

Aroostook County Residents Opposed to DEP Draft Mining Rules
Excerpts from Comments on LD 146 – Mining Rules

Darrell and Lorette Adams (Mars Hill)

“My wife Lorette and I have lived in Mars Hill in Aroostook Country Maine for 15 years. I was born and raised in Presque Isle, so we have a deep connection to Northern Maine. The proposed mining rules weaken the existing rules which protect our largest employer in the state which is tourism and retirement. In Maine we have high sulfur mineral deposits which, when exposed to air and water create sulfuric acid leading to acid run-off. Our watersheds and groundwater should not be risked if we are to continue to be a destination for tourists and retirees”.

Randel A. Agrella (Fort Fairfield)

“Please count me in the camp of those who are vehemently opposed to weakening the mining rules in Maine. It’s my belief that, if anything, they should be strengthened, not weakened. My reasoning is simple and not very profound. Mining is a particularly dirty industry, and the environmental costs tend to be very high. Developing Maine’s mostly rather marginal mineral resources will create a few jobs, yes, in the short run. Unfortunately the aftermath of mining operations is usually much more long-lived. Maine’s experience with the Callahan Mine in Brooksville should be instructive – it is now one of the most heavily polluted locations in Maine. Maine does not need another Superfund site. LD146 goes 180 degrees in the wrong direction in the regard. The Legislature had it right in the last session, when it killed a similar proposal”.

Betsy Bishop Terrell (Carr Pond)

“I have actively watched the Maine mining revision process since the beginning; I wrote letters and spoke at the previous public hearings to testify against these flawed rules. Over this period of time I have thankfully witnessed overwhelming opposition to the flawed revisions, and unfortunately witnessed the mining industry representatives amend these laws with only their needs in mind and not the long term effects they would have on the environment”.

Alice Bolstridge (Presque Isle)

“I am Alice Bolstridge from Presque Isle. I am opposed to these rules because they are too weak to protect the environment. We need rules that are strong enough to protect the most environmentally risky sites such as Bald Mountain which contains unusually high level of toxic chemicals that are now contained in the rock. With these rules, open pit mining at this site would pollute a chain of rivers, streams, and lakes which are some of the most pristine areas for brook trout in the United States. This proposed mining site is likely even more dangerous than the one left by the Callahan Mine in Brooksville. I am an old woman thinking about the legacy I and my generation will leave for the future. My children and grandchildren enjoy fishing in the waters of the river chain downstream from that most risky proposed mining site. Bald Mountain is just west of Portage Lake, my home town. These rules would allow a mining company to ruin a sustainable, life-enhancing legacy for the sake of a temporary boost in J.D. Irving’s corporate profits. Please, don’t let that happen”.

Mary DiMarco (Houlton)

“It is clear that the overall intent of these metallic mining rules is to relax regulations on the metallic minerals mining industry”.

Ward Gerow (Presque Isle)

“I am very concerned that these weak mining rules would allow mining corporations to pollute our water and harm our woods and wildlife in Aroostook County for centuries. L.D. 146 as it stands would facilitate the permitting of a particularly problematic metal mining site that contains high levels of sulfur and arsenic compounds that very likely would leach into the ground contaminating streams, aquifers, and the woods. I am concerned about the unrealistic and wildly exaggerated jobs claims for projects like Bald Mountain. Similar mining projects elsewhere have led to a relatively small number of long-time jobs and a somewhat larger number of temporary jobs during start-up. Thousands of Maine people need our state’s healthy environment to make their living and provide for their families. Guides, commercial fishermen, and sporting camp owners all depend on Maine’s clean water and abundant fish and wildlife. Mining pollution is a grave threat to these resources and should not be risked for a handful of new jobs”.

Jim and Megan Gerritsen (Bridgewater)

“I’m Jim Gerritsen. My family and I grow Maine Certified Seed Potatoes in Aroostook County. I’m here today to testify in opposition to LD 146. We are adamantly opposed to the weakening of Maine’s mining regulations. We have farmed for 39 years in the unorganized territory of Central Aroostook Country. Our isolated seed farm is located 40 miles Southeast of Bald Mountain. In our 36 square mile township – Township D, Range 2 – there are just eight residents: six are in our family. Our children were born in the Unorganized Territory. They’ve been raised with a land ethic. They know the most important work they can do is make the land better for their children, just as my wife and I have done for them. Their choice to live in Maine is a quality of life issue. They like the woods and the freedom and the purity. That’s why we oppose LD 146. Weakening existing mining regulations is bad policy. It will hurt everyone in Maine. Our priority must always be protecting Maine’s environment. To be successful – and to continue to be a great place to live and great state to visit – Maine must maintain very strict limits on groundwater pollution. The Maine Legislature acted correctly last year when it overwhelmingly defeated this same proposal. I urge your Committee to lead by example and defeat LD 146”.

