

**Legislative Ambiguity and Ontological Hierarchy in US Sacred Land Law
[ABSTRACT]**

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Sacred site law within the United States often fails to meaningfully protect indigenous cultural landscapes. One reason for this failure is ambiguous language within legislation which courts interpret in accordance with hegemonic understandings of land, thus marginalizing indigenous ontologies. Drawing on research involving ski resort expansion on the San Francisco Peaks, I demonstrate instances in which sacred site law was construed so narrowly as to *a priori* preclude indigenous ways of knowing, particularly in regards to the nature of land, use of sacred objects, and pollution. These examples highlight how ontological bias significantly limits the possibilities for sacred land protection.

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