, members of Congress urged the Bush Administration to withdraw proposed regulations that would seriously undermine the Endangered Species Act and negatively impact endangered wildlife, farmworker safety, and human health.

Bay Area Representatives Barbra Lee, George Miller, Tom Lantos, Zoe Lofgren, Mike Thompson, and Lynn Woolsey all signed the letter.

California conservation groups are concerned that the proposed regulations would threaten Endangered Species Act protections being sought throughout the state for the California red-legged frog in a matter currently pending in Federal District Court in San Francisco. In similar proceedings, the Federal District Court in Seattle ruled in 2002 and 2004 to protect endangered salmon from illegal pesticide use, responding to evidence that pesticides pollute salmon streams and that the Bush Administration had failed to protect the species.

"The Bush administration prefers to pad the chemical industry's pocketbook at the expense of the California red-legged frog, worker safety, and human health," said Brent Plater, Staff Attorney with the Center for Biological Diversity, who brought the case to protect the California red-legged frog from illegal pesticide use. "Members of Congress are advocating for the use of checks and balances to protect endangered species, protect the health of farmworkers, and insure that our environment is safe for all. The Bush administration should heed this sound advice."

The proposed regulations came after conservation groups were successful in a series of lawsuits that were based on the Environmental Protection Agency's admitted failure to follow the Endangered Species Act and determine the impact of pesticides on wildlife by officially seeking input from expert agencies such as the National Marine Fisheries Service and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. Such input is essential because scientists from around the country have recently discovered that the impacts of pesticides on imperiled species is compounded by the presence of predators and other environmental stressors, factors that can only be adequately assessed in conjunction with biologists from federal wildlife agencies. Instead of working within this system

of checks and balances to protect wildlife, the Bush Administration chose to propose new regulations to circumvent the Endangered Species Act.

The letter, which was spearheaded by Rep. Grijalva (D-AZ), highlights the real threat that the regulations pose to both wildlife and people, particularly farmworkers. The letter states, "The proposed changes would unnecessarily risk both wildlife and public health by exposing animals and humans to highly toxic pesticides when they are most potent and would eliminate necessary interagency checks and balances."

For a copy of the letter and background information on the California red-legged frog please contact Brent Plater and visit our website at www.biologicaldiversity.org.

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