

James Gehring
Bridgewater
LD 2274

My name is James Gehring, Service Officer for the Aroostook Veterans Alliance, located in Aroostook County, Maine. I was honored to be selected and serve on the Commission which developed the recommendations contained within LD 2274. It is critically important to the National Guard Personnel and their families who were exposed to all the chemicals that were sprayed at Camp Gagetown to receive the long-term treatments and medical attention that will be required now and in the future. The soldiers who served at Gagetown were exposed to the same harmful chemicals as the soldiers who served during the Vietnam War. However, the Veterans Administration does not recognize Gagetown as a presumptive Agent Orange site. As a result, Gagetown soldiers are not currently entitled to Veteran Administration benefits. During the past 50 years the Veterans Administration has continuously added Agent Orange sites to protect those soldiers and their families against the crippling affects of a variety of cancers and other medical issues. It was encouraging that the Commission recognized and voted unanimously to move forward with this endeavor to protect those soldiers who served at Gagetown, New Brunswick. We are hopeful that the Commission will be reestablished to rectify this issue and move forward with corrective recommendations.