

**Sponsors: Northern California Power Agency; Northwest Public Power Association; Southern California Public Power Authority; Trinity Public Utilities District; Colorado Association of Municipal Utilities**

**Ensuring Adequate Federal Funds to Combat Catastrophic Wildfires**

1 Recent fires in the West have had a devastating impact on natural resources, property, and lives—  
2 including public power facilities and employees. In addition to the immediate impact on families and  
3 businesses, the fires have resulted in the release of a significant amount of greenhouse gas (GHG)  
4 emissions, undermining utility efforts to reduce such emissions. Federal wildfire management policies  
5 need to be overhauled to boost funding, prevent the raiding of needed fire prevention funds, and treat the  
6 most devastating fires as natural disasters.

7 Large-scale, catastrophic fires throughout the West are occurring with increasing frequency and severity.  
8 These fires touch the lives and operations of public power utilities, their employees, and the communities  
9 they serve. Generating units, transmission and distribution lines, communications equipment, and utility  
10 buildings have been affected. In addition, utility employees and customers have lost homes and property.  
11 Furthermore, fires release tons of GHG emissions into the atmosphere, and if the damaged and fallen trees  
12 are left to decay, even more tons of GHG emissions are released. Combined, wildfires in the United  
13 States equal roughly one-fifth of total man-made emissions.

14 Under federal law, the Departments of Agriculture and Interior forecast fire suppression budgets based on  
15 an average of the past ten years' spending. When there is a shortfall, the agencies raid other programs  
16 under a system known as "fire-borrowing." This funding scheme is deeply flawed. When budgeted funds  
17 are inadequate, as frequently occurs, the agencies take funds from other accounts—including funds that  
18 are needed for forest management to prevent future fires and funds needed to properly restore the forest  
19 after a fire. This cycle of "fire-borrowing" denies the agencies of critical funds needed to maintain  
20 healthy forests and leads to a cycle of more devastating fires and continued depletion of forest  
21 management funds.

22 Major fires need to be treated like other major natural disasters. Bipartisan legislation has been  
23 introduced in the Senate (S. 235) and House (H.R. 167), the Wildlife Disaster Funding Act, to ensure  
24 adequate and equitable funding for major fires. Under this legislation, catastrophic fires would be funded  
25 under a separate disaster account—just like funding for all other catastrophic natural disasters. Any fire  
26 suppression spending above 70 percent of the 10-year average for fire suppression would be eligible for  
27 disaster funding, with the remaining funding secured through appropriations.

28 Removing these mega-fires from the regular budget will free up substantial new funding for fire  
29 prevention and hazardous fuels reduction projects that can help break the cycle of increasingly dangerous  
30 and costly fires.

31 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:** That the American Public Power Association (APPA)  
32 supports swift enactment of the Wildfire Disaster Funding Act, or other similar wildfire funding  
33 mechanisms (both legislative and regulatory) to address the inadequate and inequitable funding to prevent  
34 and fight major forest fires.

**As adopted June 14, 2016, by the membership of the American Public Power Association at its  
annual meeting in Phoenix, Arizona.**