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**Last Stand Made for Endangered West Virginia Northern Flying Squirrel
Coalition Files Suit to Restore Protections Stripped Away from “Ginny” by Bush**

WASHINGTON— A coalition of conservation groups, including the Center for Biological Diversity, Friends of Blackwater, Southern Appalachian Forest Coalition, The Wilderness Society, and Wild South, filed suit today in federal court in Washington, D.C., seeking to overturn a Bush-administration decision stripping the [West Virginia northern flying squirrel](#) of protection under the Endangered Species Act.

“We’re going to bat for ‘Ginny,’ the West Virginia northern flying squirrel who should never have been stripped of federal protection,” said Judy Rodd, director of [Friends of Blackwater](#), a West Virginia-based conservation group. “The decision to take the flying squirrel off the endangered species list was a political move, to allow more destruction of the squirrel’s forest habitat for timbering, energy extraction, and development.”

The decision to delist the squirrel ignored a scientifically based recovery plan for the species. Recovery plans are required under the Endangered Species Act to have measurable criteria for determining when a species’ endangered status should be changed, and are developed by a recovery team made up of scientific experts on the species and its habitat. The rule removing protection for the squirrel acknowledged that not all recovery criteria from the recovery plan were met.

“The decision to remove protection for the West Virginia flying squirrel flies in the face of the science on the species,” said Mary Krueger of The Wilderness Society. “With the filing of this lawsuit, we hope the Obama administration will move quickly to restore protections for the flying squirrel.”

To justify removing protections for the squirrel, the Bush administration claimed that threats to the squirrel have been alleviated. In making this conclusion, however, they ignored climate change models showing decline for the cool mountaintop forests the West Virginia northern flying squirrel calls home.

“Climate change is a serious threat to the West Virginia northern flying squirrel and countless other species,” said Noah Greenwald, endangered species director at the Center for Biological Diversity. “When you’re a species that lives at the top of the mountain and the forest beneath you disappears because the climate is warming, you’ve got nowhere else to go. Even the flying squirrel can only glide so far.”

The organizations are represented by Meyer, Glitzenstein & Crystal, a Washington, D.C. public-interest law firm.

Photos Available: Photographs of the flying squirrel are available for press use. Contact Judy Rodd.

Additional Sources: Contact either of the following for additional insight: Hugh Irwin, Southern Appalachian Forest Coalition, (828) 252-9223; Ben Prater, Wild South (828) 258-2667.