

Comments by Lisa Pohlmann, NRCM Executive Director
News Conference on Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument
July 7, 2017

Good morning and welcome. I am Lisa Pohlmann, the Executive Director of the Natural Resources Council of Maine.

Today we are releasing the results of a comprehensive analysis that NRCM has just completed of public comments regarding the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument.

These comments were submitted in response to the review of national monuments initiated by President Trump, and managed by Secretary of Interior Ryan Zinke.

As of today, there are only three days left in the public comment period that began May 11th and closes this Monday, July 10th, at midnight.

Tens of thousands of people have submitted comments either online through the official web site or by mail or hand delivery. The Department of Interior has posted on the official web site all comments received, whether they were submitted digitally or in hard copy form.

NRCM has opened up and reviewed every comment posted online at www.regulations.gov. We have spent more than 120 hours reading and evaluating public comments about Katahdin Woods and Waters, including thousands of comments that are included in attachments to online submissions.

And this is what we have learned.

The public comments show nearly unanimous endorsement of Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument.

We counted a total of 192,052 comments that specifically mention Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument as of midnight on July 4th. This number does not include generic comments in support of all national monuments under review, or tens of thousands of names on petitions.

Out of this total, 191,976 comments – or 99.96% – support Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument.

This is a virtually unanimous endorsement for Katahdin Woods and Waters.

Only 67 comments total, out of more than 192,000, voiced opposition to the Monument. That is only .03% — three one-hundredths of one percent in opposition.

If we had printed out all comments, the comments in support of Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument would tower 60 feet high – the equivalent of a five-story building.

In comparison, the comments in opposition stack up to only one quarter of an inch.

Reading the comments, it becomes crystal clear that people overwhelmingly see Katahdin Woods and Waters as a positive development for Maine and the nation. They see the designation as a settled matter, and do not want the Monument taken away in any fashion.

Many people who once opposed protection of these lands have since become strong supporters as they see economic benefits arriving in the Katahdin region, and financial investments underway that they know would not have happened without the Monument. Our other speakers here today will describe some of the positive economic benefits already happening.

Our analysis shows that Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument is providing new hope for communities in the Katahdin region, as people come to visit the area for the first time, including many with out-of-state license plates not often seen in the region. These visitors are spending money, and they plan to return.

Many others who have submitted comments have learned about Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument from news reports, and are eager to visit it.

This is great news for the businesses and communities of the Katahdin region.

Another point that clearly comes through from these comments is that there was ample opportunity for local input. Katahdin Woods and Waters was established after a lengthy, multi-year, statewide public conversation about the possibility of a national park or monument like this in the Katahdin region.

Scores of people described the public meetings they attended over the past five years as the proposal was modified based on public input.

Reading these comments, it is obvious that there has been exhaustive public outreach and coordination with relevant stakeholders over the years.

I'll close with an excerpt from one comment that captures a broad sentiment expressed by many.

Kevin Parker, from Millinocket, said:

"Just miles from my house, the newly-created Katahdin Woods and Waters monument is already bringing new life to our city in the form of tourist dollars, while also preserving the beauty of our great state for generations to come."

With me here today are three Katahdin Region residents who submitted comments to the Department of Interior and will share their views:

- Gail Fanjoy, Past-President, [Katahdin Area Chamber of Commerce](#), lifelong Millinocket resident
- Dan Corcoran, [North Woods Real Estate](#), Millinocket, former manager of forest policy for Great Northern Paper for 30 years
- Terry Hill owner of [Shin Pond Village](#), Mount Chase