



United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc.

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USET Resolution No. 2016:034

CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS AND RESPONSE ACTIONS TO PROTECT HUMAN HEALTH, TRIBAL LANDS, WATER AND NATURAL RESOURCES, CULTURAL IDENTITY, AND SOVEREIGNTY

- WHEREAS,** United South and Eastern Tribes Sovereignty Protection Fund (USET SPF) is an intertribal organization comprised of twenty-six (26) 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,** the USET Natural Resources Committee recognizes there is overwhelming scientific evidence of climate change, which has been documented in the Fifth Assessment Report Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2014), Third National Climate Assessment (2014), and Impacts of Climate Change on Human Health in the U.S. Assessment (2016); and
- WHEREAS,** the IPCC Synthesis Report issued findings that "warming of the climate system is unequivocal, and since the 1950s, many of the observed changes are unprecedented over decades to millennia," and that "recent climate changes have had widespread impacts on human and natural systems;" and
- WHEREAS,** the Third National Climate Assessment acknowledges "the peoples, lands, and resources of indigenous communities in the United States, including Alaska and the Pacific Rim, face an array of climate change impacts and vulnerabilities that threaten many Native communities;" and
- WHEREAS,** the National Climate Assessment further identified that "climate change impacts on many of the 566 (*currently* 567) federally recognized tribes and other tribal and indigenous groups in the U.S. are projected to be especially severe, since these impacts are compounded by a number of persistent social and economic problems;" and
- WHEREAS,** the assessments of the Impacts of Climate Change on Human Health in the U.S. recognize that "... Indigenous people, especially those who are dependent on the environment for sustenance or who live in graphically isolated or impoverished communities are likely to experience greater exposure and lower resilience to climate-related health effects;" and
- WHEREAS,** the Impacts of Climate Change on Human Health in the U.S. Assessment further recognizes that climate change impacts are far-reaching and pose threats to traditional foods resulting in poor nutrition and increased obesity and diabetes; disruption of traditional fishing, hunting and subsistence practices; threats to sacred ceremonial and cultural practices through changing the availability of culturally relevant plant and animal species, and clean water; Tribal surface and ground waters, water security and water treatment infrastructure; and loss of Tribal territory and disruption of cultural resources and traditional ways of life leading to loss of cultural identity; and

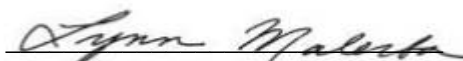
- WHEREAS,** a collaborative partner, the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (ATNI), has asserted that “increasing the resilience of Tribal Governments and Native communities is critical to ensuring access to resources protected by right and vitally important to the cultural existence and economic vitality of these communities; and Tribes must proactively begin to address these (climate) impacts, assess their vulnerability, and develop adaptation strategies;” and
- WHEREAS,** the President’s State, Local, and Tribal Leaders Task Force on Climate Preparedness and Resilience: Recommendations to the President declared: “The Federal Government must fully incorporate its government-to-government relationship with Tribes and Alaska Native communities into existing programs and activities that relate to climate change by enhancing self-governance capacity, promoting engagement of State and local knowledge in understanding the changing climate;” and
- WHEREAS,** ATNI has articulated a set of Tribal Climate Change Principles, set forth in ATNI Resolution #15 – 52 (attached); and further ATNI has found that “less than five percent of Tribal Governments nationwide have developed climate change vulnerability assessments or adaptation plans;” and
- WHEREAS,** USET member Tribal Nations are committed 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,** 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 endorses the Tribal Climate Change Principles, as outlined in Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians Resolution #15 – 52; and, be it further
- RESOLVED** the USET SPF Board of Directors supports greater engagement with federal agencies in all aspects of federal climate preparedness and resilience efforts, including the Bureau of Indian Affairs Climate Change/Tribal Climate Resilience Program, Climate Science Centers, Climate Hubs, and Landscape Conservation Cooperatives; regional collaboration and joint efforts to conduct vulnerability assessments and adaptation planning among USET SPF member Tribal Nations; and collective and individual Tribal Nation response actions to protect human health, Tribal lands, water, and natural resources, cultural identity, and sovereignty.

CERTIFICATION

This resolution was duly passed at the USET Sovereignty Protection Fund Semi-Annual Meeting, at which a quorum was present, in Atmore, AL, May 18, 2016.



