**Northwest Public Power Association**

**Resolution 2023‐13**

**Support for Federal Policies to Combat**

**and Prevent Catastrophic Wildfires**

**Background**

Fires in the West have had a devastating impact on natural resources, property, and lives—including public power facilities and employees. Generating units, transmission and distribution lines, communications equipment, and utility buildings have been adversely affected by recent fires. The significant carbon emissions of fires – from burning vegetation and damaged trees left to decay – also undermine utility efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Wildfire affects every state in the NWPPA footprint, with more than 10 million acres consumed by wildfire in 2020 alone, followed by more than 7 million acres burned in 2021 and about 7.5 million acres burned in 2022.

The Departments of Agriculture and Interior have the responsibility under federal law to ensure the health of federal forest and range land. Yet, there are numerous stands of timber and range land that suffer from disease or bug infestation. Once a fire is started where there is an abundance of dry or dead natural fuel, consumer-owned utilities are subject to infrastructure destruction as well as reliability, personnel and financial risk related to wildfires on federal lands. And, in the aftermath of a fire there is a large volume of the affected timber, as well as other hazardous fuels, that remain on federal lands. These fuels create additional fire hazards on federal lands unless they are removed. Federal laws prohibiting the export of unprocessed timber from federal lands in the Western United States further exacerbate the challenge of removing hazardous materials from these lands.

**NWPPA Position:**

* NWPPA supports swift enactment of legislation, or regulatory action, to establish aggressive management of forests where electric infrastructure is also nearby or present.
* NWPPA supports the Department of Energy’s Grid Resilience and Innovation Partnerships (GRIP) matching grant program for grid infrastructure protection and other activities to reduce the threat of wildfire in rural areas.
* NWPPA supports changes in law to reduce constraints on the ability to export timber from federal lands to support prevention and mitigation of wildfire and improve forest health.
* NWPPA supports federal assistance to move burned trees from areas impacted by wildfire to mills where the timber can be processed in order to reduce hazardous fuels buildup on the forest floor.

Origination Date: 2016. Revised 2017, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023.