Cherokee Council House
Cherokee, Qualla Boundary (NC)

Date:_____

RESOLUTION NO. _____ (2026)

WHEREAS, in Cherokee tradition, the waterways are known as the Longperson, a living, conscious being whose head begins in the mountains and whose feet stretch to the sea. The Longperson is a sacred presence, offering life, guidance, healing, and protection to our people.

WHEREAS, Cherokee traditional teachings and wisdom recognize that nature and all its elements are not just resources to be exploited for human gain, but are living beings with inherent rights to exist, thrive, and evolve;

WHEREAS, Eastern Band of Cherokee's core values are rooted in our strong connection to the land and waters. The following core values directly pertain to the rights of the water and our responsibility to honor our non-human relatives;

1. Honoring the Past- honoring Ancestors and elders, learning from past tribal decisions;
2. Strong Individual Character- to act selflessly with integrity, honesty, perseverance, courage, respect, trust, honor, and humility;
3. Educating the Children- providing values-oriented education and recreation, and by being strong role models; and
4. Group Harmony- freely giving time, talent, and treasures;
5. Sense of Place- acting as good stewards of the land, making a connection between the land & tribal identity.

WHEREAS, our people center Longperson in our ceremonies, gathering medicinal plants, practicing cleanliness and purity, providing nourishment for our families, in our enjoyment and mental health, and bringing our families and community together in celebration and stewardship of Longperson;

WHEREAS, the Eastern Band of Cherokee have the responsibility to care for our waterways so that other Tribal Nations and all living beings downstream can enjoy clean, healthy water. The care we show our waters directly affects the health and welfare of those who live along Longperson's path to the ocean;

WHEREAS, Our Ancestral homelands are being threatened by pollution, destruction and climate change. Longperson is the heartbeat of our homelands and home to the Tsuwa, our water quality indicator, who is also under threat and considered endangered. The decline of Longperson stewardship is evident in the death and decline of our non-human relatives, in the health of Longperson, and in the diminishing incredible biodiversity we share our home with;

WHEREAS, climate change has caused significant harm to Indigenous communities and poses a threat to the health and well-being of all life on earth, the impacts are becoming more and more devastating. The most recent hurricane, Helene, demonstrated that the Longperson and the Eastern Band of Cherokee are not immune to climate change impacts;

WHEREAS, the Eastern Band of Cherokee recognizes the importance of upholding the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which affirm our right to

maintain and strengthen our relationship with our Lands and Waters; Strengthening our relationship with and acknowledging Longperson rights will affirm boundary lands and prevent continued land loss through riverbank erosion;

WHEREAS, the recognition and protection of the rights of the Longperson is a necessary step toward achieving environmental sustainability and safeguarding the health, culture, and prosperity of future generations and the planet as a whole;

WHEREAS, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Tribal Council is the legislative body of the Eastern Band of Cherokee and is responsible for introducing and implementing legislation that uplifts and centers tribal governance around our Core value system.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians in Council assembled, at which a quorum is present, that the Tribal Council hereby recognizes the inherent rights of the Longperson, a natural entity within the boundary and Ancestral homelands of the Cherokee people, and declares that the Longperson possesses the following rights:

1. To exist, persist, and regenerate its vital cycles, structures, functions, and processes free from negative human disturbance, alteration, or destruction.
2. To maintain and restore its natural state and integrity, including the right to be free from pollution, contamination, nonnative invasive species, and other environmental degradation.
3. To serve as a home and habitat for non-human relatives, consistent with the ecological relationships established through time.
4. To access and maintain free-flowing conditions, including protection from damming, obstruction, or any alteration that impedes the natural flow of water.
5. To be protected by the Eastern Band of Cherokee under the laws, customs, and traditions of the Eastern Band of Cherokee, and to have its rights enforced by the appropriate authorities.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Eastern Band of Cherokee directs its representatives to work with other Indigenous communities, governments, and organizations to promote the recognition and protection of the rights of Longperson and to advocate for policies and laws that support environmental sustainability and the protection of Longperson.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians declares that the recognition of the rights of Longperson is a fundamental step towards protecting and ensuring the safety of water, and is committed to working towards this goal for the benefit of current and future tribal citizens.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that this resolution shall become effective upon ratification by the Principal Chief of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

Submitted by:

Jasmine Smith - NAIWA Daughters Chairwomen
Kyndra Postoak - NAIWA Daughters Secretary
Emma Maney - NAIWA Daughters Treasurer
Zailiana Blythe - NAIWA Daughters Project Leader
Laila Crowe Taylor - NAIWA Daughters Project Leader
Janee Smith - NAIWA Daughters Project Leader
Ehko Lossiah - NAIWA Daughters Member
Maryjane Tafoya - NAIWA Daughters Member
Story Martens - NAIWA Daughters Member

Misha Slee - NAIWA Daughters Member
Aryahnie Pheasant - NAIWA Daughters Member
Nyra Reed - NAIWA Daughters Member
Nahnie George - NAIWA Daughters Member
Kimberely Smith - NAIWA Daughters Mentor
Malia Crowe-Skulski - NAIWA Daughters Mentor
Tia Panther - NAIWA Daughters Mentor
Sharlotte Queen-Jackson - NAIWA Daughters Mentor

Darius Taylor - Cherokee Youth Council Member
Gavin Teesatuskie - Cherokee Youth Council Member
Georjia Girty - Cherokee Youth Council Member
Ava Walkingstick - Cherokee Youth Council Member
Moke Tafoya - Cherokee Youth Council Member
Kale Walkingstick - Cherokee Youth Council Member
Chaz Martens - Cherokee Youth Council Member
Utsela Saunooke - Cherokee Youth Council Member
Kierstan Jumper - Cherokee Youth Council Member

Carmeleta Monteith, Beloved Woman

Mary Thompson, Earthkeeper
Onita Bush, Earthkeeper
Tom Belt, Earthkeeper
Roger Smoker, Earthkeeper
Blythe Wincester, Earthkeeper