

# Support Apache Stronghold and Act in Solidarity to Protect Oak Flat

Coalition to dismantle the  
Doctrine of Discovery



## Background

Resolution Copper threatens to destroy Oak Flat, a sacred site cared for by the Western Apache from time immemorial. Apache Stronghold resistance is grounded in the strength of their religious practice and spiritual relationship with the land.

Apache Stronghold invites people of all faiths to join this spiritual struggle. On Nov 4, 2023 there was a great Prayer-Rising at Oak Flat for the preservation of that sacred land. Indigenous people prayed in their ways and gave counsel to people of other faiths who joined to encounter the Holy and to confront, through prayer, the forces of destruction brought by Resolution Copper. Watch livestream recordings [here](#).

Apache Stronghold is also engaged in a legal battle to stop the land transfer to Resolution Copper on the basis of religious freedom. Read more about the court case on the [Becket Law webpage](#) (Apache Stronghold v. United States et al)

In addition to this court case there is a bill called the Save Oak Flat from Foreign Mining Act (SOFA) that would preserve Oak Flat. The bill needs support in Congress in order to pass. Read about SOFA on the [Apache Stronghold website](#).

# Summary of Asks

What you can do as an individual:

1. **Pray:** join the power of your spirit with Apache prayer to strengthen this work.
2. **Spread the word:** share about Oak Flat with friends, family, and your community.
3. **Organize** for prayer and action.
4. Sign and share [on-line petitions](#).
5. **Contact your elected officials** and urge support of the Save Oak Flat from Foreign Mining Act (SOFA).
6. **Follow Apache Stronghold** on [social media](#). Respond to calls to action. Amplify their voice by liking and sharing their content.
7. **Join a working group** of the Coalition to Dismantle the Doctrine of Discovery. Contact Carol Rose: carolarose77@gmail.com.
8. Support and recruit for the **Chí'chil Bıldagoteel Oak Flat Accompaniment Team (COFA)** at Oak Flat.



What you can do as an organization:

1. **Spread the word:** share about the Oak Flat case with your constituents & members. **Organize** for prayer and action. Signing the [on-line petition as an organization](#).
2. **Join a Supreme Court Amicus brief:** When the case goes to the Supreme Court, interested organizations can file or join a friend-of-the-court or amicus brief, in support of Apache Stronghold. This is a [legal document](#), filed by a lawyer, that explains why Apache Stronghold should win its case. Email Leigh Brown at Becket ([LBrown@BecketLaw.org](mailto:LBrown@BecketLaw.org)) and let her know your organization is interested in filing or joining an amicus brief. Please also copy Melanie Beikman ([melanie.beikman@azipl.org](mailto:melanie.beikman@azipl.org)) in that email so that we can support your process going forward. [More information on amicus briefs](#)

3. **Follow Apache Stronghold as an organization** (on [Instagram](#) or [Facebook](#)) for updates and further actions you can take. Amplify their voice by sharing their content on your platform.

## Tips on Meeting with Representatives

If possible, try to arrange an in-person meeting with your representative(s). In-person meetings are especially impactful, and will demonstrate your commitment to this issue through your physical presence. Below are some additional tips for meeting with your representatives:

- Organize a group of people to go with you. Not everyone needs to speak during the meeting, but having a group of constituents present will indicate that this is an issue your representative should pay attention to. You can also deliver letters on behalf of other constituents who can't make it in person.
- Go into the meeting with a sense of commonality and not belligerence or confrontation, no matter how inimical the congressman's beliefs are to yours.
- Talk about Oak Flat and why you care. Speak from your perspective and from your faith. Allow several voices to share during the meeting.
- Ask your representative to cosponsor the Save Oak Flat from Foreign Mining Act, or thank them for being a cosponsor and ask about next steps and how they will be working on that.
- Send a follow-up thank you to your representative's office.
- Send a brief report on how your meeting went to [doe@dismantlediscovery.org](mailto:doe@dismantlediscovery.org), so that we can track our meetings with legislators and representatives.

