



The Right Reverend Jennifer A. Reddall
BISHOP OF ARIZONA

September 23, 2021

The Rev. Canon Cornelia Eaton
Executive Council of the Episcopal Church
PO Box 720
Farmington, NM 87499

Dear Canon Eaton,

I write to ask you and other members of Executive Council to pass a resolution opposing the transfer of 2400 acres of National Forest land in Arizona to Resolution Copper planned as a rider to the 2015 National Defense Authorization Act; and supporting the *Save Oak Flat Act* proposed by Senator Bernie Sanders (S 195) and Representative Raul Grijalva (HR 195).

This would be in keeping with General Convention resolutions 2000 D-005, "Oppose Environmental Racism" and 2012 B023, "Seek Environmental Justice."

For generations upon generations into to the present day, Native peoples have gathered at Oak Flat (known to the Apache as *Chi'chil Bildagoteel*) to harvest acorns and plants, which are used for ceremonial prayer, medicinal purposes, and for other cultural reasons. They have been added to the National Register of Historic Places as a Traditional Cultural Property These are holy, sacred, and consecrated lands which remain central to the identity of Native peoples in the region, including nearby Apache tribes.

There is concern that some in the USDA hope to re-release the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) before the end of this year, starting a 60-day clock to turn over the land.

The FEIS reveals truly devastating potential impacts. In place of the Oak Flat/ Chi'chil Bildagoteel the destructive block-cave mining will produce 1.8 miles wide and 1000 feet deep crater half-filled with water contaminated by the heavy metals used to refine the ore. It will create a dangerous 1.5 m. ton mountain of waste (tailings) near Superior, AZ and deplete the streams and aquifer (all a part of the sacred ecosystem of these Native Peoples). The now-withdrawn FEIS summarizes well what is at stake: "Oak Flat is a sacred place to the Western Apache, Yavapai, O'odham, Hopi, and Zuni. It is a place where rituals are performed, and resources are gathered; its loss would be an indescribable hardship to those peoples."

Consequently, nearly all of the 574 federally recognized tribes, as well as the National Congress of Indians and the Inter-Tribal Council of Arizona support the protection of Oak Flat/ Chi'chil Bildagoteel.

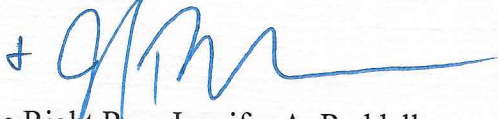
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East of
PHX

Extract
Copper

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billion
tons
of
waste
would
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produced

If Executive Council speaks clearly about this issue, that will help the Diocese of Arizona to continue to advocate for the just use of this holy land, and give us access to assistance from the Office of Government Relations in working with our Senators and Representatives.

Yours in Christ,



The Right Rev. Jennifer A. Reddall
Sixth Bishop of Arizona