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Events planned in Peaks protest
Several organizations plan weekend rallies

By Kathy Helms
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FLAGSTAFF — Several events are scheduled this weekend to raise awareness for the efforts to protect the San Francisco Peaks from proposed ski area expansion and snowmaking with treated sewage effluent.

The Save the Peaks Coalition, horseback riders from the Navajo Nation, runners from Prescott, and the newly formed Northern Arizona University student group, Indigenous Action Student Alliance, are working together to address environmental, cultural, and public health concerns about the controversial ski expansion plan.

The Save the Peaks Horseback Ride will begin at 8 a.m. Saturday from Grey Mountain. More than 15 horseback riders from the Navajo Nation will meet south of Grey Mountain store to begin the journey.

A traditional dry sweat lodge service will be at 8 a.m. Sunday, with the location to be announced at end of the horse ride.

Riders from across the Navajo Nation are welcome to saddle up and join in. For more information, contact: Jim Black (928) 608-7469. E-mail: Sacred4s@hotmail.com

On Saturday and Sunday, the Save the Peaks Harvest Run will start from Prescott, also headed for the Peaks.

A local Prescott man, Thomas Arnold, has organized the event and is running from Prescott to the top of the San Francisco Peaks before finishing up in Flagstaff. He plans to begin his journey from Prescott at 3 a.m. Saturday and estimates the 115-mile run will take just under 36 hours to complete, without stopping to sleep.

On Sunday evening, the Sacred Landscapes Forum: Environmental Justice & Cultural Survival will take place at Northern Arizona University's Cline Auditorium. The forum begins at 6:30 and is free and open to the public.

Representatives from the Save the Peaks Coalition, Black Mesa Water Coalition, Black Mesa Indigenous Support, Native Movement Collective and other social and environmental justice groups will be on hand to provide information about the campaign to Save the Peaks, the work to protect the Navajo aquifer and stop Peabody Coal, the resistance to forced relocation on Black Mesa, and more, according to Save the Peaks Coalition.

The Peaks are considered sacred by more than 13 Native American nations and provide habitat for threatened plants and animals.

On Sept. 14, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco heard arguments in a legal battle that may decide the future of American Indian religious freedom and the ecological integrity of the Peaks.

Tribes and environmental groups have joined forces to halt plans to expand the Arizona Snowbowl ski area where developers plan to use treated sewage effluent to make artificial snow on that portion of the Peaks.

The Navajo Nation, Hopi Tribe, Havasupai, Hualapai, White Mountain Apache, Yavapai-Apache tribes as well as the Sierra Club, Flagstaff Activist Network, and the **Center for Biological Diversity** all were represented in the legal arguments before the Court of Appeals.

The Din Medicine Men's Association and Din Bidziil Coalition also filed amicus briefs stating that the court's decision will impact all American religious faiths and indigenous cultural identities.

The court has not yet issued an opinion in the case.

For more information: www.savethepeaks.org