## Talking Points

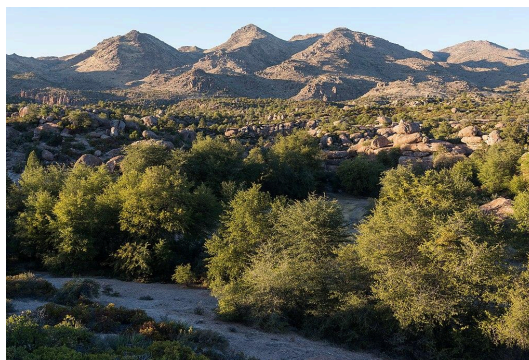
**Speak from your own perspective.** Why do you care about Oak Flat? What aspects of your faith compel you to stand in solidarity with Apache Stronghold?

Democratic Representative	Republican Representative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is an issue of religious freedom. The freedom of religious expression of Indigenous religion was long and shamefully restricted by our government. We cannot go back into the repressive mistreatment of Indigenous people. We must go forward to justice.</li> <li>• Oak Flat is the traditional place where young women are honored. Women would be particularly hurt were Oak Flat to be destroyed.</li> <li>• Climate justice cannot be achieved by the destruction of Indigenous sacred sites. Indigenous people and their religion must be respected.</li> <li>• The waiver of environmental laws that is part of the 2014 law supporting Resolution Copper is an ecological disaster in the making, both in Arizona and well beyond. If this foreign mining giant gets these exceptions, all other mining interests will also want them.</li> <li>• The US government should not be siding with a foreign mining giant over US citizens, especially Indigenous nations.</li> <li>• Don't fall for Resolution Copper's attempt to greenwash their plans.</li> <li>• There is not enough water.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Some of these arguments reinforce a protectionary/anti foreigner perspective that is problematic... so use with care and only if they are that kind of Republican.)</li> <li>• This is an issue of religious freedom. If the Apache cannot exercise their right to worship, neither can you and I.</li> <li>• The US government should not be siding with a foreign mining giant who plans to send the copper to China over US citizens, and over freedom of religion.</li> <li>• A foreign corporation should not be granted exceptions to US laws that US corporations must follow.</li> <li>• There is not enough water. It should be used for our people.</li> </ul>

# Example Leave-behinds from Repair Network

From: Rochester Repair Community (Rochester, MN)

## ***Save Oak Flat from Foreign Mining Act HR 1351***



Oak Flat, ancestral home of the San Carlos Apache and other tribal Nations of the Southwest, is under threat. Resolution Copper, a subsidiary of British and Australian mining giants Rio Tinto and BHP, proposes to completely destroy this sacred site, contaminating land, water and air. A crater 1000 feet deep and a bank of toxic tailings 10 miles long would be all that remains of this diverse ecosystem and its history.

Oak Flat has been protected from mining under the US Forest Service “due to cultural and natural value,” since 1955 but was granted to foreign interests in a questionable “land swap” in 2015, through a midnight rider on a “must-pass” defense bill.

- The copper would largely benefit foreign interests, who would ship it to China for manufacturing. The local environment would be devastated with little or no benefit accruing to the USA or the traditional Indigenous owners of the land.
- The people of Apache Stronghold, whose history and religious practice are inextricably tied to Oak Flat, are asking the courts to uphold their constitutional right of freedom to exercise their religion as they have from time immemorial..
- Copper is necessary to build a green economy; but experts affirm that other deposits are more readily accessible and less threatening to the environment.

“I know firsthand that farmers are the greatest stewards of the land, as their livelihoods depend on it.” Brad Finstad, <https://finstad.house.gov/agriculture>, retrieved 12/5/23

Similarly, the greatest stewards of the wealth of Oak Flat are those who have harvested its abundant natural bounty for their own livelihoods and grounded their spirituality there for untold generations. We urge Representative Finstad to co-sponsor HR 1351. Protect Oak Flat as you would protect Minnesota District 1 farmland for those who care for it.

