

## **A Special Regulation for a Special River, by Bill Leder**

In 2015 the Michigan Natural Resources Commission enacted 20 inch minimum size and 1-fish daily possession limits for brook trout on eight streams in the Michigan Upper Peninsula. The Pilgrim River, from its mouth to Paradise Road, was included. These streams are part of a Michigan Department of Natural Resources study pertaining to coaster brook trout.

Coasters are an adfluvial form of brook trout that migrate between streams where they are born and Lake Superior. Due to habitat loss and over-fishing, only a very small population remains. The Pilgrim River is part of an active research program to better understand these beautiful fish. The regulation applies to all brook trout because it is very difficult, from their appearance alone, to determine the difference between coasters and brook trout that are stream residents exclusively.

In May 2019 the Michigan DNR held a public meeting in Houghton to obtain community input concerning extending the geographic reach of the special regulation. There was broad support, and no opposition. Subsequently, in April 2020, the NRC extended the regulation, which will run until at least 2025, to include the entire Pilgrim River and all its tributaries.

The Pilgrim Community Forest, Pilgrim Heritage Forest, and Pilgrim Headwaters Forest conserve four miles of river and 1,500 acres of watershed vital to coaster survival.

*Bill is a PIF member, long time officer of Copper Country Trout Unlimited and serves on the board of the Keweenaw Land Trust.*

Please see [www.partnersinforestry.com](http://www.partnersinforestry.com) for a legible sign on the fishing regulations and photos of Coaster Brook Trout!