

119TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

# H. R. 7957

To preserve the Traditional Cultural Place of Chí'chil Bildagoteel Historic District listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 17, 2026

Mrs. GRIJALVA (for herself, Ms. STANSBURY, Ms. LEGER FERNANDEZ, and Mr. HUFFMAN) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources

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## A BILL

To preserve the Traditional Cultural Place of Chí'chil Bildagoteel Historic District listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Preserve the Tradi-  
5 tional Cultural Place Chí'chil Bildagoteel Historic Dis-  
6 trict Act”.

7 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

8 Congress finds the following:

1           (1) Chí'chil Bıldagoteel, meaning “a broad flat  
2           of Emory oak trees” in Western Apache, and known  
3           as Oak Flat in English, is part of the ancestral  
4           homelands of Native Americans forcibly removed at  
5           gunpoint by the United States Army during the  
6           1880s and held as prisoners of war in concentration  
7           camps until the early 1900s.

8           (2) Despite being forcibly removed, Western  
9           Apaches and other Native Americans have main-  
10          tained their deep connections to Chí'chil  
11          Bıldagoteel and continue to conduct religious cere-  
12          monies, gather medicines, water and other items for  
13          ceremonies, gather acorns and other foods, pray, and  
14          honor ancestors buried there as they have since time  
15          immemorial.

16          (3) The National Historic Preservation Act was  
17          enacted in 1966 to help preserve the historical and  
18          cultural resources of the United States and author-  
19          ized the National Park Service to establish and  
20          maintain the National Register of Historic Places  
21          “to identify the Nation’s cultural resources and to  
22          indicate what properties should be considered for  
23          protection from destruction or impairment (36 CFR  
24          60.1)”).

1           (4) The National Park Service has established  
2           specific criteria for the evaluation of nominations to  
3           the National Register of Historic Places, including  
4           for traditional cultural places.

5           (5) In 2012, the Tonto National Forest initi-  
6           ated the formal process of nominating Chí'chil  
7           Bíldagoteel to the National Register of Historic  
8           Places given its status as a known traditional cul-  
9           tural place.

10          (6) From 2012 to 2014, as part of the nomi-  
11          nating process, Tonto National Forest staff engaged  
12          in government-to-government consultations with Ari-  
13          zona Indian Tribes, made numerous site visits, com-  
14          piled oral history and archival research, and worked  
15          with the Arizona State Historic Preservation Officer  
16          and the Pinal County Supervisor and incorporated  
17          their suggestions, comments and feedback, and this  
18          process resulted in the Forest Service formally nomi-  
19          nating Chí'chil Bíldagoteel Historic District to the  
20          National Register of Historic Places.

21          (7) The Chí'chil Bíldagoteel Historic District  
22          encompasses thousands of acres located in the Tonto  
23          National Forest and includes Apache Leap, Ga'an or  
24          Devils Canyon, Queen Creek Canyon, and the pre-

1       vious Oak Flat Withdrawal Area issued under Presi-  
2       dent Eisenhower’s Administration.

3           (8) In 2014, despite bipartisan opposition, con-  
4       gressional allies of Resolution Copper inserted the  
5       Southeast Arizona Land Exchange Act as a closed-  
6       door, last-minute rider in the Carl Levin and How-  
7       ard P. “Buck” McKeon National Defense Authoriza-  
8       tion Act for Fiscal Year 2015 to give away approxi-  
9       mately 2,422 acres of land within the Chí’chil  
10      Bíldagoteel Historic District to Resolution Copper.

11          (9) In 2014 and 2015, under the Southeast Ar-  
12      izona Land Exchange (Section 3003 of Public Law  
13      113–291; 16 U.S.C. 539p), the Forest Service su-  
14      pervised an ethnographic and ethnohistoric study in  
15      accordance with the National Historic Preservation  
16      Act and found that—

17           (A) Chí’chil Bíldagoteel is a sacred place  
18           for Western Apaches and an important tradi-  
19           tional cultural place for at least 9 Tribes;

20           (B) there are hundreds of traditional cul-  
21           tural resources, including ancestral archeo-  
22           logical sites, petroglyph sites, Apache camps,  
23           and named landforms and resource collection  
24           areas within Chí’chil Bíldagoteel;

1 (C) there are 46 known springs that are  
2 culturally important to Western Apaches in  
3 Chí'chil Bıldagoteel and the surrounding area;  
4 and

5 (D) there are dozens of plants, minerals,  
6 and animals that possess traditional cultural  
7 significance to Western Apaches located in  
8 Chí'chil Bıldagoteel.

