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Groups sue EPA over pesticide policy

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Environmental groups yesterday sued the federal government, charging that pesticide makers are illegally influencing rules meant to protect endangered species from dangerous chemicals. The lawsuit was filed in federal District Court in Seattle.

The groups said the Environmental Protection Agency is meeting behind closed doors with an organization of 14 pesticide companies and that the organization has taken on an unlawful advisory role.

In a letter sent to the environmentalists Tuesday, EPA officials denied any wrongdoing. The pesticide organization simply supplies data, they said, not advice, and "they do not have special access to EPA staff."

The groups filing suit include the Center for Biological Diversity, the Washington Toxics Coalition and the Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides.

They want to put a stop to what they characterize as "secret" meetings with a "corporate insider group."