NAPA, Calif. — The Center for Biological Diversity and Sierra Club filed a lawsuit today challenging the approval of a large vineyard development in the mountains east of the city of Napa. The project will tear up more than 300 acres of undisturbed riparian, oak and native grassland habitat and convert it into vineyards sprawled haphazardly across the 2,300-acre Walt Ranch property.

The project, which was approved Dec. 19 by the Napa County Board of Supervisors, will also destroy vital habitat for threatened California red-legged frogs, valley elderberry longhorn beetles and endangered Contra Costa goldfields.

“If this luxury vineyard goes in, thousands of trees will be cut down, acres of wildlife habitat will be destroyed, new roads will be built, and limited water supplies will be depleted,” said Aruna Prabhala, staff attorney and Urban Wildlands director at the Center. “The project is the step in the wrong direction for the county, and the local community and wildlife will pay the price.”

The lawsuit outlines Napa County’s violations of the California Environmental Quality Act, including inadequate review of the proposed vineyard’s impacts on wildlife, water supply and greenhouse gases. The lawsuit raises concerns over the construction and alteration of more than 20 miles of roads and fencing that will reduce habitat connectivity and restrict wildlife movement; the use of harmful pesticides; the drawdown of local groundwater aquifers; and a host of other activities that will impair water quality in streams crucial to the survival of local salmon, reptiles and amphibians.

“The Sierra Club is filing this suit as an extension of Redwood Chapter’s long tradition of forest and woodland protection,” said Napa Sierra Club Chair Nancy Tamarisk. “Worldwide, deforestation is the second strongest driver of global warming, and this degree of deforestation should be unthinkable in the context of our climate crisis.”
1.3 million members. The Redwood Chapter of the Sierra Club has approximately 9,600 members who reside in the north coast region of California, including Napa County.

The Center for Biological Diversity is a national, nonprofit conservation organization with more than 1.1 million members and online activists dedicated to the protection of endangered species and wild places.