

**Media Advisory**

February 5, 2019

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**EVENT DETAILS:****5th Annual Oak Flat Walk**

February 8-10, 2019

[www.apachestronghold.org](http://www.apachestronghold.org)

[Oak Flat Campground](#)

## 5th Annual Walk to Protect Oak Flat

*Apache Stronghold leads the fifth year of 45-mile spiritual walk from San Carlos to Oak Flat*

This weekend, the Apache Stronghold hosts the fifth annual walk to Oak Flat. Since 2014, members of the San Carlos Apache tribe have held this annual event to raise awareness about the threats to the sacred land of *Chi'ch'il Bildagoteel*. For nearly a decade, Oak Flat has been the proposed site of one of North America's largest copper mines. Resolution Copper, a subsidiary of Rio Tinto, continues to claim they will build the mine in 2020 despite enormous opposition and grave environmental impacts revealed.

"The killing of Oak Flat by Resolution Copper will take a miracle to stop," says Wendsler Nosie, Sr. "We must all exercise our religious beliefs, in the name of the creator, known throughout the world by many names. Let us not stand motionless and witness a murder. I call on all denominations, spiritual leaders, elected leaders, and you to stand with us in prayer to confront what is evil so that our Mother Earth will grant us peace."

After Oak Flat was placed in a midnight rider by Senator John McCain in 2014, hundreds of Indigenous people gathered at Oak Flat the following February. The historic gathering brought together tribes from around the country in opposition to the desecration of sacred sites. For a year, the Apache Stronghold remained with prayerful presence, holding regular holy ground ceremonies. Since then, thousands of people have traveled to events at Oak Flat, joining efforts to stop the copper mine.

In January 2019, Congressman Raul Grijalva and Senator Bernie Sanders reintroduced the Save Oak Flat Act, a bill that would overturn the land exchange that has still not been completed. With both Senators McCain and Flake no longer shepherding the project through Congress, the bill presents one path towards an end to Resolution Copper's plans.

### *Background about Oak Flat:*

Oak Flat is an area about an hour east of Phoenix that is a sacred site known to Apaches as *Chi'ch'il Bildagoteel*. Also home to a diverse desert ecosystem, Oak Flat is currently federal land, held as a part of the Tonto National Forest. In December 2014, Arizona Senators McCain and Flake attached a land exchange rider to the National Defense Authorization Act. The bill included the Oak Flat land exchange gave multi-national mining company, Resolution Copper the area to build one of the world's largest copper mine. The mine is slated to permanently decimate Oak Flat and surrounding desert features. Apache and mining reform activists had been successfully fighting the proposal for nearly a decade before this "backroom deal" was made in Congress. Currently, the Forest Service is undertaking an

Environmental Impact Statement, a legally mandated assessment that must be completed before the land exchange is finalized.