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SIERRA CLUB CRITICIZES USFWS BACK PEDALING ON HEARING FOR THREATENED COASTER BROOK TROUT

The Sierra Club today chastised the US Fish and Wildlife Service for changing their mind on holding hearings on the proposed listing of the Coaster brook trout as an endangered species. The Sierra Club is one of two organizations petitioning the federal agency to list the Coaster brook trout under the federal Endangered Species Act .

The Sierra Club and the Huron Mountain Club filed this petition with the USFWS in 2006 to declare the Coaster Brook Trout, a large, very rare trout which reproduces in only one stream on the south shore of Lake Superior, as Endangered. March 20 of this year, the USFWS published a notice in the Federal Register noting a positive preliminary finding on the petition, asking for comments by May 19, and asking for requests for a public hearing by May 5.

Dozens responded asking for a hearing. However, May 2, 2008, the USFWS released a letter "To Interested Parties" claiming that the offer of a hearing was "in error", and stating that there would be no such hearing.

According to Marvin Roberson, Forest Ecologist with the Sierra Club, "We call on the US Fish and Wildlife Service to make good on their offer of a hearing on this matter. While it may have been made "in error", whatever that means, it was in fact made, and many groups and individuals responded in the manner and time specified in the Federal Register Notice".

Roberson further noted that there is no prohibition which would keep the USFWS from holding the hearing they offered, and further noted that this letter claiming the offer had been made "in error" came over 40 days after the original Notice, and only after numerous written requests for a hearing.