

Endangered Species Act protection not warranted for Eagle Lake rainbow trout

July 6 2016, by Pam Bierce

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) announced today that it has completed a status review on the Eagle Lake rainbow trout and determined that the fish does not warrant protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) at this time.

The Eagle Lake [rainbow trout](#) is a subspecies of rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss aquilarum*) found only in the highly alkaline Eagle Lake and its main tributary, Pine Creek, in California. Past impacts from improper land management, introduction of non-native fishes, over-harvesting and water diversions from the lake during the late 1800s and the early 1900s resulted in the degradation of habitat within the Pine Creek watershed and a declining Eagle Lake rainbow trout population. In addition, passage barriers were constructed in the 1950's as part of a hatchery program. The barriers were intended to prevent spawning migration, protect the [fish](#) from being stranded in the creeks by insufficient flows and to assist in the collection of fish for the hatchery program.

After a thorough evaluation of the best scientific and commercial information, the Service concluded that the stressors that currently may be impacting the Eagle Lake rainbow trout population, including grazing, roads, fish passage barriers, recreational fishing, predation from and competition with brook trout, disease and climate change do not pose significant threats to its long-term survival. As part of the evaluation, the Service also considered and evaluated conservation efforts that have been implemented and shown to be effective in reducing the effects of

the stressors on the Eagle Lake rainbow trout.

The Coordinated Resource Management Planning (CRMP) group was formed in 1987 to identify goals and implement a course of action for habitat and ecosystem restoration for Pine Creek. The CRMP membership includes the U.S. Forest Service (FS), the University of California Cooperative Extension for Lassen County, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), and local landowners and interested parties. Since 1989, the CRMP has completed numerous successful restoration actions to improve habitat conditions and re-establish natural populations and spawning runs of Eagle Lake rainbow trout within the Pine Creek watershed. Implemented restoration actions have included, among other things, replacing culverts to increase fish passage and improving grazing practices. A fishway was installed around the fish trap in 2012 and subsequent passage studies in 2013 indicated that this is no longer a barrier to spawning migration.

In 2015, a Conservation Agreement and Conservation Strategy were developed as a collaborative and cooperative effort among the Service, CDFW and the FS as a framework for conservation and protection of the Eagle Lake rainbow trout.

The finding on the Eagle Lake rainbow trout will be published in the [Federal Register](#) on July 6, 2016. An advance copy of the notice is on public view at the Federal Register today. The document will be posted tomorrow on [Regulations.gov](#). In the search box, type in Docket No. FWS–R8–ES–2012–0072.

Provided by U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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