



# CITY OF FLAGSTAFF

## FLAGSTAFF CITY COUNCIL

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October 18, 2022

Honorable Tom Vilsack  
U.S. Secretary of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

Section 3003 of the Carl Levin and Howard P. “Buck” McKeon National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015 (NDAA) authorized the release of 2,422 acres of U.S. Forest Service land in a land exchange (Exchange) that will allow international mining companies, Rio Tinto and BPH, to develop the Resolution Copper mine (Project) in the Tonto National Forest. This land, often called Oak Flat or Chi’chil Bildagoteel, is of cultural importance and considered a sacred site by the San Carlos Apache Tribe and other tribal communities in Arizona, specifically those located in the Tonto National Forest.

The Project will destroy Oak Flat, use massive amounts of water, harm local ground and surface waters, negatively impact imperiled species, and create a crater up to 1,000 feet deep and roughly 1.8 miles across. Any development of this scale requires a serious and comprehensive review. Unfortunately, on January 15, 2021, the previous administration rushed to release the Project’s Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), triggering a requirement for the land exchange to occur within 60 days.

Section 3003 of the NDAA (National Defense Authorization Act) land exchange provision requires a legally compliant FEIS before the Forest Service can approve the land exchange. It is clear that this requirement has not been met, and we request the Secretary of Agriculture instruct the Forest Service to withdraw the FEIS to allow the Biden administration time to review and address implementation or administrative flaws, including several federal Special Use Permits required for the proposed mine.

We thank you for your time and consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

The Flagstaff City Council