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Thursday, July 7, 2005

Pig fight rages

Santa Cruz Island co-owners say feral pigs are destroying the land and hindering efforts to protect endangered island foxes. Opponents have sued to halt the killing, saying no environmental plan was developed before the order was issued.

By GREG RISLING

The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES – Opponents of an effort to rid Santa Cruz Island of feral pigs have filed a federal lawsuit to stop the killing and have a declaration from a former park superintendent who claims the decision to eradicate the animals was made before an environmental plan was developed.

CONTROVERSIAL PROGRAM

Suit filed: The lawsuit filed in federal court accuses the National Park Service and The Nature Conservancy, which co-own the island, of violating federal and state laws.

What plaintiffs are asking: The plaintiffs want a judge to issue a temporary restraining order or a permanent injunction to ban the slaughter.

Anti-eradication proponent reaction: "The Park Service and Nature Conservancy made a rush in judgment to kill the pigs," said Richard Feldman, 65, a Santa Barbara businessman who filed a similar suit in May but withdrew it to join in the new suit.

Eradication proponent reaction: Channel Islands National Park spokeswoman Yvonne Menard said Wednesday that the agency had not seen the lawsuit and could not comment. A phone message left for The Nature Conservancy was not immediately returned.

At issue: Channel Islands National Park and The Nature Conservancy have said that the pigs are destroying the island - part of the Channel Islands National Park - by causing erosion, uprooting native plants, helping



HUNT: The National Parks Service and The Nature Conservancy have launched a sustained hunt to rid Santa Cruz Island of feral pigs, which pose a threat to native growth, co-owners say.

File photo: AP

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spread invasive species and threatening an effort to protect endangered island foxes.

What's being done: The groups have hired a professional hunter to kill the pigs.

How the pigs got there: Ranchers introduced the pigs to the island in the 1850s.

When is a decision likely? There could be a decision issued this week.

The Associated Press

