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## Ruling on trout boosts U.P. mining project

Jim Lynch / The Detroit News

Federal officials dealt a setback to opponents of a proposed nickel mine in the Upper Peninsula Monday by declining to place a trout species that spawns in the area on the endangered species list.

Conservation groups looking to block Kennecott Minerals Inc. from mining 160 acres of state land near Marquette had hoped the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service would designate the Coaster Brook Trout for federal protection. That designation may have forced Kennecott to revise its permit applications seeking state approval for the project.

But three years after the Sierra Club and Huron Mountain Club petitioned for the trout to receive endangered species status, the federal government announced Monday it would not do so.


"We know Coaster Brook Trout in the Great Lakes face a number of challenges, as do many Great Lakes fisheries," said Tom Meilius, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife's Midwest regional director, in a press release. "The Service is committed to its ongoing Coaster Brook Trout conservation and rehabilitation efforts."

Sierra Club and Huron Mountain Club officials have said the Kennecott project -- called the Eagle Project -- could be the litmus test for Michigan laws passed in 2004 to regulate new mining efforts. If the Eagle Project goes through, they argue, similar mining efforts won't be far behind.

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