

## DNR Turns Deaf Ear To Mio Proposal

Does Not Respond? It would sure seem that way. After several years of study and an extensive public input session last spring, the DNR Fisheries Division has managed to take a win-win situation and trash it.

Their proposed new trout regulations below Mio Dam on the Au Sable River, an area known as the Trophy Water, call for no major changes regarding protection of brown trout. The minimum size would stay at 15 inches, as would the daily take of two fish.

This is in sharp contrast to the overwhelming majority of anglers who voiced an opinion on the matter. Ninety percent (90%) of those who voted at the several public meetings favored some type of No Kill for browns. Sixty-Five (65%) of the letters received on the issue also supported No Kill. Throw in a petition with 206 signatures in favor of No Kill and the message is clear; manage the stretch for a maximum population of trophy browns.

Anglers even came together on a reasonable compromise, fashioned by Bryan Burroughs, Executive Director of the Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited, to lower the size on rainbows to make it easier to harvest them while maximizing protection of browns. The trophy hunters and folks who like to keep fish would both benefit.

DNR's own statistics on this reach of the Au Sable, coupled with hundreds of photos and stories, demonstrate that the 14 miles of river from Mio Dam to McKinley Bridge is unmatched, perhaps anywhere east of the Rockies, for large stream-run browns. They grow faster and live longer in this water.

The prospective of big trout is also a potential for economic gain in a region that has suffered for years.

Doesn't matter to DNR, they chose to ignore the well reasoned argument made by the folks who fish and, in many cases, take care of this water; cleaning up trash, restoring riverbanks and even posting the fishing regs signs that DNR never got around to doing the last time, 2000, they changed the rules.

The regulations they have proposed will only continue the decline of brown trout – 44% since the year 2000. The addition of an extended season, even with catch and release, will just add to the problems including a twenty-fold increase in fishing pressure and high water temperatures in the summer.

A group of concerned anglers will make a stand for compromise – one brown trout at 18 inches - at the NRC Meeting on December 4<sup>th</sup>. This allows for some harvest while providing a step in the right direction to maximize the potential for trophy browns on this section.

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