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**Lorette Adams, Alice Bolstridge, Gail Maynard, and Shelly Mountain
2014 Conservation Leadership Award**

For their unwavering determination to ensure that Maine implements strong, commonsense regulations to protect our waters, wildlife, and citizens from dangerous mining pollution.

Water is one of Maine's most precious resources, for people and wildlife alike. Near the end of the 2012 legislative session, a bill was introduced to weaken Maine's mining rules, at the request of J.D. Irving, a huge Canadian mining conglomerate. Irving proposed to build a large, open-pit mine at Bald Mountain in Aroostook County. Such a mining operation would put important water resources at risk from sulfuric acid and toxic heavy metals. Such pollution persists for hundreds of years, would likely leave Maine taxpayers with cleanup costs, and put human health and wildlife habitat at risk, including some of our state's most important brook trout habitat.

Four Aroostook County residents grasped the seriousness of the threat posed by J.D. Irving's bill. Lorette Adams, Alice Bolstridge, Gail Maynard, and Shelly Mountain soon became the most important voices from the County on the mining issue. They hosted NRCM staff members during a key presentation in Presque Isle. As part of this event, in keeping with time-tested Maine tradition, they cooked a bean supper and turned out a great crowd for presentations on mining pollution by Nick Bennett, NRCM's staff scientist and Jeff Reardon, Trout Unlimited's New England Conservation directory.

In addition, on numerous occasions, these women made the long trip down from the County to give incredible testimony before the Board of Environmental Protection and the Maine Legislature, despite having to cover their own costs for gas, lodging, and meals. Their strong connections in the County meant others from that part of the state came to Augusta to testify as well. As a result, Aroostook County citizen voices were far more powerful than the pro-mining lobby. Without these four women, this would not have been the case.

After three sessions of battling over the mining issue, the Legislature rejected the LePage Administration's weak mining rules. But this isn't just good news for Aroostook County residents; this is a big win for everyone who lives in and loves Maine, because the risk of metal mining pollution extends beyond Irving's plans for Bald Mountain. There are many other places in Maine where companies may want to mine, including Cobscook Bay and the Moosehead Lake region. Although the mining issue may rear up again, the victory this year was an important one, and these women were key to that victory. On behalf of the Natural Resources Council of Maine, it is an honor to present to Lorette Adams, Alice Bolstridge, Gail Maynard, and Shelly Mountain a 2014 Conservation Leadership Award.