

Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited

Dedicated to the Conservation, Preservation and Restoration of Coldwater Fisheries & their Watersheds

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Michigan Council Trout Unlimited Stands Firm Against Kennecott Mine Project

The Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited (MCTU) has come out in strong opposition to the Kennecott Company's proposed Eagle Mine which would be located directly under the environmentally fragile Salmon Trout River in Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

The opposition is based upon extensive research conducted by MCTU and its national organization Trout Unlimited (TU).

Patrick Kochanny, Chairman of the Michigan Council said, "To date, TU and MCTU have invested considerable staff, volunteer, and financial resources evaluating the technical merits of Kennecott's proposed Eagle Mine. We previously submitted comments regarding the technical adequacy of the project, and in particular the negative impact that the mine could have on the Salmon Trout River. We continue to have serious concerns that the proposed project will cause significant harm to the Salmon Trout River and the viability of the Coaster Brook Trout that depend on it. In addition, the information recently released by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) from the Itasca Consulting Group raises new and grave concerns that Kennecott did not follow industry best-practices when evaluating the potential structural stability of the crown pillar. Equally as alarming, the technical report reveals that Kennecott did not conduct an analysis of the hydrologic stability of the crown pillar and the potential increase in hydraulic connectivity as a result of stress-induced deformation from the mining process."

Kochanny also said "We are seriously concerned that MDEQ's analysis and review of the permit application may not have been conducted properly and have expressed that concern in our position letter to MDEQ Director Steven Chester."

The sensitivity of this site leaves no margin for error. Trout Unlimited and the Michigan Council strongly oppose this project, and believe that it is in the best interest of the State of Michigan and the Salmon Trout River to deny Kennecott's application at this time. If, however, the MDEQ should decide to move forward and further evaluate Kennecott's application after the conclusion of the internal investigation, MCTU believes that MDEQ and Kennecott must satisfactorily

address the following issues before any defensible decision can be made regarding the existing project proposal.

- 1) MDEQ should require Kennecott to conduct further analysis following industry best-practices of the strength and structural integrity of the Crown Pillar;
- 2) MDEQ should require Kennecott to conduct a complete analysis following industry best-practices of the hydrologic stability of the crown pillar, including the hydraulic connection of existing sub-vertical faults as well as stress fractures that would arise as a result of the mining operation. A worst-case scenario should be included that postulates vertical fractures from the ore body to the Salmon Trout River directly above the deposit.
- 3) MDEQ should require Kennecott to follow additional assessment and monitoring regimes, including quarterly monitoring of aquatic macroinvertebrates, sampling in the truck wash area, onsite storage of overburden, and the discharge of process or wash water, to ensure there will not be any short- or long-term water quality issues.
- 4) MDEQ and Kennecott should provide specific plans and assurances that if problems arose, anticipated or unanticipated, they would respond in a timely fashion. We have this concern based on the past performance of the mining industry in general, and are particularly worried about delays in responding to issues during critical times, such as brook trout spawning season.
- 5) MDEQ should consult with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) and ask for a response from Kennecott concerning the mine at Flambeau. There continues to be lingering issues with water quality contamination, all the while Kennecott is seeking a Certificate of Completion from the WDNR.
- 6) We are concerned that if a problem is identified during mining or after reclamation and Kennecott states that “it is working on the problem” that the MDEQ will not aggressively enforce the terms and conditions of the applicable permit(s) to ensure water quality in the Salmon Trout River.

Kochanny issued the following statement. “The MDEQ is responsible to the people of the State of Michigan and must conduct an honest evaluation of all of the permit application materials and any other materials that are necessary to ensure the protection of the environment. No more, no less. Simply stated, we believe the Salmon Trout River watershed is critically important to coldwater resources and much too valuable to the State of Michigan to have unanswered questions at this late date. Further, it leaves too much margin for catastrophic errors to occur. Again, we strongly urge the MDEQ to deny this permit.”

Trout Unlimited was founded 48 years ago by Michigan anglers concerned about the management and protection of coldwater resources. TU remains true to that vision and its 150,000 members nationwide, including 7,000 in Michigan, are passionate advocates for the conservation, protection, and restoration of trout and salmon and their watersheds. The proposed Eagle Mine would be located directly beneath the headwaters of the Salmon Trout River, which contains critical spawning habitat in the southern range of the Lake Superior Coaster Brook Trout. TU National and the Michigan Council feel the inherent risks associated with a mining project of this size and nature are too great to gamble with the future of this unique fish population and the health of the Salmon Trout River.

