

SAN CARLOS APACHE TRIBE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Joint Statement of the San Carlos Apache Tribe
Concerned Citizens and Retired Miners Coalition
and
Arizona Mining Reform Coalition

(San Carlos, AZ) --“Resolution Copper Mine, LLC is engaging in the same old scare tactics to pressure the U.S. Senate to act on bad legislation,” announced Terry Rambler, Chairman, San Carlos Apache Tribe in response to the company’s statement on November 30 that it would lay off approximately 400 employees. Resolution Copper cited the stalled legislation before Congress to approve the land swap it is seeking and a decline in the global markets as reasons for its decision. That same day Resolution Copper’s parent company, Rio Tinto, announced it was cutting costs by \$7 billion in its global operations over the next two years.

“Resolution Copper made the very same claim in 2007 when its President John Rickus told the *Tucson Citizen* it would not invest more money in the project unless the land swap was approved by Congress, and that the 400 person workforce would have to be cut,” continued Chairman Rambler. “But the real cost of this bill is not jobs. The real costs are desecration and destruction of one of our most important sacred sites, and the very real and great potential for disastrous harm to our environment including Arizona’s precious water supplies.”

Resolution Copper has been pushing a bill since 2004 to direct the Secretary of Agriculture to convey over 2,400 acres of the Tonto National Forest to the company. The company is owned by the foreign mining giants Rio Tinto PLC (United Kingdom) and BHP Billiton Ltd (Australia). China holds an ownership stake in Rio Tinto and it, not the United States, is positioned to be the chief beneficiary of the copper and other materials removed from the mine.

If the land exchange legislation is passed by Congress, large copper deposits will be turned over to Resolution Copper to develop and operate an unprecedented block-cave copper mine which threatens to swallow huge swaths of lands currently within the Tonto National Forest. The land includes sites that are sacred to the San Carlos Apache and other tribes, and important to recreational users, rock climbers, campers, hikers and others.

“What Resolution and its political allies don’t tell you is the land exchange sidesteps critical safeguards provided by other federal laws,” said Roy Chavez of Concerned Citizens and Retired Miners Coalition which also opposes the land exchange. “Senators Kyl and McCain should be cautious. If passed, this bill may leave Arizona with a superfund site of unprecedented magnitude, and a clean up bill for the American taxpayers costing billions of dollars. That would be a most unfortunate legacy for the Senators.”

The land exchange is also opposed by conservation, recreation and preservation organizations including the Arizona Mining Reform Coalition, the Tucson Audubon Society, Friends of Ironwood Forest, Earthworks, Access Fund, and Grand Canyon Chapter of the Sierra Club. These organizations cite the potential for catastrophic harm the proposed mine presents to a long recognized sacred traditional cultural site, air, water, recreation, and imperiled plants and animals.

Roger Featherstone, Director of the Arizona Mining Reform Coalition, cited more reasons the exchange is bad policy. “This would be the first piece of federal legislation that would turn over a Native American sacred site on public land to a foreign mining company. It would mandate the largest loss of rock climbing lands on public lands in US history; and it would privatize a campground that has been off limits to mining since 1955.”

Don Steuter, Conservation Chair for the Sierra Club’s Grand Canyon (Arizona) Chapter added, “H.R. 1904 is nothing more than special interest legislation for a foreign mining corporation. The potential for an environmental catastrophe, including major negative impacts to water resources, has been all but been ignored by its advocates. Resolution Copper does not address the enormous costs, including environmental, that this mine will have.”

In addition to threatening the physical landscape, the block-cave mining process proposed for this mine requires voluminous amounts of water, up to 40,000 acre feet of water annually. Water withdrawal of that magnitude will have a serious negative impact on an already- drought-stricken region. In addition, studies demonstrate that the mine has the potential to generate vast amounts of toxins that can poison the water supply throughout the region, in both Pinal County and metropolitan Phoenix.

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