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# Wolfden project can set standard to improve mining worldwide

by **Opinion Contributor**

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A view of Pickett Mountain and Pickett Mountain Pond, which could serve as the site of a new minerals mine by Canadian mining company Wolfden Resources. Credit: Courtesy of the Maine Land Use Planning Commission

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Recently there have been **public hearings** held on whether to allow the **Pickett Mountain Project**, a proposed copper, zinc, gold and silver mine, to move forward. I testified in support of the project at those hearings, which as a lobbyist with Democratic Party loyalties had some of my colleagues asking “why?”

I am not just a political consultant, I am also a hunting guide who recently bought a lodge in Sherman, just south of the proposed mine. As such my opinion on this matter, and domestic mining in general, is informed by the local economics, national economics, global environmentalism and national security.

You see, it is easy to find the pitfalls in any project when you do not consider the totality of the problem the project aims to fix. My belief is more pragmatic; that as humans we can live a balanced existence here on earth, promote conservation, promote rewilding much of our forests as well as benefit from the resources provided to us. None of this is mutually exclusive, we can do it all.

The computer that I type this on, the phone I will no doubt answer twice while I write this and the cables that connect my computer to the Bangor Daily News are all made possible by the minerals that Wolfden is asking to mine. Some folks hear they want to mine gold and silver and think “great, they’re going to rip up a mountain so that the bourgeoisie can have jewelry.” Wrong. Copper, gold and silver are the best electricity conductors at room temperature. So, for any consumer or industrial computing or communication needs, they are absolutely invaluable. From Macbooks to mammograms, these metals are present and necessary in nearly every aspect of our lives.

“In 2020, China was by far the world’s leading mining country based on mineral production value, reporting over 217 billion U.S. dollars in metallic mineral and coal production value, “according to Statista. The article goes on to say that the U.S. did about \$55 billion worth of mining in 2020, about 25 percent of China’s output. This has serious environmental and national security implications. China already controls much of the world’s manufacturing, but they also control a good chunk of the global metals market.

This presents an environmental concern, because of its open pit mines and almost non-existent environmental regulation. It presents a national security problem because China can manipulate these metal markets for its own gain. Slowing supply to increase price and starve our industry, or even shutting off its exports, totally crippling the global electronics market. Remember, everything with a screen uses these metals, especially military equipment.

Similarly, in South America illegal gold miners use mercury to separate gold from the ore, then release it into the environment. In Maine, we know all too well the dangers of mercury when it is released uncontrolled into our woods and waters.

Wolfden’s mine would not do this. In fact, the mine is proposed to be completely underground, replaces the mined ore with inert ore so as to prevent collapse, has an extensive water treatment facility built in and overall would be among the most state-of-the-art mines in the world.

Not to mention, I have full faith in our government to ensure that Wolfden’s words are met with the action it speaks of. I know and trust our elected officials and bureaucrats to execute their duty to ensure that the mine is above the standard that they lay out. From my interactions with the folks at Wolfden in their Patten office, I trust them with our state’s land.

The Pickett project is not the cure all for abhorrent mining practices around the world. However, supporting the Pickett project is what you and I can do to combat the illegal gold mines and open-pit mines in China and the environmental and security threats that they produce. When Wolfden brings their ethically sourced metals to the global market, using the most state-of-the-art methods of procuring them, it could put the international mining community on notice that their destructive and dangerous mining methods days are numbered.

Maine's copper, gold and silver could become the gold standard and path forward for global mining operations to lower their environmental impact, pay their employees fair wages and when they are done, leave their mining site with the ability to be returned back to nature. We have a responsibility as Mainers who care both about the economy and environment, to take a global view; understand that by allowing this responsible mine we can push back on the true environmental catastrophes around the world.

Part of my ideology as a Democrat is weighing economic, environmental and human needs when I decide what to support or oppose. This project has a large economic benefit for the local region, mitigates environmental concerns and promotes our progress as humans toward a world where we can have both; the electronics we have grown to require and the earth we need to survive.

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