

The Save Oak Flat Act

*Original Sponsors: Senators Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.),
Martin Heinrich (D-N.M.), and Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.)*

A provision of the FY15 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) approves the transfer of public lands, Oak Flat and nearby Tonto National Forest lands, to private, foreign-owned mining corporations Rio Tinto and BHP Billiton. Resolution Copper, a subsidiary of the corporations, intends to use the land to construct a block cave mine, an environmentally-destructive mining style used to maximize profit.

Both Oak Flat and the Tonto National Forest have religious and cultural value to the Western Apache and other tribal people of Arizona. Because of their religious and cultural value, Oak Flat and the Tonto National Forest are protected under the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act which mandate the protection of American Indian cultural property, lands, and traditions and bar actions that would encroach upon or damage these areas.

The Save Oak Flat Act would repeal the provision, Section 3003, and preserve Oak Flat and the Tonto National Forest as protected public lands. We must act to preserve federal lands, respect American Indian religious and cultural traditions, comply with federal regulations, and safeguard the environment from reckless exploitation by foreign corporations.

Benefits of the Bill

Preservation of American Land

- Preserves Oak Flat and nearby Tonto National Forest lands as public lands rather than transferring the rights to foreign-owned mining corporations, who will in turn reap tens of billions in U.S. taxpayer assets from the exchange.

Respect Sacred and Cultural Areas.

- Ensures compliance with federal regulations for protecting American Indian cultural landmarks, religions, and traditions.

Environmental Responsibility.

- Ensures compliance with federal regulations regarding land and water impact analysis prior to major federal action.
- Safeguards local aquifer and drinking water from damage as a result of block cave mining.

If you have questions, or your boss would like to co-sponsor the Save Oak Flat Act, please contact Katie Thomas at katie_thomas@sanders.senate.gov or call 4-5141.