



## United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc.

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### **USET Resolution No. 2015:021**

#### **SUPPORT FOR THE RIGHT OF TRIBAL CITIZENS TO CONTINUE TRADITIONAL GATHERING OF PLANTS AND MEDICINES IN THE NATIONAL PARKS**

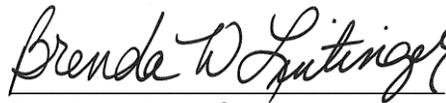
- WHEREAS,** United South and Eastern Tribes Incorporated (USET) is an intertribal organization comprised of twenty-six (26) federally recognized Tribes; and
- WHEREAS,** the actions taken by the USET Board of Directors officially represent the intentions of each member Tribe, as the Board of Directors comprises delegates from the member Tribes' leadership; and
- WHEREAS,** it has been the custom and practice of some Tribal members for centuries to gather plants for consumption, medicinal and religious purposes; and
- WHEREAS,** some Tribal members have been prevented by the National Park Service (NPS) from continuing to gather plants for traditional purposes on NPS lands; and
- WHEREAS,** one example of interference by NPS involves the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI), whose members have gathered ramps, sochan, and other plants from traditional sites that are now located within the Great Smoky Mountains National Park (GSMNP) since before the GSMNP's creation; and
- WHEREAS,** although the EBCI and GSMNP previously entered into written agreements over the past decade that permitted restricted plant gathering on GSMNP lands, the GSMNP has issued criminal citations to Tribal members, predominantly elders, for this traditional practice; and
- WHEREAS,** a change in federal law is necessary to clarify that EBCI citizens and citizens of other Tribes have the right to continue traditional gathering of plants on NPS lands according to the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 PL-95-341; and
- WHEREAS,** in December 2010, the United States recognized the rights of its First Peoples through its support of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), whose provisions and principles support and promote the purposes of this resolution; therefore, be it
- RESOLVED** the USET Board of Directors hereby supports the right of all Tribal citizens to continue traditional gathering practices of plants and medicines for consumption, medicinal and religious purposes from National Park Service lands; and, be it further
- RESOLVED** the USET Board of Directors hereby supports specific legislation that would clarify that any individual Tribe, including the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, and their respective Tribal citizens would be permitted to continue traditional gathering practices of plants and medicines for consumption, medicinal and religious purposes from National Park Service lands.

**CERTIFICATION**

This resolution was duly passed at the USET Impact Week Meeting, at which a quorum was present, in Arlington, VA, February 12, 2015.



Brian Patterson, President  
United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc.



Brenda Lintinger, Secretary  
United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc.

*“Because there is strength in Unity”*