



NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

The National Congress of American Indians Resolution #SAC-12-007

TITLE: NCAI Support for Return of Coso Hot Springs District, a Sacred Place, to Local Area Tribes

WHEREAS, we, the members of the National Congress of American 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 the inherent sovereign rights of our Indian nations, rights secured under Indian treaties and agreements with the United States, and all other rights and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws and Constitution of the United States, to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people, to preserve Indian cultural values, and otherwise promote the health, safety and welfare of the Indian people, do hereby establish and submit the following resolution; and

WHEREAS, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) was established in 1944 and is the oldest and largest national organization of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments; and

WHEREAS, the Big Pine Paiute Tribe of the Owens Valley (BPPT), federally recognized as the Big Pine Band of Owens Valley Paiute Shoshone Indians of the Big Pine Reservation, is a sovereign, federally recognized Indian tribe and a member of NCAI; and

WHEREAS, BPPT has formed the Paiute-Shoshone Coalition for Protection of Aboriginal Lands with other federally recognized and state recognized Indian tribes to restore ancestral lands through acquisition and other means for more adequate protection; and

WHEREAS, BPPT and its partners in the Paiute-Shoshone Coalition for Protection of Aboriginal Lands have long recognized Coso Hot Springs as an important spiritual center for healing and restoring life; and

WHEREAS, Coso Hot Springs was acquired through condemnation by the United States Navy in 1947 as a part of the Naval Air Weapons Station, China Lake (NAWS China Lake); and

WHEREAS, the Navy began developing geothermal energy within the Coso Geothermal Field despite a determination by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the California State Historic Preservation Office that “this undertaking as proposed would have an adverse effect upon the Coso Hot Springs district;” and

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WHEREAS, BPPT and its partners in the Paiute-Shoshone Coalition for Protection of Aboriginal Lands have testified to NAWA China Lake that it is physically impossible for Native Americans to use the Coso Hot Springs in a traditional manner by immersion in its waters because of the changes which have occurred concurrent with the development of geothermal energy; and

WHEREAS, NAWA China Lake, in response to tribal testimony, stated that “current scientific data cannot prove or disprove a correlation between geothermal operations and any perceptible changes that have occurred in the surface manifestations at the Coso Hot Springs. However, NAWA China Lake acknowledges that appreciable changes in the water temperature and elevation have occurred in the South Pool since the Navy first began recording data from the Coso Hot Springs area in the 1970’s;” and

WHEREAS, the Department of the Navy is preparing a Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake Land Withdrawal EIS/LEIS to assess the potential environmental effects on withdrawn lands and to revise the Comprehensive Land Use Management Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Comprehensive Land Use Management Plan revision will include the Coso Hot Springs district.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the NCAI supports the Big Pine Paiute Tribe of the Owens Valley by advocating for congressional action to remove the Coso Hot Springs district from the Department of the Navy and place the land in tribal care; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this resolution shall be the policy of NCAI until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution.

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the General Assembly at the 2012 Annual Session of the National Congress of American Indians, held at the Sacramento Convention Center from October 21-26, 2012 in Sacramento, California, with a quorum present.



 President

ATTEST:



 Recording Secretary