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DISTRICT GRAZING PLAN GETS JUDGE'S APPROVAL

From Mercury News staff and wire reports

An Alameda County Superior Court judge has ruled in favor of a grazing technique used by the East Bay Regional Park District as a method of grassland management.

The district received the ruling by Judge James Richman on Tuesday.

The suit was filed in October by the Southwest Center for Biological Diversity and the Alameda Creek Alliance, soon after the park's board of directors approved 11 leases with various private parties who pay for grazing rights in the park. The plaintiffs wanted permits to be delayed pending an environmental impact review of the grazing technique.

But district spokesman Ned Mackay said the grazing policy is environmentally sound and has been in place since 1992. He said if the grasslands were not grazed, they would become brush, and that the district will monitor the program to make sure it is properly carried out.

Jeff Miller, a spokesman for the Alameda Creek Alliance, said that his group was not happy with the ruling and would appeal. The grazing technique is not a sensible or effective tool for fire management, he said.

The park district covers more than 90,000 acres of public land in Alameda and Contra Costa counties. About 30,000 acres are available for grazing and yield less than \$300,000 from leases.