John Graves (Presque Isle)

“I urge you to not weaken mining regulations for Maine. The risk of accidents which would pollute pristine natural trout habitat is too great. The benefit of short term industrial expansion is paled by the eternity of maintenance and cleanup that would exist after any mining is finished or after a disastrous accident”.

Gail Maynard (Woodland)

“I am an organic beef and grain producer from Aroostook County. My family operates Orchard Hill Farm in Woodland. As a farmer, I understand the importance of healthy soil, clean air, and water quality. I want strong mining rules to protect my family and my business. Weak mining rules allowing wide spread groundwater contamination threaten the pristine aquifer underlying Bald Mountain and my home. There is an ongoing marketing campaign to promote Aroostook County as the bread basket of the northeast. The “Aroostook Brand” has a mystical quality, invoking images of abundant, healthy cropland, clean air, free flowing streams and unspoiled vistas. I ask you to consider images that might result from weak mining rules: acid mine tailing ponds, stunted fields and forests, fish kills, rivers of unnatural color. This grim picture is anything but “Business Friendly”.

Michael Maynard (Perham)

“My name is Michael Maynard and I live in the very small town of Perham Maine, in Aroostook County. As a state we already have adequate mining rules in place. To weaken the existing rules with the wording currently under discussion would be unconscionable. The Fish River chain of lakes and rivers, for one, are a precious gem, a crown jewel of the highest natural order, and virtually the last remaining wild and sustainable habitat of the eastern Brook trout and our native landlocked Salmon. Other endangered fish directly in the firing line of LD 146 are the Blue Back trout, a fish existing now under the very real threat of extinction from loss of habitat. The rules in place now already allow for responsible mining in the state of Maine, there is no need to cheapen the value of our watersheds and forests simply to satisfy a mining company’s need for greater profit. The current rules protect us, they protect our environment: our very natural heritage. The rules in place must be upheld and I urge you in the strongest possible terms to reject LD 146”.

Alice Sheppard (Presque Isle)

“I first visited Maine on vacation. I was instantly attracted to the clear lakes, pristine wilderness, and abundant wildlife. I decided to stay. Now I learn that proposed changes in Maine’s mining regulations would threaten all that I cherish. Despite claims of ‘improved’ technology, mining in much of the state threatens the release of arsenic, mercury, and sulfuric acid – the latter a result of oxidations and hydration of sulfide compounds in the rocks. The devastating collapse of a tailings dam at Mount Polly in 2014 refutes the claim of contemporary mining safety, as wastewater gushed into and contaminated nearby lake and streams. A few short-term jobs do not outweigh water pollution, loss of habitat, and struggle to ameliorate them across millennia”.

Wayne and Pamela Sweetser (Presque Isle)

“We live and farm in Aroostook County and struggle every day to stay financially afloat. We also know well the folly of destroying for short term gain the very resources that sustain us: air, land, water. We sincerely hope that you will accept the truth from empirically proven evidence that open pit mining such as J.D. Irving and its proponents advocate WILL release toxins that WILL poison ground and surface water. Without strong mining rules, Maine will lose a lot to gain a little. The losses will be for all Mainers; the losses will last forever and their costs will be generational. The gains will be temporary and serve a few”.

Stephen Wood (Presque Isle)

“My wife and I chose to move to Presque Isle in 1979 from the suburban sprawl of California to live and raise our sons in a clean environment where the land and its animals are enjoyed and respected. I own a woodlot, lease some of the land to a farmer, and spend much of my free time in nature. These attributes of Maine that I appreciate are the “Maine Brand”. A clean environment where forests, fish and other animals thrive is also the economy of Aroostook County. Hundreds of farmers, loggers, guides, inn keepers, and store owners depend on this economy for their livelihoods. We live off the land and the tourists it attracts. That pollution will seep into rivers and lakes for hundreds of years, devastating the very basis of our economy. This project will destroy, not create jobs. I urge you to oppose any weakening of our environmental laws. The citizens of Aroostook County, and all of Maine, need a strong Department of Environmental Protection, not a Department of Environmental Degradation”.