



April 12, 2023

## **Mahoosuc Land Trust Statement on Mining in the Mahoosuc Region**

### **To Whom it May Concern:**

**About the organization.** Mahoosuc Land Trust (MLT) serves western Maine and eastern Coos County, New Hampshire, with a mission “to *conserve and share the Mahoosuc region’s important natural lands with our communities, now and for the future.*” MLT has conserved roughly 22,000 acres through its publicly accessible preserves, and conservation easements on private lands. These include Androscoggin River boat landings, iconic summits like Rumford Whitecap and Puzzle Mountain, working farms and forests, and dozens of miles of multi-use recreational trails.

**Our tradition of conservation.** Since 1989, MLT has focused on those critical lands which protect biodiversity, water quality, and habitat connectivity, mitigate climate change, and deliver recreational, scenic, cultural, economic, spiritual, and ecological benefits. These lands include “working landscapes” contributing to local economies and quality of life, provided that they also support other conservation values. Increasingly, we see how the region depends on a tourism economy attracted to the region’s beautiful open space and high quality nature-based recreational offerings resulting from government and non-profit conservation. Today we also seek to better understand the Wabanaki cultural importance of the lands we steward.

**All land matters.** We also recognize that even though most land cannot be “preserved” in the traditional sense, that all land matters as we face global threats to our atmosphere and biological systems. That includes our working lands, backyards, schoolyards, and other spaces with more intensive land uses. Through our Habitat for All Program, we ask people to think differently about the cumulative impact of a multitude of actions to conserve species diversity in places where we live, work, and play. We must make the most of every scrap of land, no matter its condition.

**MLT and climate change.** On behalf of our 574 members, we are committed to addressing climate change consistent with our mission. Our forest conservation work is a key strategy to address the climate crisis by sequestering and storing carbon in trees, while also stemming the effect of forest fragmentation on biological diversity. Additionally, we are sharing new research with landowners that demonstrates that “climate smart” forest management strategies on their



lands can remove more carbon, while also improving habitat and producing more and better quality wood.

**MLT and mining.** MLT is not anti-mining, and we appreciate the long history of respectful quarrying and gem and mineral prospecting that is one of the hallmarks of the region. We are just beginning to gather information about the recent lithium discovery on Plumbago Mountain in Newry, Maine. It is our understanding that, once processed, it can be a component for clean energy technology (including electric vehicles) the widespread adoption of which is also a key strategy for attaining a low-carbon future to combat climate change.

The Plumbago lithium deposit sits squarely within MLT's Rumford Whitecap Mountain—Ellis River Focus Area in our 2020–2025 Strategic Conservation Plan. This designation is based on the area's long history of public access, its climate change resilient habitat, public drinking water protection values, and other ecosystem services. The focus area also includes Maine Natural Areas Program (MNAP) Focus Areas and MNAP Natural Communities—located on the opposite side of the Ellis River valley from Plumbago Mountain. We do not have adequate information at this time to understand how all of these values might be affected by significant mining operations, and we will seek knowledge and insights from geologists and other experts from sources such as the Maine Mineral & Gem Museum, the State Geologist's office, and others.

MLT appreciates the balancing act that is needed as any mining law changes or legislative proposals on this topic are considered. MLT will need to understand more fully the details of any proposals relating to mining in this area, and elsewhere in the region, using the lens of our mission and in support of decisions that sustain a healthy natural environment for our communities. MLT welcomes any and all conversations that allow us to deepen that understanding.

Sincerely,



Kirk Siegel  
Executive Director