

Fish gets new protections, could restrict delta water flow

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The Associated Press

Article Launched:02/07/2008 02:08:35 PM PST

FRESNO, Calif.—California fish and wildlife managers say a fish species that plays an important ecological role in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta should gain new protections, a move that could further restrict water pumping throughout the state.

The Fish and Game Commission voted Thursday to consider the longfin smelt as a candidate for threatened and endangered status under state law.

It also adopted new requirements that state and federal water managers scale back pumping operations in the next 180 days when longfin smelt are near the pumps that send water to more than 25 million Southern Californians.

While authorities review biological information about the fish over the next year, spokeswoman Adrianna Shea says the longfin smelt will get the same protections as endangered species.

Last summer, a federal judge ordered federal and state water authorities to reduce the amount of water they pump through the delta hoping to protect another species called the delta smelt.

Jeff Miller, a spokesman with the Center for Biological Diversity, says the pumping restrictions for the longfin smelt will be more restrictive than the court's framework.