



Center for Biological Diversity

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*Protecting endangered species and wild places through
science, policy, education, and environmental law.*

PESTICIDES IN CALIFORNIA IMPERIL ENDANGERED SPECIES

Lawsuit Claims EPA's Pesticide Registration Program Harms the California Red-legged Frog

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San Francisco- With concern mounting about the harmful effects of pesticides on human health and imperiled species, the Center for Biological Diversity filed a lawsuit today in Federal District Court against the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency ("EPA") alleging that the EPA's pesticide registration program is harming the California red-legged frog, (*Rana aurora draytonii*), a federally listed threatened species, and damaging the frog's critical habitat.

Historically abundant throughout California, the red-legged frog has been extirpated from 70% of its range. Its population has declined by at least 90%. Recent studies link the decline of the red-legged frogs with pesticide use. Exposure to such chemicals may cause deformities, abnormal immune system functions, diseases, injury and death in California red-legged frogs.

Between 1991 and 1998 more than 1.5 billion pounds of pesticides were used in California alone, with nearly 200 million pounds applied annually. In 1997, the California Department of Pesticide Regulation reported that approximately 150 pesticides or herbicides used within approximately 2 square kilometers (1 square mile) of known California red-legged frog habitat.

Under the Endangered Species Act ("ESA"), the EPA is required to consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to determine how the EPA's pesticide registration program impacts endangered or threatened species. The Center's suit seeks to compel the EPA to comply with its mandates to protect wildlife and the public from the harmful impacts of pesticides.

"The EPA is asleep at the switch," claims Brent Plater, attorney with the Center for Biological Diversity. "Ample evidence exists that pesticides are a contributing factor in the decline of the species, yet even the basic requirements of federal endangered species law have been ignored by the EPA."

The red-legged frog is not alone in its plight: amphibians are declining across the globe, and many scientists believe that industrial chemicals and pesticides may be to blame. "Pesticides have been linked to cancers, reproductive and developmental problems, and impairment of the nervous system," said Peter Galvin, conservation biologist with the Center. "The Environmental Protection Agency needs to take adequate measures to ensure that its pesticide review program protects the health and safety of humans and species such as the California red-legged frog."

The Center for Biological Diversity is actively involved in protecting red-legged frogs throughout California, including the frog's wetland habitats.

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