

SAVE OAK FLAT



Background

International mining giant, Rio Tinto, is proposing the Resolution Copper Mine east of Superior, Arizona on the Tonto National Forest and traditional lands of the Western Apache. The mine would destroy Oak Flat, including the campground and thousands of additional acres of public land. The project includes an underground block cave mine that would create a crater roughly two miles wide and 1,000 feet deep right there at Oak Flat due to subsidence of the land. The mine would also dump nearly 1.4 billion tons of toxic mining waste into an unlined tailings dump -- the preferred alternative tailings site will ultimately cover six square miles with a dam 490 feet high. This mine would use significant amounts of water -- enough to supply the City of Tempe, Arizona, for 40 years. This at a time when climate change is intensifying our droughts and contributing to less water flowing in our rivers and streams.

Oak Flat is sacred to Indigenous people, including the Apache, and is on the National Register of

Historic Places (NRHP) as a traditional cultural property (TCP), the *Chí'chil Bitdagoteel* historic district. It is a world class recreational area, attracting climbers from all over, not to mention a place of biological diversity. Several endangered species will be harmed by the mine, including the Arizona hedgehog cactus, yellow-billed cuckoo, and narrow-headed garter snake.

For more than a decade, Resolution Copper pursued legislation in the U.S. Congress to facilitate an exchange of Oak Flat for other lands with Resolution Copper but was only able to win its passage when it was included in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). Subsequent to the passage of this proposed exchange as part of the NDAA, the Forest Service initiated the National Environmental Policy Act process and developed a final environmental impact statement (FEIS) on the project which was rushed out in the waning days of the Trump administration. While that FEIS has been withdrawn under the new administration for additional consultation with the affected Tribes, a long-term solution is desperately needed to permanently protect Oak Flat from a company – Rio Tinto – that has terrible history relative to destroying sacred Indigenous sites, including the destruction of a 46,000-year-old Aboriginal heritage site in Australia just last year.

That is why it is important that the U.S House of Representatives move forward with the Save Oak Flat Act and work to assure its passage in the U.S. Senate as well.

Take Action!

The Save Oak Flat Act, [H.R.1884](#), in the House and [S.195](#) in the Senate, has been introduced in Congress. Please ask your U.S. Senators and Representative to co-sponsor and support these bills to rescind the land exchange that will facilitate the destruction of Oak Flat. This is an opportunity to help protect the religious freedom of Indigenous people, save an important recreational area, and protect the plants and animals that inhabit this biologically rich part of the Tonto National Forest.

You can take action here <https://addup.sierraclub.org/campaigns/save-oak-flat-and-stop-rio-tintos-destructive-copper-mine> or contact your members of Congress directly.

Thank you for taking action to protect Oak Flat!

