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Environmental Assessment Branch  
Nova Scotia Environment  
P.O. Box 442  
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Halifax, Nova Scotia  
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**Re: Public submission for Miller's Creek Mine Extension review**

November 23, 2009

To whom it may concern:

Upon reviewing the focus report for the Miller's Creek Mine Extension project, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) has determined that the proposed undertaking MUST undergo a full environmental assessment. A higher level of scrutiny afforded by the full environmental assessment is required to help ensure that there are no significant adverse environmental impacts on the ecology of this extremely important place. CPAWS is a non-government organization working to protect Canada's wilderness; with 20,000 members and 13 offices across the country.

Of particular concern to CPAWS are the cumulative impacts of gypsum mining across the province, without a comprehensive assessment and conservation plan in place for protecting gypsum/karst landscapes from over-exploitation. Indeed, many strip mining projects are underway to extract gypsum from various locations across Nova Scotia, some with very large open-pit mines and a huge impact on the natural environment. At the moment, the protection of gypsum/karst areas within the province's system of protected areas is extremely under-represented. Less than 1% of gypsum/karst areas are included within the boundaries of a permanently designated protected areas. This situation needs to change. The provincial government needs to carry out a provincewide, scientific assessment of gypsum/karst areas to prioritize this component of our landscape for conservation. This work must be carried out BEFORE any further gypsum mines are established, or expanded. In the absence of such an assessment, it is not possible to assess the significance of one gypsum/karst area against others, with any sort of meaningful context. Without this information, the province runs the risk of approving developments and undertakings in gypsum/karst areas where they are NOT appropriate.

Irreplaceable components of our natural heritage are at risk of being lost as mining projects are approved in these areas before sufficient conservation measures can be put in place. Gypsum/karst zones are known areas of high biodiversity in the province, important for concentrations of biodiversity, species-at-risk, significant wetlands, and important vascular plant populations.

CPAWS is not satisfied with the conservation measures proposed by the Proponent to safeguard the significant natural features associated with the gypsum/karst areas. Of particular concern is the hugely disproportionate inclusion of active mining areas in comparison to conservation areas. The proponent proposes 347 ha of mine expansion, with only 46 hectares of conservation zones. This sort of ratio of development to conservation is grossly inadequate. In other jurisdictions, a ratio of 1:20 has been used in favour of conservation. For every one hectare of land used for mining, twenty hectares of land are set aside for conservation. If approved, the proposal presented by the Proponent for Miller's Creek Mine Extension for conservation offsets would set a very dangerous precedent for Nova Scotia that could effectively undermine other conservation projects.

CPAWS is also unimpressed with the conservation measures proposed by the company to ensure that the 46 ha conservation zone is protected in perpetuity. The proponent does NOT propose any significant measures to ensure permanency for the conservation designation and has failed in having a nature reserve designation placed on the lands or a conservation easement embedded in the deed to ensure it is protected forever. **Simply stating that the company will ensure that the area will always be protected doesn't actually ensure that the area will always be protected.** (e.g. *"The Conservation Area will be undisturbed by the proposed Project, and will be protected by CGC to ensure it remains undisturbed"* pg. iii, focus report). CPAWS also does not agree that the proposed undertaking will not have any significant adverse impacts on the conservation area (e.g. *"None of the environmental parameters within the Conservation Area are expected to be significantly adversely affected by the proposed Project"* pg. ii, focus report). Also, an insufficient number of environmental parameters have been used to assess the potential impacts on the conservation area, and the focus report fails to consider impacts from fragmentation, loss of intactness, connectivity of natural landscape, etc., etc.

A full environmental assessment is needed to properly assess the likely impacts associated with this undertaking. CPAWS respectfully requests that the provincial government proceed in this direction. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this review. If you have any questions or would like to follow up, please do not hesitate to be in touch.

Sincerely

*Signed in original*

Chris Miller, Ph.D.

National Manager,  
Wilderness Conservation and Climate Change  
Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society