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Testimony in opposition to LD 1772

Senator Boyle, Representative Welsh, members of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources:

My name is Alice Bolstridge. I was born in Portage Lake near Bald Mountain. The Hathaway Road that links Route 11 with the north basin of the lake was named for my grandparents. Fish River and in its tributary brooks provided much of the protein for our family and neighbors. I care deeply about this area of Aroostook County revered for fishing, hunting, recreation, and pristine beauty.

Researching mining safety and economic benefits, I see conflicts of interest in virtually all claims about the environmental safety of modern mining. An Irving employee was the presenter at one event I attended. At another event, 3 presenter-scientists all had close ties to the mining industry. The North Jackson Company, hired to write modernized regulations for Maine, says: "We pride ourselves in our long relationships with two major metallic mining companies" (http://www.nrcm.org/news_detail.asp?news=5075).

Important questions from audience members at a 3rd event did not get reassuring answers. Modern liners still develop leaks. Flooding, earthquakes, or other natural disasters can and do cause modern tailings ponds to fail. There are no examples of a modern mine using modern technology that has not polluted surrounding waters. Hydro-geologist Carol White explained, "Inherent in any of these studies is uncertainty . . . nobody can guarantee water quality in the future." Ramsey Hart, Canadian mining expert says, "There's almost no way Bald Mountain can be mined without polluting nearby water, potentially for thousands of years" (<http://bangordailynews.com/2012/09/27/news/portland/mining-bald-mountain-for-precious-metals-not-worth-the-environmental-risk-portland-speaker-says-2/>).

As a child I looked up at planes flying low overhead. DDT mist fell on my face. Pesticide industries denied for decades that DDT was harmful to the health of humans and wildlife. Tobacco industries denied for generations that smoking is hazardous to human health. Fossil fuel industries still deny that carbon emissions contribute to global warming. The mining industry, landowners, and Maine lawmakers who support rules that reduce protections are denying environmental hazards and costs of clean-up in perpetuity.

It's true, there is plenty of uncertainty in all areas of our lives, but we can choose to reduce this uncertainty by writing environmental protections that are more rather than less rigorous, such as those in LD 1302. Please, revive and support that bill, not LD 1722. "The Earth is our home; we must take care of it."