



## UNITED SOUTH AND EASTERN TRIBES, INC.

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Resolution No. USET 99:01

### **SUPPORTING FUNDING INCREASES FOR THE NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE'S ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVE PROGRAM**

**WHEREAS,** United South and Eastern Tribes Incorporated (USET) is an intertribal organization comprising twenty-three (23) 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,** we the United South and Eastern Tribes, give thanks to the Creator for the abundant natural resources that our member tribes steward; and

**WHEREAS,** we find it increasingly difficult to manage and preserve these resources for the welfare of our people within the funding available to us for these purposes; and

**WHEREAS,** the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), a provider of such funding, recognizes, in its Policies on American Indians and Alaska Natives, that "tribal governments...manage land for such agricultural activities as farming, grazing, hunting, fishing, subsistence agriculture, and gathering of plants, animals, and plant products [and] that such resources may hold a unique meaning in the spiritual as well as everyday lifeways of American Indians;" and

**WHEREAS,** one USDA program that tribal governments have found extremely important to their efforts to manage these natural resources is the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), which provides cost-effective, technical, educational, and financial assistance to eligible tribes to address soil, water, and related natural resource concerns on more than 100 million acres of controlled lands; and

**WHEREAS,** Pearlie S. Reed, Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) (formerly the Soil Conservation Service), has led an admirable effort to adhere to the trust obligations under treaties and statutes to protect and maintain the lands, resources, and traditional use areas of Indians, and to implement the above USDA policy by setting aside five percent (5%) of EQIP funds for tribal use; and

**WHEREAS,** this set-aside doubled the influx of EQIP dollars into Indian Country - from \$5 million in FY 1997 to \$10 million in FY '98 with a constant total appropriation of \$200 million, and established offices at the reservation headquarters of 33 tribes, dedicating the hours of many staff members to work directly with tribes; and

**WHEREAS,** Secretary of Agriculture, Dan Glickman, sang the praises of EQIP in January, 1998 when announcing that year's \$200 million budget request by stating that EQIP had, "[I]n less than a year...become one of the most popular conservation programs at USDA, not to mention its long term environmental benefits;" and

**WHEREAS,** Congress also stated, in H.R. REP. NO. 105-588 accompanying H.R. 4101 (the pre-omnibus Agriculture appropriations bill for FY '99), its "belie[f] in the way the NRCS has provided vital conservation technical assistance to private landowners, groups, and communities since 1935," finding that it was "critical [to] end the erosion of USDA assistance available to provide basic technical conservation services to private agricultural landowners," and that "[t]he Federal government must maintain its commitment to support locally led conservation initiatives which secure a safe and productive environment;" and

*"Because there is strength in Unity"*

(USET 99:01)

**WHEREAS,** USDA sought \$300 million for EQIP in FY '99, and NRCS has produced a "workload analysis" that demonstrates a need for that \$300 million for Fiscal Year 2000 to cover the cost of technical assistance; and

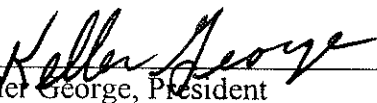
**WHEREAS,** the need for a funding increase is supported by the fact that at least three times more requests for cost-shares were received in FY '98 than could be funded; and

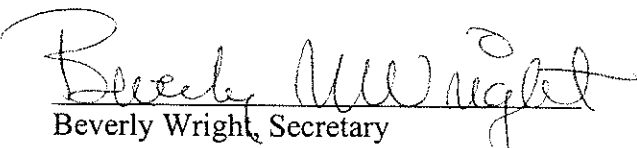
**WHEREAS,** despite EQIP's importance and success, FY '99 saw a decrease in total EQIP appropriations from \$200 million to \$174 million, negatively impacting tribes and all private landowners who use these funds to assist in the management of their natural resources; therefore, be it

**RESOLVED** that the United South and Eastern Tribes Board of Directors supports the views of the Appropriations Committee and the USDA regarding their trust responsibility and the importance of NRCS programs generally and EQIP specifically, and encourage Congress to fund EQIP at the NRCS requested level of \$300 million for Fiscal Year 2000.

#### CERTIFICATION

This resolution was duly passed at the USET Impact Week Meeting, at which a quorum was present in Washington, D.C. on Thursday, February 4, 1999.

  
Keller George, President  
United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc.

  
Beverly Wright, Secretary  
United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc.