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News Release - For Immediate Release  
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**Coalition of Tribal Leaders and Environmental Justice Groups to Defend Sacred Site at Pasadena, CA Courthouse Legal Arguments to be Heard on December 11th, 2007**

Pasadena, CA - December 11th, 2007 a legal battle that may determine the fate of American Indian religious freedom and the ecological integrity of the San Francisco Peaks, a mountain held sacred by more than 13 Native American nations will be reheard in a Pasadena, California courtroom.

On October 17th, 2007 the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals granted the U.S. Forest Service and an Arizona ski resort the opportunity to challenge a previous decision by the court, which had blocked the ski resort owners from expanding development and making fake snow from treated sewage effluent on the sacred San Francisco Peaks.

A coalition of tribes and environmental groups are joined together to prevent the environmental destruction, community health hazards, and the extreme desecration this planned development would cause.

"It should not be this difficult to keep government or anybody else from using sewage containing feces, hospital waste, pharmaceuticals, and pathogens like the Norwalk Virus for anything humans would come in contact with. It's a no-brainer-- you don't play in your own poo." Stated Rudy Preston, Board member of the Flagstaff Activist Network and plaintiff in the case.

The March 12, 2007 9th Circuit Court ruling overturned a lower court decision and blocked the proposed ski area expansion and snowmaking with treated sewage effluent. The decision established that the Forest Service had violated its own laws by not fully studying the impact of human contact with fake snow made from the treated sewage.

During the 9th Circuit proceedings a Judge had asked the Forest Service, "Have you ever heard of a face plant?"

The ruling has also determined that the development would substantially burden Tribe's religious practice. The decision had been hailed as a victory for Religious Freedom, Environmental Justice & Cultural Survival.

Tribal Leaders of the Yavapai-Apache, Hopi, Havasupai, Hualapai, White Mountain Apache, and Navajo Nations will converge on the Pasadena courthouse for oral arguments in defense of their original victory.

Of the many dignitaries, Ben Nuvamsa, Chairman of the Hopi Tribe, the Hopi Head Kachina Priest and a Cultural Preservation representative will be making the journey from the Hopi Mesas in Arizona to Pasadena.

“The Hopi tribe and I are hopeful that the court will uphold the initial decision.” Stated Leigh Kuwanwisiwma, the Hopi Cultural Preservation Office Director. “Both myself and chairman Nuvamsa are going to attending the proceedings with a positive prayer in our hearts.”

The President of the Navajo Nation, Joe Shirley Jr., who will also be at the court proceedings and following press conference, has called upon all those "who deeply respect our Mother Earth to join us in a 'National and International Day of Prayer' for our sacred mountain of the west, Doko'oosliid (The San Francisco Peaks)."

The Save the Peaks Coalition (STPC), a volunteer group formed in 2004 to protect the Sacred Mountain, will caravan with Indian and non-Indian people from Arizona to attend the December 11th court proceedings.

California community based organizations such as Axis of Justice, South Central Farmers, Southern California Indian Center, Q-Team, Food Not Bombs, to name a few, are working with the STPC to organize a 2 mile march, prayer vigil, and rally in Pasadena.

"Why in 2007, do we as America's first people have no guarantee for protection of our religious freedom? We will continue our dedication to save the Peaks until we have our human rights fully upheld." Said Jeneda Benally a volunteer with the Save the Peaks Coalition.

"Our federal government seems to place the profitability of a privately owned, non-destination ski area, that operates on federal land, over the deeply held religious and cultural convictions of hundreds of thousands of Native Americans living in the southwestern United States." said Howard Shanker, of the Shanker Law Firm, PLC, representing the Navajo Nation, the White Mountain Apache Tribe, the Yavapai-Apache Tribe, the Havasupai Tribe, Rex Tilousi, Dianna Uqualla, The Sierra Club, The Center for Biological Diversity, and the Flagstaff Activist Network.

Shanker, who is running for Congress in Arizona's Congressional District 1, added that "We need better laws and lawmakers who are willing to stand up and be counted in the face of this type of injustice. The continued pursuit of the use of reclaimed waste water to make snow on the San Francisco Peaks should be an affront to all people of conscience everywhere."

In addition, lawyers representing the Hopi Tribe and DNA People's Legal Services Inc. representing the Hualapai Tribe, and other tribal individuals will present their case.

“If you desecrate this sacred mountain it is like destroying the Mormon chapel or other churches through out the world, even Mecca a holy place, what will be next what if it's your place of worship?” Said Avery Denny, a member of the Dine' (Navajo) Hataali Association which is involved in the lawsuit to protect the holy Mountain.

"The struggle for Indigenous People's cultural survival is directly connected to maintaining a healthy environment." Said, Jesus Torres, Community Organizer with Communities for A Better Environment, a California statewide environmental health and justice organization. "Although Los Angeles and the surrounding areas may seem distant from these threatened sacred landscapes, we recognize this is a fight for Environmental Justice and Human Rights. We will be at the courthouse to support the efforts to protect the San Francisco Peaks."

In advance of the court proceedings a panel discussion with representatives from the Save the Peaks Coalition, the Tongva Nation, actress and activist Q'orianka Kilcher, and more will be held to address "Indigenous Cultural Survival, Environmental Justice and Protecting Sacred Places." This event will be held on Saturday, December 8th at 6:00pm at Self Help Graphics located at 3802 Cesar E. Chavez Ave. An awareness concert to protect sacred sites will follow. KPFK FM 90.7 Los Angeles is a media sponsor of this event.

Members of the public have been invited to participate in events that have been scheduled to support efforts to help save the Peaks:

Saturday, December 8th

Panel Discussion & Awareness Concert!

"Defending the Land: Indigenous Cultural Survival, Environmental Justice & Protecting Sacred Places"

Panel Discussion from 6:00pm - 8:00pm with representatives from Environmental groups, Grassroots organizations, and Indigenous communities struggling to protect sacred places.

Protect Sacred Sites! Awareness Concert starting at 8:00pm (Bands TBA)

Where: Self Help Graphics & Art  
3802 Cesar E. Chavez Avenue  
Los Angeles, CA 90063  
Tel. 323-881-6444

Monday, December 10th

Welcoming ceremony for Save the Peaks caravan from Northern Arizona, dinner and speakers.

When: 6:30pm

Where: The All Saints Church

132 North Euclid Avenue, Pasadena, CA 91101

Tuesday, December 11th - Save the Peaks Court Date

The case will be heard at the Pasadena Court of Appeals at 3:00pm. The court is located at 125 South Grand Avenue, Pasadena, CA. Parking is limited in the area so please carpool and use public transportation.

Noon - 1:30pm

March for Sacred Sites & Human Rights!

Meet at All Saints Church for lunch and march to the Appeals Court.

1:40pm - 3:00pm

Prayer Vigil, Ceremony & Rally outside the Courthouse.

Vigil to continue outside for folks who do not wish to enter the courthouse.

3:00pm - 4:00pm

Actual court proceedings. Folks will be able to go inside the courthouse to view the court proceedings and show support.

5:00pm - 5:30pm

Press Conference outside of courthouse.

Please visit [www.savethepeaks.org](http://www.savethepeaks.org) for more information.