

REGIONAL: FISH AND GAME COMMISSION DELAYS ACTION ON LEAD AMMO IN CONDOR RANGE

04/13/07 2:40 PDT

The California Fish and Game Commission took testimony today but delayed voting on a proposal to prohibit lead ammunition in the current range of the critically endangered California condor.

Conservationists, including **the Center for Biological Diversity**, claim the use of lead ammunition threatens condors that feed on carrion of species killed with lead ammunition.

Jeff Miller of the Center for Biological Diversity said the four members on the commission have scheduled a teleconference vote on April 26 but may postpone the vote until May or June. The commission meets in San Diego in May.

The commission has four proposals: to ban lead ammunition in the condor's current range; to ban its use in the condor's historic range; to take no action; or to initiate a statewide ban on the use of hunting using lead ammunition.

Miller said the Center for Biological Diversity hopes a statewide prohibition of lead ammunition will eventually be enacted but the organization urged the commission to ban use of the ammunition in the condor's current range. There are only 127 condors flying free in the wild, 70 of them in California, according to the center.

Miller said it appeared the commission was evenly split on allowing the lead ammunition to be used in the condor's current range. **Miller said** the issue may be decided when the commission has a fifth member.

"It's unlikely they will take no action on the issue. It's a question of when, not if," **Miller said.**

At its meeting Thursday in Bodega Bay, the commission voted 4-0 against taking emergency action to change the status of the Delta smelt from threatened to endangered under the California Endangered Species Act, **Miller said.** Conservation groups claim the species is in imminent risk of extinction.

The small, nearly translucent fish is found only in the upper San Francisco Bay and the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. It was listed as a threatened species in 1993 and in 2005 the population was estimated at 2.4 percent of the 1993 level, **Miller said.**

Miller said the commission will continue to process the petition to change the smelt's status and the state Department of Fish and Game will submit its recommendation before the commission's June meeting.

The smelt's status will be reviewed, **Miller said,** and it appeared Thursday the commission is leaning in favor of declaring the smelt endangered and could vote on the issue in June.