USET Resolution No. 2003.067

SACRED SITES PROTECTION

WHEREAS, United South and Eastern Tribes, Incorporated (USET) is an intertribal organization comprised of twenty-four (24) 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, properties of religious and cultural significance to tribes are frequently threatened or destroyed by private and government sponsored development; and

WHEREAS, legal remedies such as the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, Executive Order 13,007 and the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), although they may occasionally provide the basis for protecting sites, are often ineffectively implemented and provide only limited (if any) legal redress to aggrieved traditional Indian religious practitioners and tribes; and

WHEREAS, thousands of sacred sites are currently threatened in the south and east, including but not limited to (e.g.): Penobscot River in Maine, Conley site in Louisiana; the Sacred Landscape Corridor within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the Ocmulgee Old Fields in Georgia; Tuckaleechee Cove in Tennessee; the Buckeye Knoll Site in Texas, and numerous other places; and

WHEREAS, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act requires that whenever a federal undertaking could affect a property of religious and cultural significance to a federally recognized tribe, the responsible federal agency must engage in an extensive review process, including government-to-government consultation with all affected federally recognized tribes; and

WHEREAS, many, if not all, federal agencies have not been in compliance with Executive Orders 13-007 regarding sacred sites and 13-175 regarding consultation or the National Historic Preservation Act (16 USC 470 et. Seq.; 36 CFR 800), concerning Indian rights to protect sites of traditional religious and cultural significance to tribes; and

WHEREAS, USET’s Culture and Heritage Committee has for many years supported and played a key role in efforts to strengthen legal protections for sacred places and to secure administrative accommodations for the use of sacred places by Indian practitioners; therefore, be it

RESOLVED that the USET Board of Directors supports the Sacred Places Protection Coalition (also called the Sacred Lands Protection Coalition) to develop statutory and regulatory Sacred Sites protection, and in particular, to focus upon the sacred site protection efforts in the South and Eastern United States; and, be it further

RESOLVED that the USET Board of Directors will seek participation in Congressional Oversight Hearings on threats to sacred places with the goals of strengthening federal law, administrative policies, procedures and regulations relevant to sacred sites protection.

"Because there is strength in Unity"
CERTIFICATION

This resolution was duly passed at the USET Impact Week Meeting, at which a quorum was present, in Arlington, VA, Thursday, February 6, 2003.

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

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