



MICHIGAN CHAPTER

PRESS RELEASE
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Sierra Club and Huron Mountain Club jointly seek protection for the Coaster brook trout

The Sierra Club and the Huron Mountain Club today jointly petitioned the US Fish & Wildlife Service to list the Coaster Brook Trout as Endangered under the Endangered Species Act. The Coaster, once prevalent in Lake Superior, now has a resident breeding population in only one stream on the south shore of the lake, in the Salmon Trout River. The lands adjoining the portion of the Salmon Trout used by Coaster Brook trout is owned in its entirety by the Huron Mountain Club, which has been the prime conservator of this rare fish. Habitat degradation by logging and roadbuilding upstream from spawning grounds have caused numbers to decline. In addition, there is the new threat of an acid-generating mine at the headwaters of the Salmon Trout. This mine is being proposed by the Kennecott Mining Corporation, which has applied for a permit to begin mining.

Statement of Peter Dykema, Representing the Huron Mountain Club

Historical records confirm that the spectacular Coaster Brook Trout once spawned in literally dozens of Michigan streams and thrived in all the near-shore waters of Lake Superior. Today, the only surviving South-shore Coasters are those that spawn in the Salmon Trout River ("STR"). Ongoing research confirms that the STR population, while viable, is very small and therefore at risk.

The Huron Mountain Club and its members are proud that the Club's 116 years of stewardship of its pristine lands and waters has saved the Michigan Coaster from extinction. At the same time, we believe that the vulnerable condition of the surviving coaster population gives us special responsibilities to do everything we can to protect and improve the existing Coaster population. Those efforts will include continued protection of the coaster's spawning and rearing habitat, continued support for Michigan state regulations closing the lower STR to all fishing when the coasters are spawning, and continued support for critically important long-term research into the ecology, genetics, and competitive interactions of the Coaster.

Today we are, as an additional step, asking the United States Fish & Wildlife Service to give the Coaster the legal protection to which it is entitled under the Endangered Species Act. There are many forces that could, potentially, endanger the STR Coaster population, including stream sedimentation and competition from exotic salmonids such as Coho Salmon. But recently there has arisen a newer and more specific threat. Kennecott Mineral Company proposes to mine sulfide minerals directly underneath the headwaters of the STR, creating a risk of polluting the river with sulfuric acid and/or dissolved heavy metals that are highly toxic to all species of trout. With today's filing we are seeking to ensure that Kennecott's proposed mine, and all other activities in the STR watershed, will be evaluated by the relevant State and Federal authorities with due regard for the unique and invaluable environmental resources that the mine could impact -- in particular, the rare and extraordinary Coaster.

Peter Dykema is a member of the Board of the Huron Mountain Club.

Statement of Marvin Roberson, representing the Sierra Club Michigan Chapter

The Endangered Species Act has been proven over and over again to be one of the truly visionary acts passed by Congress. We in Michigan are fortunate that one of our own Congressmen, John Dingell, was one of the primary authors of this Act.

The Sierra Club has been a strong proponent of first, passing the ESA, and since then, maintaining its strong provisions for protections for endangered species. But long before the Endangered Species Act, the Huron

Mountain Club was prescient of the need to conserve and protect fragile species, and in fact has done so with the Coaster Brook Trout.

This magnificent fish was documented to have existed in over 105 streams feeding Lake Superior. That number is down to one stream, the Salmon Trout River, containing native breeding populations of Coasters. The entire stretch of that river used by Coaster Brook Trout is on the property of the Huron Mountain Club, and they have been maintaining, protecting, and studying this magnificent fish.

The Sierra Club is proud to partner with the Huron Mountain Club in the ongoing efforts to make sure that the Coaster Brook Trout does not go the watery grave of the Michigan Grayling, another wonderful fish which unfortunately is lost to us in Michigan now.

With the new threats from a potentially acid-generating mine at the headwaters of the Salmon Trout River, and with data now available as a result of new studies, the Sierra Club has determined that the Coasters need and deserve protection under the ESA, and we are pleased to join the Huron Mountain Club in this effort.

We urge the US Fish & Wildlife Service to act quickly on this petition.

Marvin Roberson is the Forest Policy Specialist for the Sierra Club Michigan Chapter