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WORLD

Endangered fly halts projects

Conservation efforts to aid rare insect hold up government construction

COLTON, Calif. (AP) — Southern California construction projects worth hundreds of millions are being held up by a fly in the development.

The U.S. government has all but halted development across the sand dunes in the desert east of Los Angeles to protect the tiny Delhi Sands flower-loving fly — the only fly ever to make the Endangered species list.

Some people cannot believe the fuss being made over a bug.

"People feel like their community is being run by a fly. Where it can develop, when it can develop — all dictated by a fly," Ray Bragg said, a development official in Fontana, one of several small cities whose plans have been thwarted by the orange-brown insect the size of a straight pin.

The flies' only known breeding grounds are the Delhi Sands dunes stretching from San Bernardino to Riverside to Ontario, about 60 miles from Los Angeles. The fine dunes were created by Santa Ana winds carrying grit from the mountains and dropping it in the desert valley.

The Delhi Sands are the largest remaining sand dune system in the Los Angeles basin. But the few dunes that remain are surrounded by freeways and encroaching development. Most of them are held by private land owners.

Because the fly's habitat is disappearing, its numbers are down to just several thousand. In 1993 it was designated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as an endangered species.

"Any time there's a listed species that's warm and fuzzy and endearing, it's easier for people to rally around it and work together toward a common goal. But this is about more than just God's creatures great and small," Jeff Newman of the Fish and Wildlife Service said. "This is a unique system with unique species."

Afraid the Delhi Sands fly will go the way of the El Segundo fly, which disappeared when its breeding grounds were paved over for a tarmac at the Los Angeles International Airport, the Fish and Wildlife Service has all but halted development on the dunes until it can be determined how many flies there are and how best to protect them.

In Fontana, developers' vision of a \$500 million project of single-family homes, shopping centers and strip malls has been dashed. Rancho Cucamonga, Ontario, Rialto and Hemet have had to delay housing projects, critical in a region absorbing residential overflow from Los Angeles. Colton had hoped to build a manufacturing plant.

About \$42 million in bonds will go into default in October because Fontana land owners unable to develop their land are unable to pay taxes.

Colton has \$11 million in debt tied up in an idle electrical substation that was built to supply power to the proposed commercial developments. And the town is in danger of losing \$300 million to \$500 million in commercial projects because developers are looking elsewhere, Colton town manager Henry Garcia said.

Forecasters tropical storm could hit coast

MIAMI (AP) — Tropical Storm Dennis formed in the western Atlantic on a track that could hit the East Coast this weekend, forecasters said.

Dennis grew out of a depression southeast of the Bahamas and north of Puerto Rico, becoming a named storm with sustained wind speeds of 39 mph.

By midday yesterday, Dennis was centered about 75 miles east of Grand Turk in the Turks and Caicos Islands, which are about 100 miles southeast of Miami. National Hurricane Center said it was moving west-northwest near 9 mph and was expected to continue that pace.

The government of the Bahamas issued a tropical storm warning for the Turks and Caicos Islands and the eastern Bahamas.

The storm could be 100 miles away from the eastern United States, from the area from northern Virginia to the Carolinas, said Jerry Riehl, director of the hurricane center.

"But this could be those that goes up the East Coast and threatens the body on the way and makes all button up," he cautioned. "There was also a chance Dennis could veer north and away from the East Coast, forecasters said."

The hurricane center was monitoring another weather system located about 500 miles west of the Caribbean's Windward Islands.

"It is pretty well-organized," said forecaster Todd Kimberlin. "And in the mid Atlantic, Tropical Storm Cindy was about 1,290 miles east of the Lesser Antilles. Cindy was moving west-northwest at about 60 mph, with sustained winds of 60 mph."

Al Fayed family blames press for deaths

PARIS (AP) — The photographers who chased Princess Diana should be prosecuted since the car crash that killed her would not have happened if not for them, the lawyer of her boyfriend Dodi Fayed's family said yesterday.



DIANA

The lawyer, Georges Kiejman, criticized the state prosecutor's recommendation last week that charges against nine photographers and a press motorcyclist be dropped.

The 10 are charged with manslaughter and failure to assist

persons in danger.

"These recommendations are surprising," said Kiejman, who is representing Mohamed Al Fayed, Dodi's father.

"They distort the facts," he said. Investigating judge Herve Stephan, who is expected to conclude his own probe soon, is not obliged to follow the state prosecutor's recommendation.

Diana, Dodi and their driver, Henri Paul, were killed in a Paris traffic tunnel Aug. 31, 1997.

Only bodyguard Trevor Rees-Jones survived.

Paul was drunk at the time of the crash, and alcohol and excessive speed are considered the main causes of the accident.

Initial blame was put on the

photographers chasing Diana.

Kiejman said the driver would never have sped to get away from them if "the occupants of the car had not been harassed."

He said he would appeal should the judge decide not to send the photographers to trial.

For his part, Rees-Jones — the bodyguard and a former Al Fayed employee — has filed a suit against the Ritz Hotel and the limousine company that supplied the Mercedes for Dodi and Diana.

Rees-Jones charges they endangered lives by allowing a drunk and unqualified driver to act as chauffeur.

Dodi and Diana dined at the Ritz, which Al-Fayed owns, shortly before the crash.

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