

1 **Northwest Public Power Association**
2 **Resolution 2019-15**
3 **Ensuring Adequate Federal Funds to Combat and Prevent Catastrophic**
4 **Wildfires**

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6 **Background**

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8 Fires in the West have had a devastating impact on natural resources, property, and lives—
9 including public power facilities and employees. Generating units, transmission and distribution
10 lines, communications equipment, and utility buildings have been adversely affected by recent
11 fires. The significant carbon emissions of fires – from burning vegetation and damaged trees left
12 to decay, accounting for roughly one-fifth of total man-made emissions – also undermine utility
13 efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The U.S. Department of Commerce estimates the
14 total economic cost to communities caused by the 2018 wildfire season alone to be upwards of
15 \$350 billion.

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17 Legislation was enacted in 2018 to end the practice of fire-borrowing by establishing an
18 emergency reserve account that the Forest Service can draw from instead of borrowing from
19 non-fire programs. However, this funding fix does not take effect until 2020. As a result,
20 Congress must be prepared to swiftly approve supplemental appropriations for suppression
21 costs to ensure other forest health programs are not raided yet again if 2019’s fire season
22 proves as severe as recent years.

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24 Additionally, the Departments of Agriculture and Interior has the responsibility under federal
25 law to ensure the health of federal forest and range land. Yet, there are numerous stands of
26 timber and range land that suffer from disease or bug infestation. Once a fire is started where
27 there is an abundance of dry or dead natural fuel, public power utilities are subject to
28 infrastructure destruction as well as reliability and personnel risk related to wildfires on federal
29 lands.

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31 **NWPPA Position:**

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- 33 • NWPPA supports swift enactment of legislation, or regulatory action, to establish
34 wildfire funding mechanisms to ensure adequate and equitable funding to prevent and
35 fight major forest fires.
 - 36 • NWPPA supports swift enactment of legislation, or regulatory action, to establish
37 aggressive management of forests suffering from disease or bug infestation where
38 electric infrastructure is also nearby or present.

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40 Origination Date: 2016. Revised 2017 and 2019.