9 (10) On March 4, 2016, the National Park  
10 Service listed Chí'chil Bıldagoteel Historic District  
11 on the National Register of Historic Places.

12 (11) The Southeast Arizona Land Exchange  
13 Act does not require Resolution Copper to smelt, re-  
14 fine, or sell the copper it extracts from beneath the  
15 Chí'chil Bıldagoteel Historic District in the United  
16 States, nor is there any requirement that this cop-  
17 per, derived from public land, benefits United States  
18 consumers.

19 (12) Resolution Copper is a joint venture of the  
20 world's two largest foreign mining entities, Rio  
21 Tinto (55 percent stake) and BHP (45 percent  
22 stake), and these foreign corporations formed Reso-  
23 lution Copper to acquire public land within the  
24 Chí'chil Bıldagoteel Historic District to extract

1 United States copper located beneath it primarily for  
2 export to the People's Republic of China.

3 (13) Rio Tinto's largest shareholder is  
4 Chinalco, a company wholly owned by the People's  
5 Republic of China, which owns 14.56 percent of Rio  
6 Tinto, 4 times more than the next largest share-  
7 holder, and Rio Tinto generates over 57 percent of  
8 its revenue through the export of minerals to the  
9 People's Republic of China, while BHP generates  
10 over 62 percent of its revenue through the export of  
11 minerals to the People's Republic of China, making  
12 the People's Republic of China the largest market  
13 for Rio Tinto and BHP.

14 (14) Rio Tinto has a long record of human  
15 rights violations and environmental devastation,  
16 harming communities around the world, including in  
17 Australia, Papua New Guinea, Madagascar, Indo-  
18 nesia, Mongolia, and Namibia.

19 (15) In 2020, Rio Tinto intentionally blew up  
20 an area sacred to the Puutu Kunti Kurrama and  
21 Pinikura peoples in Western Australia, including the  
22 Juukan Gorge Rock Dwellings, which have evidence  
23 of human habitation dating back 46,000 years, be-  
24 cause it was the cheapest way to access ore, result-

1       ing in immeasurable cultural and spiritual loss and  
2       pain for indigenous communities.

3           (16) The Resolution Copper Mine will result in  
4       the destruction of most, if not all, of the 2,422 acres  
5       of the Chí'chil Bįldagoteel Historic District trans-  
6       ferred to Resolution Copper, including the collapse  
7       of the surface, resulting in a 1.8-mile-wide crater  
8       1,000 feet deep, and fracturing and dewatering of  
9       local aquifers, which will drain ground water and  
10      springs.

11          (17) The Resolution Copper Mine proposes the  
12      development of significant mining-related infrastruc-  
13      ture throughout Tonto National Forest, including  
14      large parts of the Chí'chil Bįldagoteel Historic Dis-  
15      trict that were not transferred to Resolution Copper  
16      under the Southeast Arizona Land Exchange, for  
17      the construction, operation, and maintenance of—

18           (A) a 19.6-mile pipeline corridor to slurry  
19      1,370,000,000 tons of toxic waste to a dump  
20      site that will require drilling a tunnel through  
21      a mountain called King's Crown Peak and con-  
22      structing a pipeline bridge to span Ga'an Can-  
23      yon in the Chí'chil Bįldagoteel Historic Dis-  
24      trict;

1 (B) a 3.6-mile long high voltage power line  
2 corridor and a 16.9-mile power line through the  
3 Chí'chil Bıldagoteel Historic District to pro-  
4 vide power to the toxic waste dump; and

5 (C) new roads in the Chí'chil Bıldagoteel  
6 Historic District for servicing of the pipelines  
7 and power lines and the conversion of various  
8 Tonto National Forest service roads to commer-  
9 cial use by Resolution Copper.

10 (18) The Resolution Copper Mine will have  
11 enormous impacts on the region, including—

12 (A) consuming over 250,000,000,000 gal-  
13 lons of groundwater over the 40-year life of the  
14 mine, which is enough water to support  
15 180,000 people annually for 40 years, resulting  
16 in over 4 feet of land subsidence over large  
17 swaths of the East Salt River Valley due to de-  
18 creases in groundwater levels, in some areas by  
19 nearly 200 feet; and

20 (B) the construction of a toxic waste dump  
21 to store 1.37 billion tons of toxic waste in per-  
22 petuity that will measure nearly 500 feet high  
23 and span approximately 15,000 acres in an  
24 area called Skunk Camp in the Gila River wa-  
25 tershed.

