

**SALT RIVER PIMA-MARICOPA  
INDIAN COMMUNITY**  
10,005 East Osborn Road  
Scottsdale, Arizona 85256

**RESOLUTION NUMBER: SR-3863-2021**

**RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF H.R. 1884, COMMONLY KNOWN AS THE SAVE OAK FLAT ACT, TO REPEAL SECTION 3003 OF THE CARL LEVIN AND HOWARD P. "BUCK" MCKEON NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2015**

- WHEREAS,** Article VII, Section 1 (c)(10) of the Constitution of the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community ("Community") authorizes the Community Council to preserve historic and prehistoric arts, crafts, sites and other things culturally important to the Onk Akimel O'Odham and Xalychidom Piipaash; and
- WHEREAS,** Article VII, Section 1 (k) of the Community's Constitution authorizes the Community Council to make all laws and take such action as shall be necessary and proper for carrying into execution the foregoing powers vested by the Constitution; and
- WHEREAS,** the Community is a federally recognized Indian Tribe organized pursuant to the provisions of Section 16 of the Indian Reorganization Act of June 18, 1934 (48 Stat. 984); and
- WHEREAS,** through treaties with the United States, federal laws mandating the allotment of Indian lands, and other U.S. takings, tribal nations lost hundreds of millions of acres of tribal homelands to help build this country; and
- WHEREAS,** federal lands are carved out of the ancestral lands of tribal nations and the historical and spiritual connections of Native Americans to these lands have not been extinguished; and
- WHEREAS,** some of these lands contain the remains of our ancestors and Native Americans continue to pray, hold ceremonies, and gather traditional and medicinal plants on these lands; and
- WHEREAS,** the United States government has legal and moral obligations to provide access to these ancestral lands to Native Americans and to protect these traditional cultural territories in a manner that respects the cultural, historical, spiritual and religious importance of these lands to tribal nations; and

- WHEREAS,** for more than ten years, tribes throughout Indian country have considered and rejected legislation titled the “Southeast Arizona Land Exchange and Conservation Act” (“the Land Exchange”) that proposed a mandatory conveyance of National Forest Service lands to Resolution Copper, a private mining company owned by the foreign mining giants Rio Tinto PLC (United Kingdom) and BHP Billiton Ltd (Australia), in order to facilitate the development of a massive and unprecedented block cave copper mining project; and
- WHEREAS,** pursuant to §3003 of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2015 (NDAA), Congress authorized the transfer of all right, title, and interest of the United States in approximately 2,242 acres federal lands in the Tonto National Forest, commonly known as Oak Flat but known to Apaches as Chi’chil Bildagoteel, in exchange for all right, title, and interest in specifically identified non-federal lands held by Resolution Copper; and
- WHEREAS,** Oak Flat is part of the ancestral homelands of the Western Apache, Yavapai, Hopi, Zuni, and O’odham people; and
- WHEREAS,** Oak Flat is a place filled with power – a place where Native people have, since time immemorial, continued to go to for prayer, to conduct ceremonies such as Holy Ground and the Apache Puberty Rite Ceremony that some refer to as the Sunrise Dance, which celebrates a young woman’s coming of age, to gather medicines and ceremonial items, and to seek and obtain peace and personal cleansing; and
- WHEREAS,** Oak Flat has and continues to play an essential role in Apache, Yavapai, Hopi, Zuni, and O’odham religion, traditions, and culture for centuries and is a holy site and traditional cultural property with deep tribal religious, cultural, archaeological, historical and environmental significance; and
- WHEREAS,** on March 4, 2016, Oak Flat was listed on the National Park Service’s National Register of Historic Places as a Traditional Cultural Property; and
- WHEREAS,** the Land Exchange circumvents federal laws that mandate protection of Native American religion and culture and circumvents federal laws that mandate protection of the environment; and
- WHEREAS,** the Inter Tribal Association of Arizona (“ITAA”), an association of 21 tribal governments in Arizona, provides a forum for tribal governments to advocate for national, regional and specific tribal concerns and to join in united action to address these issues; and
- WHEREAS,** the ITAA has passed resolutions opposing the Land Exchange and has joined hundreds of tribal nations, Native organizations and others in opposition to the Land Exchange, because the proposal will destroy the religious and cultural integrity of Oak Flat, and set dangerous precedent for all of Indian Country by conveying federal

lands that encompass a known Native sacred area to a private company for mining activities; and

**WHEREAS,** by standing resolution #REN-13-019, National Congress of American Indians (“NCAI”) has opposed the Land Exchange (H.R. 1904 and H.R. 687, and S. 339), the Southeast Land Exchange, and has joined hundreds of tribal nations, tribal organizations and others in opposition to the Land Exchange; and

**WHEREAS,** over united opposition by NCAI, ITAA member tribes, and other tribal nations, and organizations across the country, the Southeast Arizona Land Exchange legislation was attached to the FY 2015 National Defense Authorization Act and enacted in December 2014; and

