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PARK GRAZING RULING APPEAL PLANNED

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Environmental groups crying "Bull!" say they likely will appeal a ruling that allows cattle to continue grazing on East Bay Regional Park District lands.

Alameda County Superior Court Judge James Richman ruled this week that the grazing policy does not violate the California Environmental Quality Act.

But environmentalists with the Southwest Center for Biological Diversity and the Alameda Creek Alliance said they probably will appeal within the 60-day deadline.

"Despite the ruling, the fact remains that the park district has never done a meaningful environmental analysis of their grazing leases or addressed cumulative impacts, site-specific problems or impacts on endangered species," said creek alliance spokesman Jeff Miller.

"At least the park district is consistent: The parks are full of cow pies and their environmental review process is full of bull excrement."

Park district spokesman Ned MacKay said the grazing program has been subject to detailed public and professional review.

MacKay said in the early 1990s, a panel of technical experts, including UC-Berkeley professors and California Native Plant Society members, recommended guidelines that the park district board adopted after public meetings.

He said the guidelines limit the number of cattle that can graze on a given piece of land and preclude grazing in areas warranting special protection.

Environmentalists sued the district in October, challenging its 11 grazing leases with ranchers on 60,000 public acres in Alameda and Contra Costa counties.

During winter and spring, between 2,000 and 3,000 cattle are rotated among parks.

The leases generate \$286,000 annually for the park district. But district officials say the main benefit of the grazing program is grassland management, which minimizes fire hazards and allows for growth of native plants and wildflowers.