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# Interior Secretary calls for dialog in Superior land swap plan

**By Tony Davis**

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SUPERIOR — Interior Secretary Ken Salazar vowed Friday to do what seems on its face impossible: to bring miners, environmentalists, Native Americans and local leaders together on a land swap proposal that has ripped this community apart.

After listening to a scattershot comments for and against the proposed Resolution Copper Co. land exchange, Salazar ordered Apache elders, legislators, council members, and a handful of others to gather in the middle of the Resolution High School gym to being the process of dialog.

More than 300 people packed the gym to vent on the proposed exchange of more than 5,000 acres of private land for 2,406 acres of federal land so Resolution can build and operate the biggest copper mine in the United States. The mine would be built on what is now the Forest Service's Oak Flat campground east of town — land held sacred by the San Carlos Apaches — and what could be the country's biggest copper deposit.

The crowd was heavily tilted in favor of the exchange, mainly from public officials and miners who would like jobs at Resolution. But some voices were heard offering cautionary or negative views about it.

Salazar, invited here by exchange supporter Sen. John McCain said: "I learned this from Sen. McCain. We need a dialog here. People need to understand each other. When voices are raised, often times you can pass a bill. But ultimately, you've seen these projects, they end up in litigation, year after year, decade after decade. The only way to avoid paralysis is if there is dialog."

Salazar also held a lengthy meeting with Apache tribal leaders Friday morning at the campground at which they pleaded their case against the exchange and escorted him around the campground to show what they felt are its spiritual values.

The mine is heavily backed by community leaders who want the project's more than 1,000 permanent jobs and thousands more jobs created indirectly by it. It is opposed tribes by environmentalists who believe the lands the feds will get aren't that valuable, and by others who believe the mine will use too much water and threaten the surrounding aquifer.

At a brief press conference after the meeting, Salazar said he is hopeful that his department can find a way "honor the work of all sides," and find a consensus. When asked if that meant he is hoping to find a way to make the exchange happen, he replied, "I'm here on fact-finding."

Read more on this in tomorrow's Arizona Daily Star

Contact reporter Tony Davis at 806-7746. Follow Tony Davis on Twitter at [tonydavis987](#)

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