



USET

SOVEREIGNTY PROTECTION FUND

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USET SPF Resolution No. 2018 SPF:002

MAINE TRIBAL AQUATIC ECOSYSTEMS IN PERIL

- WHEREAS,** United South and Eastern Tribes Sovereignty Protection Fund (USET SPF) is an intertribal organization comprised of twenty-seven (27) 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,** since time immemorial, Tribal Nations have depended upon the abundance and diversity of fish within the ocean and river ecosystems for survival; and
- WHEREAS,** the aquatic ecosystems within our Tribal homelands have evolved over thousands of years, offering fertile, pristine fresh and salt water fish, and enabling the people to culturally connect in profound physical and spiritual ways; and
- WHEREAS,** indigenous people have always respected our connection with the Earth and all life, taking only what is needed in ways that promote sustainability and living in balance with the resources; and
- WHEREAS,** over the past 500+ years, aquatic ecosystems, particularly those in the state of Maine, have suffered severe damage brought about by climate change and human activities, including overfishing and pollution, and are now in a state of distress causing many fish and wildlife species to become extinct, become endangered or threatened, collapsed or are on the verge of collapse; and
- WHEREAS,** as sovereign and independent nations, Tribal Nations retain certain aboriginal rights to fish and survive, which have been recognized and reserved in treaties; and
- WHEREAS,** the citizens of Tribal Nations have inherited certain inalienable and natural rights which include the right to sustain and strengthen Tribal cultural connections, the right to access clean water and safe-to-eat traditional wild foods and medicines; and
- WHEREAS,** since the arrival of Europeans to our traditional homelands, Tribal Nations in Maine have witnessed and are deeply concerned about the over exploitation, mismanagement, and destruction of the natural balance of the ecosystems and related fisheries, which continues today; and
- WHEREAS,** despite 500+ years of damage to the environment, which has changed Tribal cultures and way-of-life, the Earth, her waters and the fisheries remain a vital part of Tribal culture and identity; and
- WHEREAS,** in addition to rights and promises guaranteed under treaties, reserved rights doctrines and legislation (for example, the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act of 1980), Tribal Nations

possess certain rights under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; and

- WHEREAS,** USET SPF Tribal Nations are deeply concerned about the loss of resources and destruction of ecosystems in Maine and the negative impact this has on Tribal culture and Tribal sustenance, including negative health effects on Tribal citizens; and
- WHEREAS,** the fish and related ecosystems are a critical link to the future survival of Tribal citizens in Maine and, as such, are considered a natural resource to be managed as a trust resource; and
- WHEREAS,** robust sustenance fisheries in Maine will only be possible if wild, safe-to-eat fish are able to navigate to and from their natal spawning grounds in the upper reaches of the watersheds, are present in adequate numbers in the rivers, and are accessible to Tribal citizens; and
- WHEREAS,** the restoration of aquatic ecosystems and related fisheries in Maine is the key to providing robust Tribal sustenance fisheries, which includes ending pollution and mismanagement, and facilitating the full lifecycle of fish without man-made obstacles; and
- WHEREAS,** workable solutions are needed to help restore rivers, the ocean, fisheries and the entire ecosystem in Maine, through co-management agreements between Tribal, federal, state, and provincial governments and related agencies, for example, the Schoodic River Statement of Cooperation; and
- WHEREAS,** co-management agreements defining mutual benefits, roles, rights and responsibilities that offer Tribal Nations meaningful participation in shared governance have proven to be effective at building trust and accountability, as well as regulating natural resources for sustainability, protecting critical habitat, conservation, restoration, and meeting the social, economic and cultural needs of Tribal and non-Tribal citizens; 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 recognizes that the Maine Tribal Fisheries are in peril within traditional Tribal homelands and believes it is vital to stop pollution in waters, stop overfishing, and begin the process of restoring Tribal homelands, aquatic connectivity and traditional indigenous fisheries; and be it further
- RESOLVED** the USET SPF Board of Directors believes it important that Canada, the United States and all individual states, especially the state of Maine, take meaningful action to honor fishing rights and other commitments made in the treaties with Tribal Nations; and be it finally
- RESOLVED** the USET SPF Board of Directors supports the Tribal Nations of Maine in forming inclusive and meaningful co-management agreements that will foster cooperation between the

Because there is Strength in Unity

United States, Canada, states, and Tribal governments to co-manage resources and restore aquatic ecosystems in a meaningful way for the future well-being of fisheries, the natural ecosystem, and Tribal Nations and their citizens.

CERTIFICATION

This resolution was duly passed at the USET SPF Annual Meeting, at which a quorum was present, in Cherokee, NC, October 12, 2017.


Chief Kirk E. Francis, Sr., President
United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc.


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