



Tohono O'odham Nation
Office of the
Chairman and Vice Chairwoman

Ned Norris Jr. Wavalene M. Saunders
Chairman Vice Chairwoman



April 12, 2021

The Honorable Raúl Grijalva
U.S. House of Representatives
1511 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Request to Co-Sponsor H.R. 1884/S. 915, the Save Oak Flat Act

Dear Representative Grijalva:

On behalf of the Tohono O'odham Nation, I am respectfully requesting that you co-sponsor H.R. 1884/S. 915, the Save Oak Flat Act.

Chi'chil Bifdagoteel, known as Oak Flat, is a Traditional Cultural Property listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It is located in the Tonto National Forest in southeastern Arizona and plays a vital role in tribal religion, tradition, and culture. For thousands of years, native people have visited Oak Flat for religious practices, to gather medicines and ceremonial items, and to seek peace and personal cleansing.

For nearly two decades, Arizona tribes and others have fought to protect Oak Flat from the Resolution Copper Mine project, a joint venture by foreign mining companies Rio Tinto and BHP Billiton to develop the largest and deepest copper mine in North America. Through a backroom deal in December 2014, a land exchange that would give these companies ownership of Oak Flat was inserted as Section 3003 of the FY15 NDAA. The land exchange would transfer 2,422 acres of Tonto National Forest land, including the sacred sites at Oak Flat, to Resolution Copper in exchange for private parcels that will go to the Department of the Interior and the U.S. Forest Service.

The Tonto National Forest proceeded to rush out a Final Environmental Impact Survey (FEIS) on Jan. 15, 2021 to prematurely start the land transfer process. In doing so, Tonto National Forest had failed to comply with NEPA or the required appraisal and public review process for the land transfer. As a result, on March 1, 2021 the USDA directed the Forest Service to rescind the FEIS to

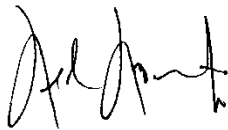
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Although flawed, the withdrawn FEIS acknowledged that Resolution Copper’s proposed mining activities will have direct and irreversible adverse impacts on numerous sites at Oak Flat including sacred springs, traditional areas, burial locations, and other cultural places and experiences of high spiritual and cultural value. The massive mine will also cause irreversible destruction to thousands of acres of public lands and contaminate already scarce water sources. It will produce a 1.8 mile-wide crater over a thousand feet deep, which will consume more than 637,000 acre-feet of water, and produce a toxic waste dump that will be taller than the Washington Monument and potentially span over 15,000 acres.

Because the land transfer is part of the FY15 NDAA, it will take an act of Congress to provide long term protection for these sacred sites. The Save Oak Flat Act would repeal the land transfer in Section 3003 and permanently withdraw Oak Flat from mining laws to protect it from destruction.

Protecting tribal sacred sites and cultural resources is essential to upholding the federal trust responsibility. In addition, preserving the places of significance to the first Americans is also essential to preserving the history and culture of the United States as a whole. I urge you to co-sponsor the Save Oak Flat Act and help ensure that this sacred site does not suffer irreparable desecration.

Sincerely,



Ned Norris, Jr., Chairman
Tohono O’odham Nation



Tohono O'odham Nation
Office of the
Chairman and Vice Chairwoman

Ned Norris Jr. Wavalene M. Saunders
Chairman Vice Chairwoman



April 12, 2021

The Honorable Ruben Gallego
U.S. House of Representatives
1131 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Request to Co-Sponsor H.R. 1884/S. 915, the Save Oak Flat Act

Dear Representative Gallego:

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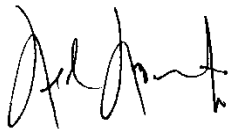
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Tohono O’odham Nation



Tohono O'odham Nation
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Ned Norris Jr. Wavalene M. Saunders
Chairman Vice Chairwoman



April 12, 2021

The Honorable Tom O'Halleran
U.S. House of Representatives
318 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Request to Co-Sponsor H.R. 1884/S. 915, the Save Oak Flat Act

Dear Representative O'Halleran:

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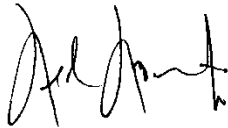
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Ned Norris, Jr., Chairman
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April 12, 2021

The Honorable Ann Kirkpatrick
U.S. House of Representatives
309 Cannon HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Request to Co-Sponsor H.R. 1884/S. 915, the Save Oak Flat Act

Dear Representative Kirkpatrick:

On behalf of the Tohono O'odham Nation, I am respectfully requesting that you co-sponsor H.R. 1884/S. 915, the Save Oak Flat Act.

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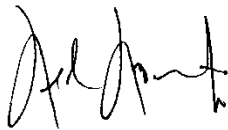
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Tohono O'odham Nation
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Ned Norris Jr. Wavalene M. Saunders
Chairman Vice Chairwoman



April 12, 2021

The Honorable Greg Stanton
U.S. House of Representatives
207 Cannon HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Request to Co-Sponsor H.R. 1884/S. 915, the Save Oak Flat Act

Dear Representative Stanton:

On behalf of the Tohono O'odham Nation, I am respectfully requesting that you co-sponsor H.R. 1884/S. 915, the Save Oak Flat Act.

