

News Release

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NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION NAMES SACRED ARIZONA SITE THREATENED BY COPPER MINING TO LIST OF AMERICA'S 11 MOST ENDANGERED HISTORIC PLACES

Oak Flat, Arizona) -- The [National Trust for Historic Preservation](#) has named **Oak Flat**, near Superior, Arizona, to its 2015 list of [America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places](#). The annual list spotlights important examples of the nation's architectural, cultural and natural heritage that are at risk of destruction or irreparable damage.

Oak Flat is sacred to the San Carlos Apache and other Native American tribes and is currently protected from mining by orders issued by Presidents Eisenhower and Nixon. Oak Flat contains many cultural resources including archaeological and historical sites, as well as being eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places as a Traditional Cultural Property. Oak Flat continues to be used and relied upon today for the religious, traditional, and cultural practices of Apaches and other Native peoples. The Apache people know Oak Flat as Chi'chil Bildagoteel.

Oak Flat is currently threatened by a massive proposed copper mine. A land exchange included in the National Defense Authorization Act of 2015 would open the site up to mining. The Arizona Mining Reform Coalition and partners, including the San Carlos Apache, encourage members of Congress to reconsider this land exchange, as any mining activity at Oak Flat would severely threaten this sacred place.

"We hope this designation increases national awareness of Oak Flat and its profound importance to Native American tribes," said Stephanie Meeks, president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. "The tribes who regard Oak Flat as a sacred place were not adequately consulted before this land exchange took place. Before any potentially harmful mining activity takes place at Oak Flat, we need to make sure the tribes and others who care about this important place have a voice in shaping its future."

"The Arizona Mining Reform Coalition and its member groups deeply appreciate this designation by the National Trust for Historic Preservation," said Roger Featherstone, Director of the Arizona Mining Reform Coalition. "We have prayed, played, and enjoyed Oak Flat for years and to lose this national public treasure to foreign mining companies would truly be a tragedy. What the US congress did in the dead of night last December to give Oak Flat

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ARIZONA MINING REFORM COALITION

away is not how we should treat our sacred places. We encourage members of Congress to reconsider the land swap embedded deep within the National Defense Authorization Act of 2014.”

Arizona Representative, Raul Grijalva, along with 14 bi-partisan co-sponsors, has introduced H.R. 2811, the Save Oak Flat Act, to repeal section 3003 of the National Defense Authorization Act. Section 3003 authorizes the give-away of Oak Flat to foreign mining companies as soon as environmental studies are completed and published, regardless of their conclusions.

The National Park Service is currently accepting public comments (deadline is June 29) for the nomination of Chi’chil Bildagoteel to the National Register of Historic Places as a Traditional Cultural Property.

A continuous encampment at Oak Flat has been in place to protect its sacredness since February 7, 2015. The encampment is being led by Apache Stronghold, and includes people from all walks of life including Tribal members from across the country.

At a time when some western state legislatures seek to transfer federal public lands to state control, this is an example of how resources owned by the American people may be sold or traded away to foreign-owned companies for development. This threat adds to those faced by other National Treasures like the Grand Canyon, Mount Taylor, and other efforts to mine or develop sacred lands of Native People.

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Press tours of Oak Flat are available and encouraged. We have a wealth of still images and video of Oak Flat also available.

The Arizona Mining Reform Coalition works to protect Arizona’s communities and the environment from inappropriate mining activities. www.azmingreform.org