

Ranchers, loggers sue feds over frog protection

By Dale Kasler, Carolyn Wilke and Ryan Sabalow, Sacramento Bee

Tiny frogs and toads used to swarm over the Sierra Nevada. Now, the government says nearly 2 million acres of land needs to be preserved to prevent them from going extinct.

California ranchers and logging groups say those protections are hurting their ability to make a living. So another conflict over the Endangered Species Act is going to court.

The California Farm Bureau and two ranchers' associations sued the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on Monday, challenging a year-old decision to designate more than 1.8 million acres of rural California as "critical habitat" for three species of frogs and toads that are protected by the Endangered Species Act.

The case affects a wide swath of the Sierra Nevada region, from Lassen to Inyo counties. It includes portions of Placer and El Dorado counties. Most of the land is owned by the government and is in designated wilderness areas, where the "highest level of conservation protection" on federal land is required, according to the Fish and Wildlife Service.

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