



USET

SOVEREIGNTY PROTECTION FUND

Nashville, TN Office
711 Stewarts Ferry Pike, Suite 100
Nashville, TN 37214
P: 615-872-7900 | F: 615-872-7417

Washington, DC Office
1730 Rhode Island Ave., NW, Suite 210
Washington, DC 20036

USET SPF Resolution No. 2023 SPF:014

SUPPORT FOR CREATING A COMPREHENSIVE FEDERAL PROGRAM TO COORDINATE TRIBAL ENVIRONMENTAL RESILIENCY EFFORTS

- 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 officially represent the intentions of each member Tribal Nation, as the Board of Directors comprises delegates from the member Tribal Nations' leadership; and
- WHEREAS,** Tribal Nations are uniquely impacted by climate change because of our profound connection to the land. Many Tribal cultures, food sources, ceremonies, and economies are heavily reliant on the ecosystems for resources such as the use of fish, wildlife, and native plants; and
- WHEREAS,** Tribal Nations further face unique social, health-related, and environmental challenges which compound the challenges faced by climate change; and
- WHEREAS,** USET SPF member Tribal Nations and Tribal Nations throughout the country are facing an increasing number of climate change-related events, including heavy precipitation leading to subsequent flooding, erosion, and decreases in water quality that have put our homelands and our ways of life in jeopardy and Tribal Nations located in coastal areas, including USET SPF Member Tribal Nations, are most at risk for impacts from sea level rise; and
- WHEREAS,** a growing number of Tribal Nations urgently need to relocate their homelands and communities due to threats from erosion, flooding, and other effects of climate change; and
- WHEREAS,** moving a Tribal community is complex, multi-layered, and resource intensive, and many Tribal Nations do not have the necessary staff time and expertise required to coordinate such an effort; and
- WHEREAS,** federal relocation programs that do exist are drastically underfunded, would only cover the cost of relocating one small Tribal community, and often contain matching requirements that are not possible for many Tribal Nations; and
- WHEREAS,** waiting years and years to secure enough federal funding and then coordinate these resources will be too late for many Tribal Nations who are facing immediate threats from the impacts of the climate crisis; and
- WHEREAS,** despite exceptional efforts toward Climate Change adaptation throughout Indian Country, there remain significant institutional barriers to Tribal Climate Change adaptation planning,

as Tribal Climate Change resiliency funding remains very “project-based,” and unsustainable for long-term Climate Change adaptation plan implementation; and

WHEREAS, the BIA Tribal Climate Resilience Program awarded only about \$60 million in climate resilience funds over the course of nine years (2011–2020), and the Infrastructure and Jobs Act allocated just \$130 million, which is insufficient to address necessary planning and relocation for affected Tribal Nations; and

WHEREAS, a 2020 BIA report found that “This patchwork approach leaves gaps in actions due to the criteria of each program and requirements of each (i.e. cost share, technical aptitude needed). Providing the direction for a coordinated, multi-organizational framework would help to address gaps among agency programs;” and

WHEREAS, the Government Accountability Office has said: “Unclear federal leadership is the key challenge to climate migration as a resilience strategy. Because no federal agency has the authority to lead federal assistance for climate migration, support for climate migration efforts has been provided on an ad hoc basis;” and

WHEREAS, in fulfillment of trust and treaty obligations, the federal government has an inherent responsibility to ensure the protection of the environmental and cultural resources that support the health and wellness of Tribal communities, as well as to support Tribal sovereignty and self-determination; and

WHEREAS, it is critical that Tribal Nations have access to the necessary resources to address the effects of climate change within our communities and as sovereign governments, to be full partners in climate change adaptation and planning efforts; and

WHEREAS, failing to provide adequate technical assistance and financial resources is a failure of the federal government’s trust and treaty responsibilities and obligations that is tantamount to being complicit in the disappearance of our lands, our people, and our way of life; 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 urges Congress to create a federal program located in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs at the Department of Interior that would assist Tribal Nations in community-driven relocation, climate adaptation planning, and other environmental mitigation efforts, in coordination with the necessary federal partners; and be it further

RESOLVED that the federal program should help provide planning and flexible funding coordination as well as expedite land-into-trust applications for Tribal Nations who are forced to consider relocation due to climate change; and be it further

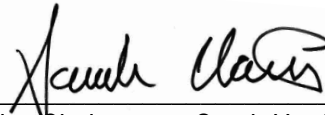
RESOLVED that Congress should provide sufficient funding so this program may adequately meet the requirements of all Tribal Nations who are forced to consider relocation due to climate change.

CERTIFICATION

This resolution was duly passed by the USET SPF Executive Committee, at which a quorum was present on June 3, 2023.



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