



# Center for Biological Diversity

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

## **CONSERVATION GROUPS FILE LAWSUIT TO STOP EPA FROM USING ILLEGAL INSIDER CHEMICAL GROUP TO FORGE POLICY**

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Washington, D.C. -- Conservation and pesticide watchdog groups filed a lawsuit to stop the Environmental Protection Agency from giving illegal special access to a group of chemical corporations. Documents obtained under the Freedom of Information Act and other sources reveal that the corporate insider group has met regularly with EPA officials in secret and has urged EPA to weaken endangered species protections from pesticides.

The chemical companies are pushing EPA to weaken pesticide safeguards by cutting expert biologists in the US Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA Fisheries out of consultations determining the effects of pesticides on wildlife. At the companies' urging, EPA has starting a rulemaking to reserve authority over such evaluations to itself.

"EPA is letting the pesticide industry have inside influence over the fate of endangered species poisoned by toxic pesticides," said Patti Goldman of Earthjustice, which brought the lawsuit on behalf of the conservation and watchdog groups.

Federal law prohibits the government from using and meeting in secret with such insider groups. Congress has established good government standards that prevent secret and one-sided advisory bodies of wealthy special interests. The Federal Advisory Committee Act prohibits the federal government from obtaining advice from committees comprised of only the regulated industry. That Act also requires that the meetings of advisory groups be open to the public.

"Behind closed doors big business and federal agencies are likely gutting much needed protections from pesticides," said Aimee Code of the Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides. "Such practices fly in the face of the democratic process. All voices must be heard."

In 2000, EPA established this chemical industry group, known as the FIFRA Endangered Species Task Force, to develop data disclosing the locations of endangered species. The task force is comprised of 14 agro-chemical companies. It meets regularly with EPA officials in closed meetings and has no public interest representatives. Over the past year, the chemical industry task force has shifted its efforts away from generating data to advocating that EPA circumvent the Endangered Species Act for pesticide uses that harm federally protected species. It has become the chief proponent of new pesticide regulations that would eliminate expert oversight over species protections. In early 2003, EPA announced its plan to issue such regulations, and it plans to propose new rules soon.

"For years, EPA has flouted its obligation to protect endangered species from pesticides," said Aaron Colangelo of Natural Resources Defense Council. "Now that the courts are directing EPA to comply with its duties, the pesticide industry and the Bush Administration have come up with a new trick for delaying species protections."

The lawsuit asks the court to order EPA to commit to bring its actions into compliance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act. Natural Resources Defense Council, the Center for Biological Diversity, Defenders of Wildlife, Washington Toxics Coalition, and Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides, represented by Earthjustice, filed the lawsuit.

Fact Sheet available at [www.pesticide.org](http://www.pesticide.org)

FIFRA Endangered Species Task Force

FESTF Member Companies (as of March 2003)

Albaugh, Inc.

Aventis

BASF Corp

Bayer CropScience

Dow AgroSciences, LLC

DuPont Ag Products

FMC Corp

ISK Biosciences Corporation

Monsanto Co

Nissan Chemical Industries Ltd

Nufarm Inc.

Syngenta

Uniroyal Chemical Co.

Valent USA Corp