

From: [Angela D Edwards](#)
To: [FS-objections-southwestern-regional-office](#)
Subject: Do not hand over land to Rio Tinto mining
Date: Monday, February 15, 2021 11:02:37 AM

To whom it may concern:

I am a resident of Maricopa county ([REDACTED] specifically) and I am writing to oppose the land swap that has been slated for 3/11/21 to Rio Tinto mining.

The region of Oak Flats is sacred to the Apache/San Carlos Native Americans, and destruction of this land violates their freedom of religion/first amendment rights as well as tribal sovereignty, something that the Supreme Court has recently held up with regards to the tribal land agreement for the Tulsa, OK region. Justice Logan was not considering this modern precedent when handing down a ruling in favor of Rio Tinto.

Aside from the consideration of the rights of Native peoples long beleaguered and abused by the US Government, Oak Flat is a popular public land resource for recreation of all people in AZ/visitors from other areas of the US. There is climbing, hunting, canyon and peak hiking/exploration, and kayaking/river rafting as well as other activities I may not be aware of avidly pursued by many throughout the area. It is the main destination along with parts of the superstition mountains for Phoenix Metro Area residents during the cooler months of Nov-March, along with the residents of Superior, Kearny, Winkelman, Globe, Miami, and multiple tribal reservations including the aforementioned as well as Gila River and others.

Destruction of land to obtain natural products is irreversible on the timescale of humans. One only needs to drive from Kearny to Winkelman on the 177 or take a tour of Bisbee to see terraced pits like a gaping scar on the earth, piles of rubble everywhere and **not a single plant in sight** (the dredging up of heavy metals to the surface is generally a hazard to any life form, as the oxidative damage these metals can cause in cells is extremely toxic. Most mining practices require use of what are already scarce water sources in the desert terrain of central and southern Arizona. Already the Queen Creek land development threatens the western communities of the southern AZ all the way to Yuma by the scandalous approval to take more than a fair share of the CO river water. The shortsighted sale of public resources to private companies, exchanging permanent alteration/damage to the land for short-term profits is already a travesty and ethical failing of our elected and appointed government officials; but in this case, to do so for the profits to all go to a **foreign company** and not even benefitting Arizonans directly is a complete sham. The number of proposed local jobs is tiny compared to the costs, and all of the real money will be siphoned away from the US into the hands of owners in the UK and Australia. If you do not care for the religious practices of Native people, if you do not care for the love of the land and recreation that many Arizonans hold dear surrounding the Oak Flat area, if the protests we have been holding for some 6+ years now do not mean anything, please consider the fact that you are about to hand all of the money to this foreign company. At minimum, if the government insists that the copper deposit in that location *must* be unearthed, *at least* find a domestic Arizona-owned company to do the job. Let the citizens who are directly impacted by the losses reap the rewards.

My concern for the environment is not fabricated or poorly thought out. I hold a MS in Biochemistry from ASU, and am nearly complete with my PhD in Biophysical Chemistry. I do not take the word of climate change activists, I have actually looked at data on partial

pressures of greenhouse gasses in our atmosphere myself. I have actually looked at the partition equations describing geological processes for mineralization myself. I understand the timescales of natural processes like erosion versus those processes humans engineer in resource extraction and processing. I've seen the smelting of mine products firsthand, glowing slag trails at sunset on the side of a hill behind the giant smokestack in Winkelman, a hill that will never again in human record support plant life unless significant remediation efforts are undertaken. I am not parroting talking points of any politician, all thoughts herein are my own. I have been increasingly concerned by the permitting of big business in AZ from the local development of the salt lake reservoir "town lake" in Tempe continuing the worrying trend of the urban heat island effect in Phoenix that has given us record 147 day >100°F temperature streaks, to broader issues like land and water allotment for agricultural and mining activities across the state. Please stop this irreversible theft of a fragile natural resource for foreign profits. It is the lowest of the low regulatory moves that Arizona residents have yet seen.

Sincerely,

Angela Edwards

