

REVOKING PROTECTIONS FOR THE IMPERILED LONGFIN SMELT

Passed: 216-195

SUMMARY:

The House approved a Congressional Review Act resolution that would have overturned Endangered Species Act protections for the endangered longfin smelt, undermining the scientific integrity of the ESA (*May 1, 2025, Roll Call No. 113*).

BACKGROUND:

The San Francisco Bay-Delta estuary is in a state of decline with several species, including indicator species like the longfin smelt, careening towards extinction. Degradation of this ecosystem, which has led to water shortages in California, has been driven primarily by outdated water quality standards, increased industrial pollution, and diversion of water away from the ecosystem to help industry interests over the last several decades. Ensuring adequate river flows into and through the Delta is essential for the survival of native fish, clean water, and productive fisheries. Rather than working to protect the Bay-Delta estuary, some politicians instead inaccurately portray environmental needs as conflicting with human needs, and scapegoat endangered species protection – smelt conservation efforts in particular – as the cause of the industrial water shortages. This thinking has led to political attacks on the San Francisco Bay-Delta Distinct Population Segment (DPS) of the longfin smelt, which the FWS recently found was in grave danger of extinction.

Scientists first identified the San Francisco Bay-Delta DPS of the longfin smelt as a species that warranted Endangered Species Act protection in 1992, more than 30 years ago. Responding to a petition to list the DPS filed in 2007 and to a court order requiring action, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service finally listed Bay-Delta longfin smelt in July 2024.

On March 21, 2025, Rep. Doug LaMalfa (R-Calif.) introduced H.J. Res. 78, a Congressional Review Act resolution to overturn the longfin smelt's long overdue ESA listing. Revoking protections for the San Francisco Bay-Delta DPS of the longfin smelt could doom it to extinction, and with it, the ecological integrity of, and environmental services provided by, the San Francisco Bay-Delta ecosystem.

OUTCOME:

On May 1, 2025, the House passed H.J. Res. 78, 216-195. “No” was the pro-conservation vote.