## From: Indigenous Allies (Boulder, CO)

Congressman Joe Neguse  
2503 Walnut Street. Suite 300  
Boulder, CO 80302

Dear Representative Neguse,

We write to thank you for co-sponsoring the **Save Oak Flat Act From Foreign Mining Act, H.R. 1351**. As you know, Oak Flat is on the National Register of Historic Places as a Traditional Cultural Property that is sacred to the S Western Apache communities. It has been protected from mining since 1955. This bill provides support of the human and religious rights of the Western Apache people whose centuries of connection with the land bring essential wisdom to establishing environmental justice. We'd like to see this bill passed in Congress, and to find out how we can help that happen.

The passage of H.R. 1351 (IH), the Save Oak Flat From Foreign Mining Act, is also a way to prevent environmental disaster before it happens. The construction of the Resolution copper mine would cause devastating and irreversible deforestation, habitat destruction, and water pollution. Since the copper mined at Oak Flat would likely be shipped out of the country, it won't significantly help efforts to green our economy and reduce inflation.

**Indigenous Allies** is composed of religious and spiritual leaders who also see the earth as sacred, and take seriously our responsibility to care for it. We stand in solidarity with the San Carlos and Western Apache in their quest to protect their land and to preserve their human and religious rights.

Respectfully yours,  
Indigenous Allies

We acknowledge that the land on which we live and meet is the traditional territory of the Arapaho, Cheyenne, Ute, and many other peoples, in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, in the watershed of Boulder Creek. We honor the Indigenous people who once lived on this land, and support the resilience and strength of their descendants living among us today. We lament that settlers on this land caused many harms to Indigenous people and to the land they hold as sacred." We seek, through our work together, to establish right relationship, to learn the truth of the past and present, to reckon with our role in the harms caused, and to stand in solidarity with our Indigenous kin as we seek an equitable future together.

# Resources to find out more about Oak Flat

Apache Stronghold [website](#)

## Videos

[The Guardian - Apache war against copper mining](#): interviews and testimony of Wendsler Nosie (Apache Stronghold leader) and family

[Becket - Apache sacred land threatened](#): Good overall summary of the situation. Includes summary of court case, importance of Oak Flat, and the threat of mining

[HECHO - former miner against Resolution Copper mining](#): the destruction that mining will cause explained by a former miner

[Cronkite News - Oak Flat](#): a short legal case summary

[Becket - Oak Flat](#): short video about importance and sacredness of Oak Flat

[Becket - A holy land worth fighting for](#): short video including interviews on importance of Oak Flat and the impact of mining on the land

[Today - Apaches fight to stop copper mine](#): interview with Wendsler Nosie and Resolution Copper engineer

**Browse** a collection of more videos [here](#)

## Articles

[Anabaptist World](#): A call to prayer for Oak Flat (Sept. 26, 2023)

[Sojourners Magazine](#): Living FaithClimate Justice: Protecting Oak Flat is a Defense of Religious Freedom (Nov 2023)

[Los Angeles Times](#): Battle for Oak Flat: How Apache opposition to a copper mine became a religious liberty test (June 14, 2023)

[Salon.com](#): It's been a place of worship for centuries. Now a copper mine threatens its future (April 18, 2023)

[The Hill](#): Religious freedom for all means sacred Indigenous sites, too (March 30, 2023)

[Y! News](#): Apache Stronghold fights for entire way of life in Oak Flats case (March 24, 2023)

[Anabaptist World](#): What does decolonization look like? (Feb. 5, 2023)

[The Washington Post](#): This land is sacred to the Apache, and they are fighting to save it (April 12, 2021)

## Podcasts

*I'm Coming Home: The Battle to Save Oak Flat Dr. Wendsler Nosie* - The Original Peoples Podcast

*Beyond Electric Cars and Renewable Energy* - The Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery Podcast

*Protect Oak Flat: Audio Interference*