Northwest Public Power Association
Resolution 2019-12
In Support of Improved Efforts, by Utilities and the Federal Government, to Respond to Natural Disasters

Background

Each year, between 100 and 200 federal natural disasters are declared. Federal statistics show that the frequency and severity of natural disasters are increasing. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), 2017 saw record-breaking losses from natural disasters, totaling $306 billion worth of damages. By October of 2018, the U.S. saw 11 natural disasters totally $1 billion each in damages. Nearly every area of the country has been touched by hurricanes, flooding, wildfires, and ice storms. These events threaten loss of life and property, both from the direct impact and the often extended periods before electric service can be restored, disaster assistance provided, and facilities and personal property rebuilt.

As community-owned resources, public power utilities are committed to improving the resiliency of their systems, responding expeditiously to disasters, and restoring service as quickly as possible. Public power utilities also help each other—through the provision of mutual aid by public power systems providing crew and equipment to repair both neighboring and distant utilities.

Recent experience underscores the value of mutual aid and federal disaster assistance, but also highlights areas where improvements can occur, including:

- Expand voluntary participation in, and coordination of, mutual aid efforts;
- Improve administration of FEMA grants to reimburse utilities, which can in turn expedite payments to those utilities that have provided mutual aid; and
- Reform federal disaster assistance programs to facilitate greater focus on disaster prevention, staging, system resiliency, program efficiency, and improved oversight.

NWPPA’s Position

- NWPPA supports action by Congress to reform federal disaster assistance programs to enable public power utilities to use federal funds for disaster prevention and system resiliency investments, expedite federal payments to utilities for both direct disaster responses and mutual aid payments, and provide adequate federal funding for disaster response.