

# Local frog gets threatened status

## First listing under Endangered Species Act since moratorium lifted

*Animal Welfare*  
San Francisco Examiner

SAN FRANCISCO — A federal agency granted the California red-legged frog Endangered Species Act protection on Monday, making it the first animal listed since a moratorium was imposed by Congress a year ago.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed the frog heralded by Mark Twain's "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" as a threatened species the day after the Calaveras County Fair and Jumping Frog Jubilee in Angels Camp, Calif.

By listing the frog, biologists are trying to protect about 240 streams or drainages mostly in the central coastal area of California. Only three areas within the historic range support colonies of more than 350 adult frogs.

They are the Point Reyes National Seashore, Pescadero Marsh State Preserve and Rancho San Carlos in Monterey County.

The red-legged frog is the largest of the native frogs in the western United States, measuring from 1 to 5 inches with an olive or brown back and a reddish belly and undersides of hind legs.

The listing protects habitat at construction sites of Los Vaqueros Reservoir by the Contra Costa Water District, the Bay Area Rapid Transit extension to the San Francisco International Airport, the airport's new parking lots and a proposed bypass of Devil's Slide south of Pacifica.

The listing won't halt construction, said Wayne White, state supervisor of Fish and Wildlife Service, but means



The Associated Press

landowners or developers will have to protect wetland and other habitat.

Near the airport, the frogs live in wetlands and open space west of Highway 101, which also are home to the endangered San Francisco garter snake.

Near Devil's Slide, the frogs breed in two ponds on Shamrock Ranch north of the slide and south of Pacifica.

Last year, Congress imposed a freeze on additions to the list of protected species amid Republican-led efforts to change the Endangered Species Act by rescinding \$1.5 million of the agency's budget.

Two weeks ago, legislators reached a compromise to restore the funds after

## Red-legged frog native to Santa Cruz

Sentinel staff report

Red-legged frogs once lived throughout low areas of California, but now they're found only in coastal streams and wetlands in a few Central Coast locations.

In Santa Cruz and Monterey counties, the frogs have been found at Wilder Ranch State Park, UC Santa Cruz, and areas around Elkhorn Slough, Fort Ord, and Harkins Slough, which in 1994 was the proposed site of 1,400 homes.

Although the numbers aren't known yet, the population at Wilder Ranch "may constitute the heart of

what remains of this species" Mike Westphal, a researcher at Coyote Creek Riparian Station, told the Sentinel in 1995.

Concern about the rare frogs helped hold back the proposed development of Wilder Ranch State Park campground by six months. The plan has since been dropped because of other factors.

Some local habitat for the frog has been restored by the University of California Natural Reserve and the UCSC Arboretum. They have constructed several ponds adjacent to Moore Creek.

President Clinton threatened to veto a budget bill containing the moratorium.

The red-legged frog was the first of the 243 species awaiting protection to be listed because of a lawsuit filed by the Environmental Defense Center in Santa Barbara.

When Twain wrote his story in 1865, the red-legged frog was common along rivers and coastal creeks. The native frog has disappeared from 70 percent of its original range from Baja California north to Marin County on the coast and Redding inland. And it no longer competes in the jumping-frog jubilee.

Biologists blame the decline of many frog species on grading and filling for

crops, pastures, houses and stream channeling, as well as pollution, planting of non-native fish in rivers and possibly ultra-violet rays.

The biggest natural predator is its burly cousin the bullfrog, introduced to California as a delicacy in the late 1890s.

Protecting the habitat of the frog will also aid the recovery of other imperiled species in the Bay Area, including the garter snake; San Joaquin kit fox; Alameda striped racer snake; bay checker-spot, mission blue and San Bruno elfin butterflies; and the coyote ceanothus and San Mateo thornmint plants, the agency said.