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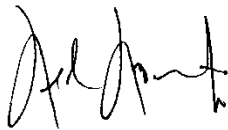
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Tohono O'odham Nation
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Chairman Vice Chairwoman



April 12, 2021

The Honorable David Schweikert
U.S. House of Representatives
304 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Request to Co-Sponsor H.R. 1884/S. 915, the Save Oak Flat Act

Dear Representative Schweikert:

On behalf of the Tohono O'odham Nation, I am respectfully requesting that you co-sponsor H.R. 1884/S. 915, the Save Oak Flat Act.

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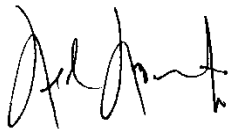
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Tohono O'odham Nation
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Ned Norris Jr. Wavalene M. Saunders
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April 12, 2021

The Honorable Paul Gosar
U.S. House of Representatives
2057 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Request to Co-Sponsor H.R. 1884/S. 915, the Save Oak Flat Act

Dear Representative Gosar:

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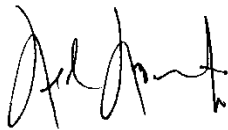
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Tohono O'odham Nation
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Ned Norris Jr. Wavalene M. Saunders
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April 12, 2021

The Honorable Andy Biggs
U.S. House of Representatives
171 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Request to Co-Sponsor H.R. 1884/S. 915, the Save Oak Flat Act

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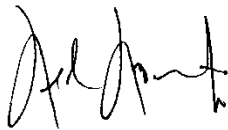
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April 12, 2021

The Honorable Debbie Lesko
U.S. House of Representatives
1214 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Request to Co-Sponsor H.R. 1884/S. 915, the Save Oak Flat Act

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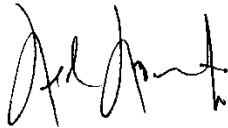
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April 12, 2021

The Honorable Mark Kelly
U.S. Senate
Dirksen Senate Office Building
Suite B40B
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Request to Co-Sponsor H.R. 1884/S. 915, the Save Oak Flat Act

Dear Senator Kelly:

On behalf of the Tohono O'odham Nation, I am respectfully requesting that you co-sponsor H.R. 1884/S. 915, the Save Oak Flat Act.

Chi'chil Bii'dagoteel, known as Oak Flat, is a Traditional Cultural Property listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It is located in the Tonto National Forest in southeastern Arizona and plays a vital role in tribal religion, tradition, and culture. For thousands of years, native people have visited Oak Flat for religious practices, to gather medicines and ceremonial items, and to seek peace and personal cleansing.

For nearly two decades, Arizona tribes and others have fought to protect Oak Flat from the Resolution Copper Mine project, a joint venture by foreign mining companies Rio Tinto and BHP Billiton to develop the largest and deepest copper mine in North America. Through a backroom deal in December 2014, a land exchange that would give these companies ownership of Oak Flat was inserted as Section 3003 of the FY15 NDAA. The land exchange would transfer 2,422 acres of Tonto National Forest land, including the sacred sites at Oak Flat, to Resolution Copper in exchange for private parcels that will go to the Department of the Interior and the U.S. Forest Service.

The Tonto National Forest proceeded to rush out a Final Environmental Impact Survey (FEIS) on Jan. 15, 2021 to prematurely start the land transfer process. In doing so, Tonto National Forest had failed to comply with NEPA or the required appraisal and public review process for the land transfer. As a result, on March 1, 2021 the USDA directed the Forest Service to rescind the FEIS to

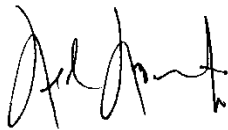
ensure that the Forest Service complies with “the environmental, cultural, and archaeological analyses required.”

Although flawed, the withdrawn FEIS acknowledged that Resolution Copper’s proposed mining activities will have direct and irreversible adverse impacts on numerous sites at Oak Flat including sacred springs, traditional areas, burial locations, and other cultural places and experiences of high spiritual and cultural value. The massive mine will also cause irreversible destruction to thousands of acres of public lands and contaminate already scarce water sources. It will produce a 1.8 mile-wide crater over a thousand feet deep, which will consume more than 637,000 acre-feet of water, and produce a toxic waste dump that will be taller than the Washington Monument and potentially span over 15,000 acres.

Because the land transfer is part of the FY15 NDAA, it will take an act of Congress to provide long term protection for these sacred sites. The Save Oak Flat Act would repeal the land transfer in Section 3003 and permanently withdraw Oak Flat from mining laws to protect it from destruction.

Protecting tribal sacred sites and cultural resources is essential to upholding the federal trust responsibility. In addition, preserving the places of significance to the first Americans is also essential to preserving the history and culture of the United States as a whole. I urge you to co-sponsor the Save Oak Flat Act and help ensure that this sacred site does not suffer irreparable desecration.

Sincerely,



Ned Norris, Jr., Chairman
Tohono O’odham Nation



Tohono O'odham Nation
Office of the
Chairman and Vice Chairwoman

Ned Norris Jr. Wavalene M. Saunders
Chairman Vice Chairwoman



April 12, 2021

The Honorable Kyrsten Sinema
U.S. Senate
317 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Request to Co-Sponsor H.R. 1884/S. 915, the Save Oak Flat Act

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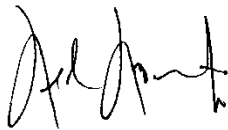
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Ned Norris, Jr., Chairman
Tohono O’odham Nation