

Delta longfin smelt gets second chance at protection

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Federal regulators have agreed to decide by Sept. 31 whether to add another Delta fish to the list of threatened and endangered species.

Longfin smelt, a cousin of the nearly extinct Delta smelt, were rejected for the list in 2009 because the fish also lives along the Pacific Coast from the Bay Area to Alaska.

At the time, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service determined that the Bay-Delta population of longfin smelt, while dwindling to very low levels, was not sufficiently distinct from the rest of the coastal population to merit protection.

Two environmental groups, The Bay Institute and the Center for Biological Diversity, sued. The sides reached an agreement this week that calls for federal regulators to reconsider their decision.

In 2009, state regulators added longfin smelt to the list of threatened species under California's endangered species law.