Brian Patterson, President
United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc.
Sovereignty Protection Fund



Chief Lynn Malerba, Secretary
United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc.
Sovereignty Protection Fund

“Because there is strength in Unity”



2015 Annual Convention Spokane, Washington

RESOLUTION #15 - 52

“TRIBAL CLIMATE CHANGE PRINCIPLES: RESPONDING TO FEDERAL POLICIES AND ACTIONS TO ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE”

PREAMBLE

We, the members of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians of the United States, invoking the divine blessing of the Creator upon our efforts and purposes, in order to preserve for ourselves and our descendants rights secured under Indian Treaties, Executive Orders, and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws and constitution of the United States and several states, to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people, to preserve Indian cultural values, and otherwise to promote the welfare of the Indian people, do hereby establish and submit the following resolution:

WHEREAS, the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (ATNI) are representatives of and advocates for national, regional, and specific tribal concerns; and

WHEREAS, ATNI is a regional organization comprised of American Indians/Alaska Natives and tribes in the states of Washington, Idaho, Oregon, Montana, Nevada, Northern California, and Alaska; and

WHEREAS, the health, safety, welfare, education, economic and employment opportunity, and preservation of cultural and natural resources are primary goals and objectives of the ATNI; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to ATNI Resolution #13– 46 “Pacific Northwest Tribes to Adopt Guidance Principles and to Explore Development of an Implementation Action Plan to Address the Impact of Climate Change” the ATNI commits to the development of guiding principles and exploration of the possibility of creating a unified mechanism to incorporate the principles into an action plan to address the impacts of climate change that will protect our

treaty, executive order, inherent and indigenous rights, including those contained in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Declaration), our health and the health of the environment, economies, and way of life; and

WHEREAS, Indigenous Peoples in the U.S., including 567 federally-recognized Tribes, are facing immediate and significant impacts from climate change; and

WHEREAS, a growing body of literature illustrates the unique issues facing Tribes from climate change, including the recently developed “Primer on Climate Change and Indigenous Peoples, Guidelines for Considering Traditional Knowledges (TKs) in Climate Change Initiatives,” and the special issue of the peer-reviewed journal Climatic Change, “Climate Change and Indigenous Peoples in the United States: Impacts, Experiences and Actions;” and

WHEREAS, furthermore, the federal government is beginning to acknowledge the disproportionate threats of climate change to Indigenous Peoples through administrative and congressional reports such as the 3rd National Climate Assessment and the 2014 President’s State, Local, and Tribal Leaders Task Force on Climate Preparedness and Resilience (Task Force); and

WHEREAS, to respond to such impacts, Indigenous Peoples must have access to the financial and technical resources that are required to assess the impacts of climate change on their cultures, air, land and water, economies, community health, and ways of life; and

WHEREAS, in turn, federal action must be taken to support the efforts of Indigenous Peoples to adapt to climate change impacts and to reduce their carbon footprints through a range of mitigation approaches, including renewable energy development and energy efficiency; and

WHEREAS, adequate response to the threat of climate change requires action by Tribes and federal, state and local governments; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. federal government trust responsibility to federally-recognized Tribes includes the protection of Indian lands and Tribal rights to access those lands as well as those lands in which treaty rights are held; and

WHEREAS, tribal nations exercise exclusive jurisdiction over all lands, air space, natural resources, and carbon based assets within our ancestral homelands, and the United States government has a sacred duty to uphold its trust responsibility to ensure those lands resources and assets are protected and secured from all external threats; and

WHEREAS, the trust responsibility includes the duty to protect lands from the impacts of climate change; and

WHEREAS, Federal resources to address climate change must be allocated to Tribes

equitably and in sufficient quantity so that Tribes can engage effectively in adaptation and mitigation strategies that will help ensure the integrity of their cultures, homelands, infrastructures, and services; and enforce Tribal treaty and reserved rights to both on- and off-reservation resources; and

WHEREAS, the Task Force led an effort to reach out to Indigenous leaders, including the ATNI, and across the country to solicit their recommendations on how the federal government can better support their nations and communities in preparing for the impacts of climate change; and

WHEREAS, actions proposed by the Task Force include consulting and cooperating with Indigenous Peoples on all aspects of federal climate preparedness and resilience efforts, and encouraging states and local communities to do the same; and

WHEREAS, the Task Force recommendations focus on inclusion and participation of Indigenous Peoples in federal climate change programs, including access to data, programs and federal funds; education; and long-term planning for natural resources and ecosystem health; water safety and security; housing infrastructure; and food and energy security; and