**WHEREAS,** under Section 3003, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) must begin implementation of the Land Exchange, which includes conducting an Environmental Impact Statement (“EIS”) of the Land Exchange and government-to-government consultation with impacted Indian tribes – but which also includes a mandatory transfer of Oak Flat to the foreign-owned mining corporation regardless of the findings of the Environmental Impact Statement and tribal government consultation; and

**WHEREAS,** the U.S. Forest Service, in carrying out the directives of Section 3003 published the Draft Environmental Impact Statement of the Land Exchange and mine project; and

**WHEREAS,** the National Congress of American Indians (“NCAI”) recently reaffirmed its commitment to strongly advocate for the protection of Native American sacred places in accordance with its 2002 Policy Statement, NCAI standing resolution #PHX-08-069c, “NCAI Policy Statement on Sacred Places,” NCAI standing resolution #SD-02-002, “Essential Elements of Public Policy to Protect Native Sacred Spaces,” and other resolutions that oppose mining that harms sacred places.

**WHEREAS,** by standing Resolution No. MSP-15-001, the NCAI expressed its support for the Repeal of Section 3003 of the FY 2015 National Defense Authorization Act, the Southeast Arizona Land Exchange; and

**WHEREAS,** on January 15, just five days before President Biden was sworn in, the Forest Service published the Final Environmental Impact Statement (“FEIS”) for the Resolution Copper Mine starting a 60-day clock that will transfer sacred Chí’chil Bildagoteel, but the FEIS is inadequate; and

**WHEREAS,** three separate government agencies have each objected to the FEIS – the Arizona State Land Department, the federal Environmental Protection Agency and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation; and

**WHEREAS,** the San Carlos Apache Tribe and others repeatedly filed comments with the Forest Service on water and cultural impacts, but these were largely ignored by the Forest Service; and

**WHEREAS,** the NDAA also requires appraisals of the land to be exchanged, but these have also not been made available to the public and Resolution has refused to provide information as to the copper content of the ore body, which is essential to both the appraisal and the value of royalties; and

**WHEREAS,** RCM admits that it will pump nearly 600,000 acre-feet of water, enough water for 168,000 homes over 40 years, which will result in the absence of drinking water for both Superior and Queen Creek; and

**WHEREAS,** the Forest Service did not provide the EPA report or nine other reports on water, mine tailings and environmental impacts to the public for comment or review, which left the public inadequately informed of the potential impacts of the mine or its tailings facility, or the impacts to underlying groundwater or the impacts of pumping; and

**WHEREAS,** the San Carlos Apache Tribe has filed suit against the Forest Service for its failed preparation, issuance and reliance upon an inadequate FEIS as part of its review of the mining project, and its failure to comply with the public and agency review requirements under NEPA and the NHPA, contravene the NDAA and stand in excess of the Forest Service's statutory jurisdiction, authority or limitations, and that the Land Exchange will violate the fundamental, constitutional right of Apaches to practice their traditional religion at Oak Flat; and

**WHEREAS,** legislation calling for the Repeal of Section 3003 of the FY 2015 National Defense Authorization Act has now been re-introduced in the current 117<sup>th</sup> Congressional session, sponsored by Representative Grijalva and Senator Sanders; and

**WHEREAS,** the Community finds that the Land Exchange will result in Apaches, Yavapais, Hopis, Zunis, and the Onk Akimel O'Odham suffering irreparable harm and that the FEIS was flawed and should be reconsidered, and for such reasons, the Save the Oak Flat Act is in the best interests of the Community and its members.

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community Council hereby resolves that:

1. The Community hereby supports the Save the Oak Flat Act and the repeal of Section 3003 of the NDAA;
2. The Secretary of Agriculture is hereby requested to withdraw the FEIS from publication and to undertake a process to issue a supplemental draft environmental impact statement.

3. The Community hereby requests the U.S. Senators and Representatives for Arizona support the Save the Oak Flat Act and the withdrawal of the FEIS from publication.

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED** that the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community Council authorizes the President or Vice President to take any and all actions reasonable and necessary to carry out the intent of this Resolution.

**C\_E\_R\_T\_I\_F\_I\_C\_A\_T\_I\_O\_N**

Pursuant to the authority contained in Article VII, Sections 1 (c)(10) and (k) of the Constitution of the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community (as amended), ratified by the Tribe on February 28, 1990, and approved by the Secretary of the Interior on March 19, 1990, the foregoing resolution was adopted this 8<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2021, in a duly called meeting of the Community Council at Salt River, Arizona, at which a quorum of 8 members was present, by a vote of 7 for; 1 opposed; 0 abstaining; and 1 excused.

**SALT RIVER PIMA-MARICOPA  
INDIAN COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Martin Harvier, President

Attest:

  
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Erica Harvier, Council Secretary

