

Arizona Mining Reform Coalition - Access Fund - The American Alpine Club - Comstock Residents Association - Concerned Citizens and Retired Miners Coalition - Concerned Climbers of Arizona, LLC - Earthworks - Environment Arizona - Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness - Friends Of The Cloquet Valley State Forest - Friends of the Kalmiopsis - Groundwater Awareness League - Information Network for Responsible Mining - Keepers of the Water - Maricopa Audubon Society - Ministers' Conference of Winston-Salem, North Carolina & Vicinity - The Morning Star Institute - Mount Graham Coalition - Natural Resources Defense Fund - Religion and Human Rights Forum for the Preservation of Native American Sacred Sites and Rights - Rock Creek Alliance - San Juan Citizens Alliance - Save Our Cabinets - Save Our Sky Blue Waters - Sierra Club - Western Lands Project - Wisconsin Resources Protection Council

March 19, 2013

Dear Member of Congress,

The newest version of the Oak Flat land exchange has been introduced in the US House of Representatives. The new bill number is HR 687. However, the bill is virtually identical to the failed HR 1904 in the last Congress. A hearing will be held on the bill on March 21st at 10:00.

We, the undersigned organizations representing thousands of Americans ask you to oppose any movement of this bill. Groups and organizations from all walks of life representing a myriad of constituencies oppose the Oak Flat land exchange. Opposition to the land exchange cuts across the spectrum in many ways and Oak Flat is held dear for many reasons. Go to <http://www.azminingreform.org/content/resolutions-opposing-hr-687-s-339> for a comprehensive list of organizations and governing bodies opposing the legislation.

This is the 12th version of the land exchange. The previous 11 versions of the land exchange have failed for a very good reason – the American people have spoken loudly that this piece of special interest legislation is not in the best interests of our Nation. We urge you to oppose HR 687. Further, we ask you to contact the original co-sponsors, Arizona Representative Gosar (R-4th) and Kirkpatrick (D-1st) and urge them to suspend any efforts to move the bill in this Congress.

Rio Tinto and BHP - Billiton have created a subsidiary that is proposing to mine an ore body more than 7,000 feet below the surface east of Superior, Arizona. As a first step, Rio Tinto has asked Representatives Gosar and Kirkpatrick to introduce HR 687 that would end an executive order banning mining from Oak Flat Campground and privatize

more than 2,400 acres of public land. The bill asks Congress to make a determination that the land exchange is in the best interest of the United States without the benefit of the normal process of permitting mines on public land which would require a mining plan of operations to be prepared. It bypasses the normal process of permitting mines on public lands that require the US Forest Service to conduct studies looking at a full range of impacts and alternatives required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

HR 687 is special interest legislation that would trade away the Oak Flat Campground and surrounding federal lands to foreign mining companies. Oak Flat is sacred to Native Americans and is critical for cultural and recreational activities.

- HR 687 is only piece of legislation in Congress that would turn over a Native American sacred site on federal lands to foreign mining companies.
- HR 687 would mandate the loss of the largest amount of federal lands ever for recreational rock climbing resulting in financial ruin for small businesses based on the climbing industry.
- HR 687 would result in massive dewatering of the riparian area and the loss of habitat critical to rare and endangered plants and animals.

Not only have the previous 11 versions of the bill failed, there are many new reasons that the land exchange is particularly inappropriate at this time.

- While Rio Tinto promised the United States Senate in February of 2012 that a mining plan of operations would be submitted to the US Forest Service by June of 2012, no document has yet been produced. In fact, it would be impossible for Rio Tinto to produce a valid mining plan of operations at this time, as the company has not even completed basic exploratory work or other critical studies. The US Congress is being asked to privatize public land that is far more valuable for non-mining uses without the benefit of being able to look at a plan that answers basic questions needed to show that the health and welfare of the public and the environment would be protected.
- The town Council of Superior passed a unanimous resolution on March 13 opposing HR 687 (attached) and has terminated a mutual benefits agreement with Rio Tinto citing that the agreement and the bill protects the company, but not the town.
- The town of Queen Valley's Homeowners Association and Golf association oppose a mine at Oak Flat because it would dewater the town and place environmentally hazardous tailings at the gateway to the town.

The bill is opposed by a wide coalition of Native American Tribes, religious organizations, recreational organizations, historic preservation organizations, and conservation groups.

Please help protect Oak Flat and the surrounding area by opposing any attempts to pass HR 687 this Congress.

Thank you,

Arizona Mining Reform Coalition
Arizona

Access Fund

The American Alpine Club
Golden, CO

Comstock Residents Association
Virginia City, Nevada

Concerned Citizens and Retired Miners Coalition
Superior, AZ

Concerned Climbers of Arizona, LLC
Arizona

Earthworks

Environment Arizona

Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness

Friends Of The Cloquet Valley State Forest

Friends of the Kalmiopsis
Grants Pass, Oregon

Groundwater Awareness League
Green Valley, Arizona

Information Network for Responsible Mining
Telluride, CO

Keepers of the Water
Manistee, Michigan

Maricopa Audubon Society
Phoenix

Ministers' Conference of Winston-Salem, North Carolina & Vicinity
Reverend Willard Bass, President

The Morning Star Institute
Washington, DC

Mount Graham Coalition
Arizona

Natural Resources Defense Fund

Religion and Human Rights Forum for the Preservation of Native American Sacred Sites
and Rights

Reverend Dr. John Mendez, Senior Minister, Emmanuel Baptist Church and Dr.
Stephen B. Boyd, Easley Professor of Religion, Wake Forest University
Forsyth County, North Carolina

Rock Creek Alliance
Sandpoint, ID

San Juan Citizens Alliance
Durango, CO

Save Our Cabinets
Heron, MT

Save Our Sky Blue Waters
Minnesota

Sierra Club

Western Lands Project
Seattle, WA

Wisconsin Resources Protection Council
Tomahawk, Wisconsin