1           (19) The Chí'chil Bıldagoteel Historic District  
2           should be preserved and protected instead of allow-  
3           ing foreign-owned Resolution Copper to destroy it,  
4           resulting in permanent and irreplaceable religious  
5           and cultural loss to Native Americans while jeopard-  
6           izing the health and safety of downstream commu-  
7           nities due to inevitable future breaching of the toxic  
8           waste dump.

9   **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

10       In this Act:

11           (1) CHÍ'CHIL BILDAGOTEEL HISTORIC DIS-  
12       TRICT.—The term “Chí'chil Bıldagoteel Historic  
13       District” means the traditional cultural place listed  
14       on the National Register of Historic Places located  
15       on—

16           (A) Tonto National Forest land in south-  
17       eastern Arizona; and

18           (B) what was previously National Forest  
19       System land but transferred to Resolution Cop-  
20       per on or about March 13, 2026, in the Tonto  
21       National Forest in southeastern Arizona.

22           (2) INDIAN TRIBE.—The term “Indian Tribe”  
23       has the meaning given the term in section 4 of the  
24       Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance  
25       Act (25 U.S.C. 5304).

1           (3) NATIONAL FOREST SYSTEM.—The term  
2       “National Forest System” has the meaning given  
3       the term in section 11(a) of the Forest and Range-  
4       land Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974 (16  
5       U.S.C. 1609(a)).

6           (4) RESOLUTION COPPER.—The term “Resolu-  
7       tion Copper” means Resolution Copper Mining,  
8       LLC, formed by foreign mining entities Rio Tinto  
9       and BHP, to acquire 2,422 acres of the Chí’chil  
10      Bildagoteel Historic District to extract and mone-  
11      tize American copper located beneath it.

12          (5) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means  
13      the Secretary of Agriculture.

14          (6) TRADITIONAL CULTURAL PLACE.—The  
15      term “traditional cultural place” means a place eligi-  
16      ble for inclusion on the National Register of Historic  
17      Places based upon its associations with cultural  
18      practices and beliefs of a living community that are  
19      rooted in that community’s history and important in  
20      maintaining the community’s continuing cultural  
21      identity.

22   **SEC. 4. WITHDRAWAL.**

23      The National Forest System land located in the  
24      Chí’chil Bildagoteel Historic District is withdrawn from  
25      all forms of—

1 (1) entry, appropriation, or disposal under the  
2 public land laws;

3 (2) location, entry, and patent under the mining  
4 laws; and

5 (3) disposition under all laws pertaining to min-  
6 eral and geothermal leasing or mineral materials.

7 **SEC. 5. PRESERVATION OF A HISTORIC PLACE; PROHIBI-**  
8 **TIONS ON USE; CONSULTATIONS AND COOP-**  
9 **ERATIVE AGREEMENTS.**

10 (a) PRESERVATION OF A HISTORIC PLACE.—The  
11 Secretary—

12 (1) shall preserve the natural condition of the  
13 National Forest System land in the Chí'chil  
14 Bildagoteel Historic District as a traditional cul-  
15 tural place;

16 (2) shall not carry out any activity that would  
17 adversely affect the physical or cultural integrity of  
18 the National Forest System land in the Chí'chil  
19 Bildagoteel Historic District; and

20 (3) shall prohibit any activities that could ad-  
21 versely affect the landscape or other natural struc-  
22 tures, water resources, wildlife, flora, or ecosystems  
23 of the National Forest System land in the Chí'chil  
24 Bildagoteel Historic District.

1       (b) PROHIBITION OF MINING-RELATED ACTIVI-  
2 TIES.—Notwithstanding any other law, all activities re-  
3 lated to mining and mining-related activities, including  
4 rights-of way, toxic waste pipelines and related infrastruc-  
5 ture, electrical and other utility development, waste dis-  
6 posal, and road development and road expansion, are pro-  
7 hibited on the National Forest System land in the Chí'chil  
8 Bıldagoteel Historic District.

9       (c) CONSULTATIONS AND COOPERATIVE EFFORTS.—  
10 The Secretary shall engage in government-to-government  
11 consultations with Indian Tribes with ties to the Chí'chil  
12 Bıldagoteel Historic District and shall enter into cooper-  
13 ative agreements requested by these Indian Tribes to en-  
14 sure access to the National Forest System land for tradi-  
15 tional activities and preservation of sacred and cultural  
16 areas.

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