



September 26, 2023

Dear Chairman Worcester and members of the Land Use Planning Commission (LUPC):

We are **Citizens Against Residential Mining Activity (CARMA)**, a Maine non-profit corporation with a board comprised of Warren, Union, and Hope residents. Please visit our website at <https://carmamaine.com/>. We represent our hundreds of members, volunteers and supporters in protecting our towns from a Canadian mining company (Exiro Minerals) seeking to mine metallic minerals in Knox County. We join with residents and groups opposing Wolfden Resources' petition to rezone nearly 400 acres near Pickett Mountain in Penobscot County to allow for a mining operation.

1. Background.

Last winter Canadian mining company Exiro Minerals came to Warren and Union attempting to garner support for metallic mineral mining within a thirty-square-mile area that encompasses our towns. Like the areas around Pickett Mountain, our towns are rich in life-sustaining natural resources -- in particular, clean water and forested and arable land. While some in Maine's north consider the Midcoast a world away, these Canadian companies are using the same false narrative with both our communities and are asking both of us to weigh the value of using and preserving our life-sustaining natural resources against the value of extracting, processing, and transporting another one of our natural resources, our metallic minerals. This is not Wolfden's first rodeo in Maine. They tried the same thing in Pembroke before residents there mobilized to drive them out.

2. The Decision on Wolfden's Appeal Impacts the Entire State of Maine.

It is important to see that the LUPC's decision on Wolfden's petition will impact other parts of Maine outside of the Pickett Mountain area. Mining interests and their investors are closely watching the State's willingness to loosen its protections, change its laws, and make exceptions to accommodate and buy into the false narrative being promoted by mining companies. Your decision on Wolfden's petition will communicate to these companies what the State values and whether it places greater weight on its natural beauty and traditional economies than on the development of metal mining and processing.

3. Mining Companies Promote a False Narrative.

Let's look at the common false narrative Wolfden and Exiro promote. **First**, these mining companies say that new mining techniques are safe for people and the environment.

“This is not the mining that your parents knew,” they assert. **Second**, they promise good jobs to local people. **Third**, they say they want to partner with the local community. Exiro’s presentation in Union is online and is worth watching for the responses of its CEO.¹ Asked about the risks of today’s mining, the CEO (Shastri Ramnath) was stunningly candid:

“Tailings dam failures where people have died, hundreds have died . . . There are a lot of bad things that could happen . . . we are people who do not want to do that . . . but you hear about it . . . the worst case is loss of life and also environmental damage.”

In her introductory presentation, Ms. Ramnath talked about the potential for job growth in “peripheral roles” including truck driving, catering and “camp services” — all relatively low pay work. She also said that nurses would be needed, presumably to address the injury and health risks associated with working in mines. Asked in the Q&A about jobs for mine workers themselves, she replied that the mines in Canada:

“often have rotational positions and what happens is that at the mine, people rotate in for two weeks and rotate out . . . there is always that possibility . . . and maybe there are certain aspects of the mine we’d have to bring people in.”

At the Warren meeting, Ms. Ramnath was asked who would profit from a mine. She responded: Exiro would “make in the millions,” property owners who have deposits and who allow mining on their land “would make a lot,” and townspeople could invest in company shares if they wanted to.² Maybe by “partnering with the community” these companies mean sponsoring little league teams and holding cookouts because they certainly do not mean sharing the wealth.

In the time since Exiro approached our communities eight months ago, the residents of Union, Hope and Warren have opposed them loudly. Union voters overwhelmingly passed an ordinance by citizens’ petition restricting metallic mineral mining. We anticipate the Town of Hope to put a similarly restrictive ordinance to a vote soon. The Town of Warren has implemented a moratorium on metallic mineral exploration and mining while it revises its existing metallic mineral mining ordinance. The overwhelming opposition to metallic mineral extraction and processing in the Midcoast comes from concerns over human health and environmental impact, as well as a mining operation’s effect on local business and our small-town, rural culture. Our existing local economy is based on agribusiness and our natural amenities. We have farms of all types, craft breweries, and organic wineries, and our economies rely on the draw of our land, water, and scenic amenities for fishermen, hunters,

¹ Videotape of Exiro presentation in Union February 15, 2023. https://townhallstreams.com/stream.php?location_id=140&id=51043

² Notes of Peter Croce from the Exiro meeting in Warren, February 16, 2023.

families with generational seasonal homes, and summer visitors to our campgrounds and youth summer camps. Please see the Penobscot Bay Pilot's Letter to the Editor "Forty-five local Union, Warren business owners endorse public letter opposing metallic mining in their towns" linked below.³

4. We Cannot Have Both Beautiful Natural Resources and Mining in the Same Place.

Let's turn to the big dilemma Exiro and Wolfden pose to the State of Maine itself. Their advances force us to articulate what we value. Do we want to protect our life-sustaining natural resources and the local and state economies that rely on those resources, or do we want to open the door to metallic mineral extraction, processing, and transportation? We cannot have both. No matter how voluminous a mining application is or how strongly mining companies assert that they will do everything in their power not to pollute, the risk is too high of permanently destroying what our local and State economies have relied on for hundreds of years.

