



Senator Stacy Brenner
Representative Lori Gramlich
Joint Standing Committee on the Environment and Natural Resources
Via email
April 10, 2023

Dear Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich, and distinguished ENR Committee,

I cannot join you this week as you consider the following bills:

- L.D. 1363 An Act to Support Extraction of Common Minerals by Amending the Maine Metallic Mineral Mining Act
- L.D. 1433 An Act to Exclude Pegmatites from the Definition of "Metallic Mineral"
- L.D. 1476 An Act to Amend the Definition of "Metallic Mineral" in the Maine Metallic Mineral Mining Act
- L.D. 1508 An Act to Ensure a Strategic Approach to Maine's Energy Transition by Imposing a Moratorium on Lithium Mining
- L.D. 1471 An Act to Amend Provisions of the Maine Metallic Mineral Mining Act
- L.D. 1495 Resolve, Establishing the Commission to Study the Role of Critical Minerals as a Resource in the State
- L.D. 1564 An Act to Eliminate Metallic Mining Activities Without a Permit

As you delve into the complex issues surrounding valuable minerals, the Appalachian Mountain Club asks you to approach the issue with certain core principles in mind:

Maine's clean environment is our most valuable asset. Clean air, clean water, and natural beauty are the basis of our state's identity and economy. They are essential not only to our good health, but to our \$7 billion tourism economy. Clean water in particular is also essential to Maine's \$11.7 billion agricultural sector and our \$3.2 billion marine products sector.

Maine's water and air have not always been clean. Within living memory, our rivers carried an overpowering stench and fumes strong enough to peel the paint off nearby houses. They were cleaned through decades of collective work, strong environmental laws, and considerable investment. We must not backslide on the tremendous gains we have made.

Maine is home to exceptional fish that require clean water. Maine supports the most extensive distribution and abundance of wild Brook trout in their native range in the United States. Ours is one of only two states with populations of native Arctic charr, the other state being Alaska. Maine is home to the *only* U.S. population of the endangered Atlantic salmon. Each of these fish depends on cold, clean water, and their populations have survived thanks to decades of careful stewardship. We must not put the future of these extraordinary assets at risk.



We must anticipate and prepare for the full range of potential extraction proposals. While the six bills currently before you appear to be inspired by the Plumbago Mountain find of spodumene, any actions that you take should recognize the potential for other mineral extraction. As you know, Wolfden Mt. Chase LLC has a current application before the Land Use Planning Commission to rezone 374 acres in T6-R6 WELS for the purpose of developing and operating a metallic mineral mine at Pickett Mountain. Exiro Minerals Corporation is currently expressing interest in mining for nickel, copper, and cobalt near Crawford Pond in Union and Warren. Wolfden Resources previously conducted exploratory drilling in the Pembroke area, with the intent to mine silver at Big Hill, while J.D. Irving previously sought to mine copper and gold at Bald Mountain in Aroostook. Other proposals are certain to come forward, and Maine must prepare for the full range of potential scenarios.

Maine's residents, taxpayers, and wildlife must not pay the future price for mineral extraction. Fifty years after it closed, the Callahan mine in Brooksville remains a Superfund site, with taxpayers footing the bill for stabilization and clean up. The State of Maine sued Kerramerican, Black Hawk Mining, and Denison Mines, Inc. to recover its costs for addressing hazardous substances released into surface and groundwater at Blue Hill. We must learn from these experiences and prevent both future environmental harm and the expense of attempting to mitigate it.

We can take the time to get this right. Climate change is real, and we support the transition to new technologies to replace fossil fuels. At the same time, biodiversity loss is equally real and threatening to the future of life on Earth, with an estimated 69% drop in wildlife populations worldwide since 1970, according to the World Wildlife Fund. Both issues are complex and addressing them requires multiple solutions. We must approach the issue of mineral extraction with seriousness, gathering the facts and understanding the risks before making decisions.

We appreciate your work on behalf of the people of Maine and look forward to engaging with you on this and other issues going forward.

Sincerely,

Eliza Townsend
Maine Conservation Policy Director

PS: I highly recommend this terrific article on Maine's fisheries from the April 9 edition of the *Maine Sunday Telegram*: <https://www.pressherald.com/2023/04/09/maines-a-fishing-destination-for-out-of-staters-and-residents-alike/>