

Sponsors: Northern California Power Agency; Northwest Public Power Association; Seattle City Light; Trinity Public Utilities District; City of Healdsburg

In Support of the Fire Safe Electrical Corridors Act

1 Large-scale, catastrophic fires throughout the Western U.S. are now occurring with more frequency and
2 severity. These fires touch the lives and operations of public power utilities and continue to adversely
3 impact public health and safety, air quality, and the economy—and the emissions associated with
4 wildfires are undermining significant economy-wide investments in emissions reductions. While progress
5 has been made toward addressing wildfire risk, the federal government must continue to take a
6 comprehensive approach toward enhancing and improving wildfire prevention and mitigation measures
7 and addressing the real financial impacts of wildfires on communities and public power utilities.

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9 Public power has long advocated for overhauling federal wildfire management policies to proactively
10 address funding challenges. One issue of immediate need of attention is the process related to the removal
11 of timber for wildfire risk mitigation. The regulations that govern how timber is removed from federal
12 land were developed to support a multiple use sustained yield model, and as such, they require the United
13 States Forest Service (USFS) to balance the multiple uses of the lands within its purview and ensure a
14 sustained yield of those uses in perpetuity. Timber sales governed by contracts to allow the removal of
15 forest products involve a formal process whereby an entity may compensate the USFS for the ability to
16 cut and remove specified timber. However, these contracts do not support the need for quick and efficient
17 utility operations, particularly as it relates to the urgent need to consistently clear vegetation below utility
18 transmission lines for wildfire prevention.

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20 Congressional action is needed to mitigate wildfire risk by streamlining the removal of wood waste
21 products that result from vegetation management conducted by electric utilities on USFS lands. Electric
22 utilities can currently apply and receive special use permits, which provide authorization from the USFS
23 to fell dead, diseased, dying, and green hazard trees located within and around their rights-of-way
24 corridors through permitted vegetation management operations. Under current regulations, however,
25 utilities must purchase the felled trees from the USFS through a timber sale contract or give the trees
26 away to certain designated entities through a time-consuming and inefficient process. In many cases, the
27 results are that wood waste is left on-site as this lengthy process is navigated. Moreover, the wood waste
28 that results from utility clearing for these purposes is typically of no monetary value, so the cost imposed
29 by the USFS creates unnecessary cost and regulatory obstacles to this important and time-sensitive utility
30 function that is key to the protection of public health and safety.

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32 Congress should amend the existing statute that governs the sale and disposal of timber on National
33 Forest System lands to authorize the USFS to expedite the removal of timber by electric utilities to reduce
34 fuel for wildfire risk mitigation. One such proposal is the Fire Safe Electrical Corridors Act of 2023.
35 Introduced in both the House and the Senate, it authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to permit the
36 removal of trees around electrical lines on USFS land without conducting a timber sale and for other
37 purposes.

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39 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:** That the American Public Power Association (APPA)
40 supports and encourages Congress to pass legislation to permit the removal of trees and other vegetation
41 by electric utilities along transmission line rights-of-ways located on National Forest System land without
42 conducting a timber sale or adhering to other burdensome and costly sale or disposal restrictions related to
43 wood waste in these cases; and

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45 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:** That APPA encourages Congress to include such a provision in
46 must-pass legislation such as the Farm Bill, which must be reauthorized in 2024.

Adopted at the Legislative & Resolutions Committee Meeting

February 27, 2024

Sunsets in March 2032