Moreover, while we can have clean water, uncontaminated land, and transformative beauty now and decide later that we want to mine, we cannot have the reverse. By statute, a metallic mineral mine must remediate after closure, and a century later that area *may* look the way it used to, but the maintenance into perpetuity of tailings facilities and water treatment plants poses perpetual risk to soil and water resources. The area cannot return to its original state and must be under human care forever. Asking mining companies and their financial investors -- the majority of whom have no connection to the local area or to the State of Maine -- to commit to long-term monitoring and remediation is unrealistic.

5. Maine's Natural Beauty Offers More Economic Value Than Mining Does.

Consider in this calculation the value of wilderness in the Pickett Mountain area. The State's website "visitmaine.com" touts the Maine Highlands (of which the proposed mine would be a part) as a place of "sheer natural beauty" with a "level of adventure, discovery, and serenity you'll encounter nowhere else." Maine uses the area's stunning vistas, pristine water, and forested mountains to lure businesses, workers, and tourists to the state. If Wolfden's mine is like other metallic mineral mines, it would be a massive, noisy, stadium-lit, eyesore running 24/7/365 complete with periodic ground rumbling from the underground blasting. And that is not counting the trucks going to and from the processing facility and tailings holding facility, both likely to be in the Maine Highlands as well.

Metallic mineral mining is incompatible with what the Maine Department of Tourism holds the area out to be. There would be no more "scenic" in the Aroostook Scenic Highway

³ Penobscot Bay Pilot, August 2, 2023. <https://www.penbaypilot.com/article/forty-five-local-union-warren-business-owners-endorse-public-letter-opposing-mining-t/172169>

which runs beside Pickett Mountain, and there would be no more “dark sky” for the International Dark Sky Sanctuary in Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument. There is no hiding a metallic mineral mining complex and its truck traffic.

Consider also the future economic opportunities that will be eliminated if mining is allowed. Wilderness areas make money, and they will make even more money in the future as they become rarer. Look at how the local community around Acadia National Park has profited in just the last ten years. In 2012, Acadia created 3,140 local jobs and contributed an estimated \$201 million to the local economy. In 2022, Acadia created 6,920 jobs and contributed \$483 million to the local economy.⁴ We are not arguing that the Pickett Mountain area will be the next Acadia, but with its forests and pristine cold water fish habitat, the Katahdin/Pickett Mountain area is particularly suited to the development of adventure tourism. Senators King and Collins are on record saying this same thing.⁵ It would be economically shortsighted to put an industrial complex — especially a metal mine — in the middle of an area with this much potential for substantial, sustained revenue from adventure tourism.

Opening the lens wider, consider also that aquifers across the United States are at historically low levels because of over-pumping by ever-expanding cities and big agriculture. What we thought would never run out, is running out. Of note, at a critically low level is the Ogallala Aquifer which underlies eight midwestern states and which is the U.S.’s largest aquifer.⁶ Maine is exceptional for its abundant, clean water, and the water around Pickett Mountain is pristine. It is hard to predict what water scarcity will do to where Americans live, where businesses locate, and how we get our water, but, for certain, Maine needs to do everything in its power to protect its fresh water and avoid anything that risks harming it.

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Thank you for reading our letter. Send the right message to all mining interests watching Wolfden’s petition unfold. Declare loudly that the great State of Maine will not

⁴ “Tourism to Acadia National Park contributed \$479 million to Local economy in 2022,” National Park Service, August 30, 2023. <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/socialscience/vse.htm>

⁵ “Legislation Would Allow Expansion of Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument,” National Parks Traveler, September, 2022. <https://www.nationalparkstraveler.org/2022/09/legislation-would-allow-expansion-katahdin-woods-and-waters-national-monument>

⁶ “America Is Using Up Its Groundwater Like There’s No Tomorrow,” *Uncharted Waters* series, The New York Times, September 2, 2023. This article is available without subscription from WaterWatch <https://waterwatch.org/america-is-using-up-its-groundwater-like-theres-no-tomorrow/>

sacrifice its most valuable resources — its water and natural beauty — in order to profit mining companies.

Respectfully,

The Board of Directors and Founders of CARMA

Janan Archibald (Union)	Jake Stamp (Warren)
Lori Bailey (Union)	Bill Stinson (Union)
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