

*RE: LD 1771 "Resolve, Regarding Legislative Review of Portions of Chapter 13L Metallic Mineral Exploration, Advance Exploration and Mining, a Major Substantive Rule of the Maine Land Use Planning Commission"; and 1772 "Resolve, Regarding Legislative Review of Chapter 200: Metallic Mineral Exploration, Advanced Exploration of Mining, a Late-filed Major Substantive Rule of the Department of Environmental Protection"*

*Testimony by Brenda Commander, Chief, Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians  
February 24, 2014*

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Senator Boyle, Representative Welsh and distinguished members of the Environmental and Natural Resources Committee:

Good morning. My name is Brenda Commander. I am Chief of the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians. I am testifying in opposition to the State's proposed new mining rules.

During my 17 years as Chief, I have testified on a number of occasions regarding proposed legislation that could harm the health and welfare of my people, our traditional ways and ancient cultural ties to the environment. In all those years, the mining rules under consideration today represent the greatest threat yet of widespread, long term environmental damage to all that my Tribe holds dear; damage to our homeland and our Wolastoq, the "beautiful, flowing river," that gives Maliseet People our name and that you know as the St. John.

We Maliseets traditionally fish, trap, hunt, and gather in and around the land and waters of the Wolastoq. Water is sacred to us.

A proposal to mine at Bald Mountain in Aroostook County, Maine is on the table right now. Our Water Resource Specialist tells me that a previous study done by Boliden, a Swedish mining company, concluded that the

Bald Mountain site has such high sulfur content that mining operations would not be possible without severe negative impacts to surface water quality.

We submitted specific recommendations during the rule-making process that would have strengthened environmental safeguards and addressed tribal-specific concerns. None of our tribal-specific recommendations were even considered.

Mining and mining exploration also presents substantial potential to disturb or destroy invaluable, even sacred, Wabanaki cultural resources; yet there is no requirement to notify Wabanaki Tribes of proposed mining activity.

Mining standards in the proposed rules provide no buffer between mining activity and tribal land; unlike for lands which the State of Maine values. For Tribal people, our lands represent the last remnants of our homeland where we can practice our hunter-gatherer traditions and sustain them for our children and future generations.

Given the weakness of these new rules, our leadership, elders, youth, and our entire community are frightened by the prospect of a mine at Bald Mountain in Aroostook County. But we know also that these rules would apply to the entire State of Maine. The health and welfare of all Maine people, now and for many generations to come, depends on clean water.

I urge you to reject these rules.

Woliwon. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.