

OUTDOOR ALLIANCE

April 20, 2021

Rep. Teresa Leger Fernandez
Chair, Subcommittee For Indigenous Peoples of the United States
1432 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Rep. Don Young
Ranking Member, Subcommittee For Indigenous Peoples of the United States
2314 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Support for H.R. 1884, the “Save Oak Flat Act”

Dear Chair Fernandez and Ranking Member Young:

On behalf of the human powered outdoor recreation community, we write to express our support for H.R. 1884, the “Save Oak Flat Act.” Without this legislation, the planned Resolution Copper mine will destroy Tribal sacred sites, as well as recreation opportunities that include hundreds of climbing routes.

Outdoor Alliance is a coalition of ten member-based organizations representing the human powered outdoor recreation community. The coalition includes Access Fund, American Canoe Association, American Whitewater, International Mountain Bicycling Association, Winter Wildlands Alliance, The Mountaineers, the American Alpine Club, the Mazamas, Colorado Mountain Club, and Surfrider Foundation and represents the interests of the millions of Americans who climb, paddle, mountain bike, backcountry ski and snowshoe, and enjoy coastal recreation on our nation’s public lands, waters, and snowscapes.

The Save Oak Flat Act repeals Section 3003 of the fiscal year 2015 National Defense Authorization Act, which calls for ownership transfer of the Oak Flat area in Arizona from the United States Forest Service to Resolution Copper. Resolution plans to construct and operate a massive block-cave copper mine at Oak Flat, Arizona that will destroy the surface of the entire area proximate to mining operations.

The subsidence crater resulting from the mine will be almost two miles in diameter and more than one-thousand-foot deep, destroying an area of great religious and archaeological significance to central Arizona Indian Tribes. The loss to Arizona tribes will be immeasurable. Oak Flat is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, specifically due its religious and cultural importance to the Tribes, both in prehistoric and historic



OUTDOOR ALLIANCE

times. The crater will also consume hundreds of rock climbs, and thousands of boulder problems. The loss of climbing will be the single largest loss of climbing resources on public land in the history of the United States.

Additionally, the mine will deplete local aquifers that are already being strained by residential and agricultural demands and a severe 20-year drought. It is hard to visualize the vast amount of water to be consumed by this mine project, but a tank that would hold that amount of water would cover a football field, and be 147 miles tall. The mine will stress an already stressed hydrologic system.

Resolution Copper is a joint venture between two of the largest foreign mining companies in the world: Rio Tinto and BHP. The copper concentrate from this mine will be smelted overseas, since there is not existing smelting capacity in the United States to handle the additional concentrate. Both the profits and the copper from this mine will flow to other countries, while we are left with the resulting 1.6 billion tons of toxic mine tailings.

Outdoor Alliance objects to the transfer and destruction of Oak Flat, public land that contains invaluable cultural and recreational resources. Oak Flat has been protected from mining activity by executive order since 1955, when its recreational value was officially recognized. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places due to its religious and cultural significance. Finally, there is simply not enough water for this project in Arizona, without the mine taking water from competing agricultural and residential users. Passage of H.R. 1884, and its companion Senate bill, S. 915, will ensure that this does not happen.

Best regards,



Louis Geltman
Policy Director
Outdoor Alliance

cc: Adam Cramer, Chief Executive Officer, Outdoor Alliance
Chris Winter, Executive Director, Access Fund
Beth Spilman, Executive Director, American Canoe Association
Mark Singleton, Executive Director, American Whitewater
Kent McNeill, CEO, International Mountain Bicycling Association
Todd Walton, Executive Director, Winter Wildlands Alliance
Tom Vogl, Chief Executive Officer, The Mountaineers



OUTDOOR ALLIANCE

Mitsu Iwasaki, Chief Executive Officer, American Alpine Club
Sarah Bradham, Interim Executive Director, the Mazamas
Keegan Young, Executive Director, Colorado Mountain Club
Chad Nelson, Chief Executive Officer, Surfrider Foundation

