



USET

SOVEREIGNTY PROTECTION FUND

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USET SPF Resolution No. 2023 SPF:001

SUPPORT FOR THE RIGHTS OF NATURE

- WHEREAS,** United South and Eastern Tribes Sovereignty Protection Fund (USET SPF) is an intertribal organization comprised of thirty-three (33) federally recognized Tribal Nations; and
- WHEREAS,** the actions taken by the USET SPF Board of Directors (Board) officially represent the intentions of each member Tribal Nation, as the Board of Directors comprises delegates from the member Tribal Nations' leadership; and
- WHEREAS,** USET and USET SPF have long been concerned with the protection of Tribal natural resources, establishing the USET Environmental Liaison Office in 2004, which in 2012 became the Office of Environmental Resource Management (OERM), to assist USET member Tribal Nations with a wide range of environmental concerns, such as supporting protection of human health and ecosystems, risk assessments, climate change adaptation and mitigation, providing clean and safe drinking water, cultural resource protection, traditional and conventional agriculture, and sustainable development; and
- WHEREAS,** USET Resolution 2015:026 endorses "the recovery of all ecosystems"; and
- WHEREAS,** USET SPF Resolution 2016:034 addresses the threat of climate change and declares the commitment of "member Tribal Nations...to join together to address climate change impacts and to take actions to protect their people, lands, water and natural resources, cultural integrity, rights and sovereignty"; and
- WHEREAS,** our authority and ability as Tribal Nations and Indigenous peoples to protect the natural environment is essential to our inherent sovereignty and self-determination; and
- WHEREAS,** our authority and ability as Tribal Nations and Indigenous peoples to protect the natural environment is at risk from the many environmental crises that we face today, including the accelerating rates of species extinction, ecosystem collapse, and climate change; and
- WHEREAS,** environmental laws, which regulate the use and protection of the natural environment and treat nature and Mother Earth as a non-living entity existing for human use, are contributing to and accelerating these crises; and
- WHEREAS,** since time immemorial, Indigenous peoples have depended on Mother Earth for survival, and have always recognized Mother Earth as a relative and provider that we must respect and protect; and
- WHEREAS,** within written law, the highest form of protection is the recognition of legal rights; and

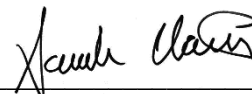
- WHEREAS,** USET Resolution 2015:026 declares that “natural ecosystems and related natural communities have a fundamental right to exist, flourish and evolve, and waters have a right to be clean and flow unobstructed, and fish have a right to spawn and to live out their natural history and life cycles,” and further declares that “human activities have seriously upset the productivity and natural balance of... Tribal traditional ecosystems” putting them “into a state of distress” for which “action must be taken to remedy”; and
- WHEREAS,** a growing number of Tribal Nations and Indigenous organizations have advanced and adopted laws and policies which recognize nature, including species and ecosystems, as a living entity with inherent rights, including rights to exist, flourish, regenerate, evolve, and restoration; and
- WHEREAS,** to strengthen and expand our authority and ability as Tribal Nations and Indigenous peoples to protect Tribal and treaty rights, and the natural environment on Tribal and ancestral Tribal territories, there is growing support within Indian Country for recognizing and protecting the rights of nature; 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 SPF Board of Directors supports the rights of nature and the efforts of Tribal Nations to recognize, implement, and enforce these rights within Tribal law and governance; and be it further
- RESOLVED** the USET SPF Board of Directors requests that the federal government support the rights of nature and the efforts of Tribal Nations to recognize, implement, and enforce these rights within Tribal law and governance; and, in coordination and collaboration with Tribal Nations, protect the rights of nature on trust, treaty, and ancestral Tribal homelands, and within Tribal communities, including through the prohibition of activities that will contribute to ecosystem decline, species extinction, or climate change.

CERTIFICATION

This resolution was duly passed at the USET SPF Annual Meeting held on the Sovereign Territory of the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation at which a quorum was present on October 13, 2022.



Chief Kirk E. Francis, Sr., President
United South and Eastern Tribes
Sovereignty Protection Fund



Vice Chairwoman Sarah Harris, Secretary
United South and Eastern Tribes
Sovereignty Protection Fund

Because there is Strength in Unity