

U.S. government moves to protect whipsnake

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The U.S. government has set aside 154,834 acres in California's East Bay for a protected habitat for the endangered Alameda whipsnake.

Environmental groups welcomed the move to protect the species but questioned whether the amount of land set aside by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service would be enough to save the snakes, Inside Bay Area reported Tuesday.

"The good news is there is finally some critical habitat protection in place," said Jeff Miller, Bay Area wildlands coordinator for the Center for Biological Diversity. "It's debatable if it's enough to recover the species."

The habitat for the Alameda whipsnake, which has been considered an endangered species by the U.S. government since 1997 and a threatened species by California since 1971, has been driven from much of its natural habitat by residential development.

Al Donner, assistant field supervisor in the Sacramento office of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, said the habitat designation requires developers to prove that any new construction in the area will not harm the snakes.

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