

Judge halts Paiute cutthroat trout recovery plan

By Denny Walsh, Sacramento Bee

A Sacramento federal judge has quashed a joint federal-state plan to improve conditions for a rare High Sierra fish, ruling that an auger driven by a gasoline-powered generator cannot be used in designated wilderness areas.



For more than 25 years, government agencies have sought by various means to increase the population of the Paiute cutthroat trout and restore this rare creature to its historical range.

Six years ago, U.S. District Judge Frank C. Damrell Jr. ordered a halt to the state's plan to poison one stretch of a High Sierra creek and a lake as part of the recovery project.

It was Damrell again stepping in to block the latest plan with a permanent injunction based on the federal Wilderness Act.

Spokespersons for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Forest Service and the California Department of Fish and Game vowed Friday that the agencies will continue to work together to find a way to accomplish the recovery and restoration of the Paiute cutthroat trout.

"Our team of lawyers are currently reviewing the order to see what we can do to move forward," said Fish and Game spokesman Kevin Thomas.

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