

*Re: Draft Chapter 200: Metallic Mineral Exploration, Advanced Exploration and Mining*

*Testimony by Brenda Commander, Chief, Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians  
September 15, 2016*

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Good morning. My name is Brenda Commander. I am Chief of the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians. I am testifying – one again- in opposition to a State proposal of weak mining rules.

After attending a number of public hearings around revising mining rules for the state of Maine, my general comment is – we need to do a lot better if we are going to have strong, protective mining rules necessary to protect Maine’s rivers, lakes and streams and its precious groundwater for the health and welfare of the people of Maine.

The rest of my comments focus on those issues that are Tribal government-specific.

In past testimony tribal representatives have asked that

- Public Notice provisions include tribal notification,
- Tribal consultation be required regarding tribal historic/archaeological resources that could be affected by mining activities,
- All tribal lands be included in the list of resources provided a buffer from mining activity, and

- Tribes be eligible for intervenor status given the potential for significant impacts to resources of great importance to tribal cultural traditions and practices.

None of these requests have been honored in this latest proposal.

Mining and mining exploration, especially near water, could disturb or – more likely - 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 a buffer between mining and lands which the state of Maine values. Yet, there is no such protection for our lands which represent the last remnants of our homeland where we can practice our hunter-gatherer traditions and sustain them for our children and future generations.

We ask the State of Maine to be a good neighbor and honor these requests.

I have one Council member with me today, Linda Raymond, who will provide additional testimony. We are also submitting more detailed comments in writing.

Woliwon. Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony.