

## **Setting the Record Straight: A Response to the New York Times**

As Project Director for the Resolution Copper project in Superior, Arizona, I read Lydia Millet's op-ed "*Selling Off Apache Holy Land*" with a sense of sadness. It is unfortunate that Ms. Millet did not give the numerous parties on whom she passed judgment the opportunity to first engage with her before she wrote her commentary. Engaging with Arizona tribal elders, elected officials, Resolution Copper, and small and medium-sized enterprises that are current or future suppliers who have different views than those protesting at Oak Flat would have at least made Ms. Millet's opinion more informed, if not accurate.

When developed, the Resolution Copper mine will be one of the largest and most technologically advanced underground copper mines in the world. It would create up to 3700 jobs in Arizona, supply up to 25 percent of the US copper demand and provide more than \$60 billion in economic impact to the state of Arizona over its life time.

The Resolution Copper project enjoys broad public support in the region, however, as with any project of this size, there are stakeholders who have concerns and who may ultimately oppose the mine. We have actively engaged both supporters and opponents with more than 100 public meetings over the last two years to share our plans, establish dialogue and answer questions. Our Mine Plan of Operations, the first step in the regulatory process, has been available on-line to the public since it was filed in November 2013.

The most recent public outreach meeting was held on the San Carlos Apache Reservation last month and saw more than 50 people attend to learn more and engage in a constructive conversation. Given the more than 70 percent youth unemployment on the reservation, many participants wanted to understand how much of the potential employment will be available to tribal members. I was pleased to indicate that Resolution will prioritize local employment – particularly among Arizona tribal members.

The legislation that Ms. Millet objected to in her commentary was sponsored by a bipartisan majority of Arizona's congressional delegation. Contrary to Ms. Millet's assertion; no tribal-owned land was involved in the land exchange related to the Resolution Copper project. The land exchange legislation was included in a package of more than 80 very specific regional land related pieces of legislation that was assembled by leaders of both parties and appended to the Defense Authorization bill. The lands package contained both additional land protections for new wilderness areas and other exchanges that permitted commercial development on federal land. This balanced package of legislation passed both the House and Senate on bipartisan votes. The land exchange related to the Resolution Copper project will facilitate the exchange of 2,400 acres of land owned by the federal government for 5,300 acres owned by Resolution composed of important wildlife habitat, conservation and recreational land. The 5,300 acres of land held by Resolution was selected with the assistance of the Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and environmental groups such as the Nature Conservancy.

The bi-partisan legislation that facilitates the Resolution exchange contains stringent conditions before the exchange of land may occur: Resolution must complete the full federal regulatory review process that culminates with the publication by the federal government of a draft

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), and an independent appraiser must be appointed to evaluate the value of the land in order to protect taxpayers interests (if the appraiser deems the federal land more valuable than the exchange lands, Resolution must pay the federal government the difference). In addition, special protections were put in place for the Apache Leap area which has cultural significance for many tribes, the United States must engage in government-to-government consultation with area tribes, and Resolution must provide the public access to Oak Flat after the land exchange is completed so long as it is safe to do so.

Resolution has long recognized the historic, cultural and spiritual linkages to the lands around the project for many Arizona tribal members. These traditional linkages to the land do not mean that the economic benefits cannot be accessed -- we can achieve both cultural respect and economic progress for the region. This mutual benefit framework around mining is already working for a number of tribes. For instance, the Navajo Nation in New Mexico has taken over ownership and operation of the Navajo Mine, sole supplier of coal to the Four Corners Power Plant. The San Carlos Apache are partnering with a mining company to sell water from the San Carlos reservation to the mine, providing much needed revenue to the tribe and the water to run the mine. These two examples demonstrate that industry and tribes can find ways to respectfully develop projects, share the economic benefits with area tribes while still protecting culturally and historically important areas.

Resolution Copper Mining and Rio Tinto are committed to advancing the project through the full state and federal regulatory process while engaging all stakeholders in open and transparent dialogue. Ms. Millett is always welcome to attend one of our numerous public meetings, ask questions and learn about the project. She may also be interested to speak with our many supporters in the region – including many members of the San Carlos Apache tribe. At the very least, this would ensure she gets a full and balanced understanding of the project.

Sincerely,

Andrew Taplin