WHEREAS, ATNI has reviewed the “Tribal Climate Change Principles: Responding to Federal Policies and Actions to Address Climate Change” which sets forth eight principles to guide the federal government in the development and implementation of administrative and legislative actions related to Indigenous Peoples and climate change; and

WHEREAS, the principles address many of the recommendations made by the Task Force; and

WHEREAS, these principles pertain directly to federally-recognized Tribes but may also apply indirectly to state-recognized Tribes, and unrecognized Tribes as they are also in need of support to address immediate and projected climate impacts and to ensure access to climate resources; and

WHEREAS; the eight principles include the following:

Strengthen Tribal Sovereignty in the Climate Change Era

1. Federally-recognized Tribes and other Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous communities must be partners with full and effective participation in assessing and addressing the problems of climate change at the local, regional, national, and international levels and must be accorded at least the status and rights recognized in the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and other international standards relevant to Indigenous Peoples.
2. Tribes must have fair and equitable representation on all federal climate committees, working groups, and initiatives in which states, local governments, and other stakeholders are represented.
3. The federal government should establish a high-level interagency Tribal

government task force to examine and propose solutions to close gaps across the federal agencies' relationships and programs with Tribes, and to develop, recommend, and implement Tribal-specific solutions that enable the agencies to support and foster Tribal climate-resilient planning and investment.

Support Tribes Facing Immediate Threats from Climate Change

4. Indigenous Peoples must have direct, open access to funding, capacity-building, and other technical assistance, with their free, prior and informed consent, to address the immediate and long-term threats from climate change.

Ensure Tribal Access to Climate Change Resources

5. Tribes must have fair and equitable access to federal climate change programs.
6. Tribes must be made eligible for existing and future federal natural resource funding programs for which states are eligible, but from which Tribes are currently, or might be, excluded.
7. A fair and equitable set-aside of direct monies or allowances must be made available for distribution to Tribes through legislation, administrative actions, and existing and future federal natural resource funding programs.

Traditional Knowledges and Climate Change

8. Indigenous traditional knowledges, with the free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous Peoples, must be acknowledged, respected, and promoted in federal policies and programs related to climate change.

WHEREAS, the current Administration has taken strides that support Tribal measures to cope with climate change, including, but not limited to, the November 5, 2009, Executive Memo directing agency heads to submit a detailed plan of actions that agencies will take to implement the policies; Executive Order 13175 - Consultation and Coordination With Indian Tribal Governments; and Department of Interior Secretarial Order 3289 - Addressing the Impacts of Climate Change on America's Water, Land, and Other Natural and Cultural Resource; and

WHEREAS, the following organizations and tribes, as well as others, have been involved, to varying degrees, in drafting, reviewing, and providing input on the principles including but not limited to:

Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians	Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission
Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission	Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission
United South and Eastern Tribes	Institute for Tribal Environmental Professionals
Native American Rights Fund	National Congress of American Indians
Tribal Environmental Policy Center	Pacific NW Tribal Climate Change Network
Intertribal Timber Council	Upper Columbia United Tribes
Quinault Tribe	Swinomish Tribe

Tulalip Tribes
Red Lake Band of Chippewa
Stillaguamish Tribe
Institute for Tribal Government; now

Lummi Tribe
Yurok Tribe
National Wildlife Federation

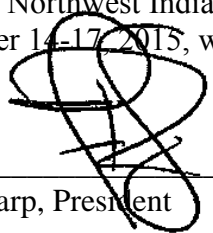
THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that ATNI does hereby support the implementation of the “Tribal Climate Change Principles: Responding to Federal Policies and Actions to Address Climate Change” as a guiding policy for U.S. federal agencies and that all federal agencies actively engage ATNI and ATNI member Tribes in plans to implement these principles; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that ATNI requests that the National Congress of American Indians also adopt a resolution in support of the “Tribal Climate Change Principles: Responding to Federal Policies and Actions to Address Climate Change” at the October 18-23, 2015 NCAI Convention in San Diego, California; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that ATNI urges the United States government agencies, taskforces, and partner organizations to comply with and implement the November 5, 2009, Executive Memo, Executive Order 13175 and Secretarial Order 3289, and partner with American Indians as sovereign nations, as co-decision makers regarding all policy, regulations and laws related to climate change on or off each nation’s respected reservations, ceded lands and usual and accustomed areas.

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted at the 2015 Annual Convention of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians, held at Northern Quest Resort and Casino, Spokane, Washington on September 14-17, 2015, with a quorum present.



Fawn Sharp, President



Norma Jean Louie, Secretary