

OPPOSE

NRCM Opposes: Resolve, Regarding Legislative Review of Chapter 200: Metallic Mineral Exploration, Advanced Exploration and Mining, a Major Substantive Rule of the Department of Environmental Protection

Oppose LD 395: *Resolve, Regarding Legislative Review of Chapter 200: Metallic Mineral Exploration, Advanced Exploration and Mining, a Major Substantive Rule of the Department of Environmental Protection*

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Summary:

LD 395 enacts weak mining rules from the Board of Environmental Protection (BEP). This is the third time in four years that the Legislature has received weak rules from the BEP. The BEP held a public hearing on these rules in the fall of 2016 and approved them unanimously in January of 2017 despite overwhelming public opposition. Opponents of the rules outnumbered supporters 441-2. As in 2014 and 2015, NRCM strongly opposes these weak rules.

Explanation:

Metal mining is a major threat to Maine's clean water. Mining in sulfide deposits, the kind of deposits common here in Maine, creates sulfuric acid and toxic, heavy-metal-laden runoff. This "acid mine drainage" pollution can devastate water quality and kill aquatic life. Even modern mines cause terrible environmental disasters. This happened in 2014 at the Mt. Polley mine in British Columbia. This modern mine opened in 1997, but the tailings dam failed due to a design flaw and released billions of gallons of mining waste into pristine streams and lakes. Taxpayers often foot the bills for mining disasters. At the Callahan mine in Brooksville, Maine, taxpayers continue to pay for cleanup more than 40 years after the mine closed. The biggest part of the cleanup there hasn't even started.

The biggest problems with the 2017 version of the mining rules are:

- They would allow mining on state lands, including spectacular Public Reserved Lands such as Deboullie, Nahmakanta, and Telos. The Legislature should ban mining on state lands.
- The requirements concerning "wet mine waste units" and tailings impoundments are not realistic or clear. The rules allow "wet mine waste units" for acid-generating waste rock. Mining companies often cover mining waste because it reduces acid generation from very reactive waste. In Maine, the presence of this type of waste is very likely, especially at Bald Mountain. The rules say such "wet mine waste units" must be temporary, but this is virtually impossible. Once a mining company puts thousands or millions of tons of waste rock under water, moving that rock and shipping it elsewhere will be impossible.
- They would allow mining under lakes, coastal water, rivers, streams, and wetlands. This is unacceptable. Maine people depend on clean water to support critical economic engines for our state: tourism, fishing, hunting, guiding, paddling, and many other activities. Wildlife watching, hunting, and fishing combined are worth about \$1.4 billion annually. Fishing alone is worth \$370 million per year. Maine lakes support about 52,000 jobs with an economic impact of \$3.5 billion annually. Weak mining rules are a serious threat to our clean water and sustainable, job-creating industries that depend on a clean environment.

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