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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

San Carlos Apache Tribe welcomes Federal Court ruling delaying trade of sacred Oak Flat to Chinese-backed Resolution Copper

San Carlos Apache Reservation, Ariz. —The San Carlos Apache Tribe welcomes Friday's federal court ruling preventing the Trump Administration from trading sacred Oak Flat to Chinese-backed Resolution Copper Mining no sooner than 60 days after the government releases an environmental report expected to be published later this month.

The Trump Administration had indicated that it intended to trade 2,422 acres of Tonto National Forest 70 miles east of Phoenix that includes Oak Flat to Resolution Copper immediately upon publication of the mine's updated environmental report.

U.S. District Court Judge Dominic W. Lanza's order "preclude(s) the United States Forest Service from proceeding with the challenged land exchange until 60 days after the issuance of the Final Environmental Impact Statement, which is anticipated to be issued on June 16."

"We are grateful that Judge Lanza has provided us an opportunity to be heard," said San Carlos Apache Tribe Chairman Terry Rambler. "The two-month window provides the Tribe an opportunity to file an amended lawsuit challenging the legality of the pending environmental report and request an injunction to stop the land exchange until the merits of our case are settled."

The Oak Flat land transfer was mandated by a [last-minute amendment](#) to the FY2015 National Defense Authorization Act that was added by the late Arizona Senator John McCain and former Arizona Senator Jeff Flake. The land transfer provision, which failed to pass Congress in previous years, avoided the normal course of business and was not debated before it was added to the must-sign defense spending bill that was signed into law by President Barack Obama.

"The bill that authorized the land exchange is not in the best interest of the American people, Arizona or the San Carlos Apache Tribe," Chairman Rambler stated. "We have filed this lawsuit because of our concerns of the mine's massive use of groundwater, which will be devastating for both Arizona and eventually the Tribe. We are also deeply concerned about the environmental destruction and the obliteration of Oak Flat will have on Apache culture and religion."

Resolution plans to collapse Oak Flat, known as Chi'chil Bitdagoteel in Apache, into a two-mile wide, 1,100-foot-deep crater. Chi'chil Bitdagoteel is listed in the [National Register of Historic Places](#) as a Traditional Cultural Place.

Resolution Copper is owned by [Melbourne-based BHP](#) (45%) and London-based [Rio Tinto](#) (55%), the two largest mining companies in the world. The Chinese state-owned [Aluminum Corporation of China](#), which spearheads China's [acquisition of strategic minerals](#) worldwide, is Rio Tinto's single largest investor with a [14.6% stake](#). Both BHP and Rio Tinto rely on China for the majority of their revenue.

"We fully expect Resolution's copper to be exported to China, which poses a national security threat," Chairman Rambler said. "The United States already [exports 30 percent](#) of the copper produced by U.S. mines because of a lack of copper smelting capacity.

"The Trump Administration's [Oak Flat appraisal](#) concludes that Resolution's copper will be exported to southeast Asia," Chairman Rambler added. "It's clearly in the best interest of the United States to withhold publication of the Resolution environmental report at least until there is a change in the ownership of this project to companies that are not reliant on China for more than half their business."

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