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NORTHERN CALIFORNIA'S LARGEST NEWSPAPER

Feds to review longfin smelt's endangered status

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Federal wildlife regulators have agreed to reconsider their decision denying endangered species protection to longfin smelt in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service pledged in a settlement Wednesday to reassess its 2009 decision declaring that the delta's longfin smelt population did not warrant special protection.

The 5-inch fish is found in Pacific Coast estuaries from the San Francisco Bay area to Alaska.

Environmentalists sued the agency, arguing the longfin smelt is crucial to the delta ecosystem and did qualify as a distinct population under federal law.

The wildlife service agreed to issue a new decision by September.

The longfin smelt is a cousin of the delta smelt, which is listed as a threatened species by federal regulators and has been the subject of court battles over delta water pumping.