

# Settlement may temporarily ease conflict over Delta water supplies

**Mike Taugher, Bay Area News Group, 2-25-11**

A four-month truce was called on one front in the Delta water wars Thursday when all sides agreed to settle a major lawsuit pitting water supplies against protections for Delta smelt.

The settlement basically lays out a range of restrictions that can be placed on Delta pumps through June that is not much different from the regulations that are the subject of the lawsuit.

"I am pleased that the water users, environmental community and federal and state officials collaborated to resolve operational issues through the end of June -- the most critical time of the year," David Hayes, deputy secretary of interior, said in a statement.

"This frees up the parties to continue to devote attention to resolving California's long term water challenges -- an effort that the Obama and Brown administrations are fully committed to undertaking," Hayes added.

So far this year, there have been no restrictions put in place to protect Delta smelt under guidelines that were the subject of fierce protests in the San Joaquin Valley during the past two dry years.

It is possible that conflict between fish protections and water supplies could flare up in the fall, when, depending on the weather, rules could kick in that would require water be released to drive back salt intruding from San Francisco Bay.

In 2007, U.S. District Judge Oliver Wanger ruled an endangered species permit was impermissibly lenient.

In December, Wanger ruled the permit developed to replace the old one by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was too costly to water users.