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Testimony in opposition to LD 1772 (Resolve, Regarding Legislative Review of Chapter 200: Metallic Mineral Exploration, Advanced Exploration and Mining, a Late-filed Major Substantive Rule of the Department of Environmental Protection)

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

My name is Shelly Mountain and I live in Mapleton, in Aroostook. I am from Portage and I own a camp on the lake there. At a previous hearing here about mining some testified that this issue should not be decided on emotion. I am not sure what that means since their testimony for relaxing mining rules was based on the very emotional issue of job creation. Perhaps what they meant was that they didn't feel that the very certain negative environmental impacts of mining were important, that we should only consider economic impacts.

I have been considering the economic impacts. I have no desire to sell the camp I own. I inherited it, it is a family gathering place, and I hope to leave it to my children. Suppose that mining creates a boom to the economy of Portage for 5-10 years. My already high property taxes will rise even more for that time. Then when the mine is gone and the toxins it has exposed start leaking into Portage Lake my property will have little value as a family gathering place and I won't be able to sell it if I wanted to. That is an economic loss.

I know that the claim is that "modern technology" will prevent this scenario and I have been to many informational meetings where speakers are supposed to convince me of this. In January Maine State Geologist, Dr. Robert Marvinney and water specialist, Carol White spoke at one of those meetings in Ashland. It seems that this "modern technology" involves lining the pit, throwing in the tailings, and covering them with waste rock, lime, manure, bactericides, and water. When Dr. Marvinney was asked if the plastic liners ever fail he responded that he "supposed there was potential for leaks." He said that impoundment of tailings are a significant problem at any mine.

Ms. White talked about using bactericides to reduce environmental impacts. I asked her about impacts from the use of bactericides. She responded that it would be similar to using pesticides; there is always risk. The "modern technology" that we will use to reduce toxins in the water will be to introduce another toxin. I asked Dr. Marvinney for an example of mine that had been successfully closed. The example he gave was the Flambeau Mine in Wisconsin. I Googled it and the first thing that came up was a Milwaukee Journal article about how 14 years after closure the mine was leaking toxins into the Flambeau River. I asked Dr. Marvinney about that and his response was that it depends on which scientist you believe and there is disagreement about whether its closure was successful.

Perhaps when people argue that you should ignore emotion when deciding this issue they really mean that you should suspend disbelief, that you should believe them when they tell you a mine continuing to leak toxins into the water many years after closure is a success. I would like to do that. I would like to

believe that mining Bald Mountain will economically revive Aroostook, that arsenic, sulfuric acid and other toxins flowing into the Fish River Chain will not devastate the industries that rely on a healthy, sustainable environment. I would like to believe that "modern technology" can perform miracles. I can't. Please don't sacrifice Aroostook's environmental and economic future for this get rich quick scheme.

Thank you.