International Joint Commission Hearing

Max S. Baucus

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Senator * or Department*: **BAUCUS**

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* "required information"
Mr. Chairman, members of the commission, let me begin by welcoming you to Montana.

As you know I have been concerned about the Cabin Creek coal mine for a long time.

The Cabin Creek coal mine threatens to degrade the water, diminish fish and wildlife resources and pollute the air of Glacier National Park and the Flathead Lake and River. I urge you to ensure that these great national treasures are not degraded.
I urge that the Commission take the action needed to end our fear that the quality of life in the Flathead will be worsened because of this mine.

In 1974, I personally visited with Premier Bennett to express my concerns over this proposal. Only two weeks ago, I was with Premier Bennett where once again I spoke out for protection of the Flathead. Over the past eleven years, I have met with numerous Federal and Provincial officials to alert them of my concerns.

During that time period we were not sitting idly by. We armed ourselves with solid scientifically based data to measure any impacts. We are continuing to build upon that data base.

Data collected through the Flathead River Basin environmental impact study provides a solid foundation for this Commission to base its review.

The task before you is not an easy one. The future of the Flathead Valley, the Flathead River,
Flathead Lake and Glacier National Park, rests on your shoulders.

A delicate and tenuous balance between nature and man has evolved in the Flathead. Our environment here is unmatched anywhere in the lower 48 states.

Flathead Lake, the largest natural body of water west of the Mississippi River is a potable source of water for those who reside along its shoreline.

The Flathead River and its three forks are nationally renowned for their quality. They are part of the National, Wild, Scenic and Recreational River System -- and thereby protected. The North Fork of the Flathead River, because of its location within Glacier National Park, is afforded additional protection.

Glacier National Park is an international peace park and the first international World Biosphere. The park is a mecca for both fish and
WILDLIFE - GRIZZLY BEARS, BIGHORN SHEEP, MOUNTAIN GOATS, BULL TROUT, CUT-THROAT TROUT, WOLVES, DEER, ELK, MOOSE, EAGLES, BLACK BEARS AND MOUNTAIN LIONS.

Almost 1 million acres -- in the 5.5 million acre drainage above Flathead Lake -- are protected from development. That's an area almost four times as large as the entire British Columbia portion of the drainage.

The remaining areas of the Flathead -- where people live and work -- have been used carefully to maintain their high environmental quality.

To Montanans maintaining the environmental quality of this area is critically important.

On the British Columbia side of the border, some of the most intensive timber harvesting and oil and gas exploration found anywhere in the entire drainage has occurred. Yet overall, its natural environment has been protected.
The Cabin Creek Coal Mine threatens to destroy this balance.

The Mine is a massive development. It dwarfs any land use that we are used to. Because of that minor miscalculations in planning and design could lead to catastrophe. Sedimentation, releases of toxic pollutants, fouled air, lost fish habitat and vanished wildlife could be the result of poorly planned development.

However the economics of this mine make it difficult to take the action needed to prevent these kinds of catastrophes. There is no guarantee that this pollution will not cross the boundary.

As you conduct your work, I urge you to adopt several standards. First, the mine must cause no pollution in Montana. This standard is embodied in the Boundary Waters Treaty.

Specifically, this Commission needs to carefully examine whether or not the proposed mine
DESIGN WILL WITHSTAND THE VULGARITIES OF WEATHER AND TIME.

IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO ENSURE THAT THERE IS A REASONABLE CHANCE OF THE MINE OPERATING IN AN ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE MATTER.

THIS COMMISSION MUST GO BEYOND THAT POINT AND PROVIDE GUARANTEES TO THE PEOPLE IN THE FLATHEAD AND THE ENTIRE UNITED STATES THAT THE ENVIRONMENT OF THE FLATHEAD RIVER WILL BE PROTECTED.

THE STANDARD OF REVIEW SHOULD BE THE STANDARD THAT CURRENTLY EXISTS IN THE NORTH FORK FLATHEAD RIVER TODAY.

SIMILARLY, THE IMPACTS ON FISH AND WILDLIFE SHOULD BE EVALUATED USING A STANDARD BASED ON WHAT CURRENTLY EXISTS THERE TODAY.

YOU ALSO MUST NOT LOSE SIGHT OF THE FACT THAT THE RIVER FLOWS THROUGH GLACIER NATIONAL PARK, AND SO WILL ANY POLLUTION FROM THE MINE. GLACIER NATIONAL PARK HAS SOME OF THE HIGHEST
RESOURCE VALUES OF ANY NATIONAL PARK IN OUR SYSTEM.

THIS MINE HAS TREMENDOUS POTENTIAL TO ADVERSELY IMPACT THE MOST REMOTE PORTION OF THE PARK.

IN CONSIDERING THE PROXIMITY OF THIS MINE TO GLACIER NATIONAL PARK YOU NEED TO REMEMBER THAT WHEN GLACIER AND WATERTON WERE JOINED AS AN INTERNATIONAL PEACE PARK, IT WAS ALWAYS ENVISIONED THAT A BRITISH COLUMBIA PORTION OF THE PARK WOULD EVENTUALLY ROUND OUT THE ECOSYSTEM.

THIS AREA HAS NOW BEEN LOGGED AND EXPLORED INTENSIVELY FOR OIL AND GAS. THE CABIN CREEK COAL MINE PROPOSAL WOULD BE LOCATED A SHORT DISTANCE ACROSS THE RIVER FROM THIS AREA.

WHILE DEVELOPMENT HAS PRECLuded A BRITISH COLUMBIA NATIONAL PARK PROPOSAL, WE SHOULD NOT LOSE SIGHT OF THE NEED TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES THAT FIRST CAUSED THIS AREA TO BE PUT FORWARD FOR PARK PROTECTION.
It is these values that this Commission needs to strive to protect.

The task before you is not an easy one. All eyes will be upon you.

The costs are too high, you must not fail in your endeavors.