

Federal protection asked for Michigan fish

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Two Michigan groups are reportedly asking the federal government to declare the coaster brook trout an endangered species.

Fewer than 200 of the fish are believed left in the Salmon-Trout River, the Detroit Free Press reported Tuesday. If the request is approved, the coaster brook trout would become the only fish among Michigan's 16 endangered plants and animals.

The designation might also possibly interfere with plans to build a Kennecott Eagle Minerals Co. mine at the headwaters of the Salmon-Trout River -- the only Lake Superior south shore tributary in which the fish reproduces naturally, the newspaper said.

But Kennecott officials say their mine would be so clean it would make no difference whether the coasters receive federal protection.

Rich Bowman, director of the Michigan chapter of Trout Unlimited, said federal protection would mean a loss of control for state regulators and non-profit groups working on behalf of the fish.

"There are good things and bad things that come with endangered status," Bowman told the Free Press. "The good thing is the involvement of the federal government. And the bad thing is the involvement of the federal government."

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