

SAN CARLOS APACHE TRIBE

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The San Carlos Apache Tribe supports the forty-two Tribal Nations that have declared their opposition to the federal government's stated intent of delisting the grizzly bear from the Endangered Species Act (ESA). As articulated in the official declarations and resolutions of the respective tribes, this proposal is contrary to tribal interests and will cause irreversible damage to tribal cultural practices and tribal economic initiatives.

The consequences of this action on those forty-two tribes reflect those that will devastate the cultural, spiritual and environmental well-being of the San Carlos Apache people if the Resolution Copper Mine becomes a reality upon our sacred land of Oak Flat.

In her statement of 12/19/14 pertaining to the National Defense Authorization Act, specifically the Resolution Copper Mining provision, Secretary Jewell stated that she was "profoundly disappointed" with the disregard for tribal spiritual rights and how the provision "short-circuits the long-standing and fundamental practice of pursuing meaningful government-to-government consultation." Unfortunately, this is precisely what is occurring with Interior's failure to pursue "meaningful government-to-government consultation" with the affected tribes in the proposed delisting of the grizzly bear.

"The appropriate time for honoring our government-to-government relationship with tribes is before legislating issues of this magnitude," wrote Secretary Jewell after the Resolution rider was enacted as part of the National Defense Authorization Act. Forty-two Tribal Nations have petitioned the Secretary for consultation on the delisting of the grizzly bear before a new rule is published in the federal register, but they are still waiting for that government-to-government process to be honored.

What has occurred with Oak Flat, and what is occurring over the delisting of the grizzly bear, is an infringement of tribal sovereignty and a violation of the federal trust responsibility. Both of these federal actions pose clear implications for tribal religious and spiritual rights, threaten tribal sovereignty, threaten negative economic impacts, and undermine tribal self-determination.

Our ancestors knew the grizzly bear, as they cohabited in our traditional homelands. The Apaches played no part in the extirpation of the grizzly bear from our territory, which was done by those who took our lands, and the government's PARC hunters and trappers who finished the extermination for them. Such was our ancestors' respect for the grizzly that they would not say the bear's name, but instead referred to the grizzly as "mother's sibling," "my grandfather," or "my uncle." Our people would not even step where a bear had walked. San Carlos Apache people did not hunt grizzly bears, and it is disturbing to consider that the federal government is going to permit states to open trophy hunting seasons on the grizzly if they are delisted. This is antithetical to our culture, a sentiment consistently emphasized by the forty-two nations that oppose the removal of ESA protections from the grizzly.

Grizzly bears survive on less than 2% of their original range. With only 2% of their historic population, maybe fewer than 1,400 bears, it is inconceivable to remove ESA protections from the grizzly when 100,000 thrived within its historic domain pre-European contact, many of them in the Southwest, in Apache country.

Thank you,

SAN CARLOS APACHE TRIBE

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Terry Rambler", with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Terry Rambler
Chairman

CC: cc. Hon. Sally Jewell, Interior Secretary.

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Chrono