**RESOLUTION 2024-06**

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| **RESOLUTION TITLE:** Improving the USDA Forest Service Community Wildfire Defense Grant Scoring Process |

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| **SPONSORING ENTITY/IES CD(s):** Cascadia & Okanogan Conservation Districts |

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| **AREA:** 🞏NW 🞏SW ⌧NC 🞏SC 🞏NE 🞏SE |

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| **RESOLUTION TYPE:**  🞏 **Policy**  ⌧ **Position Statement**  🞏 **Recognition**  🞏 **Study** |

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| **RESOLUTION ACTION AGENCY** (check any option that applies):  🞏 **WACD**  **⌧ WSCC**  **🞏 OTHER STATE AGENCY \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**  **🞏 NRCS**  **⌧ NACD (See Page 2)**  **🞏 NON-STATE/FEDERAL PARTNER \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** |

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| **TYPE OF TEXT OF RESOLUTION** (check all boxes that apply):  🞏 Technical (changes address grammar, punctuation, sentence flow and makes **NO** substantive change(s) to the existing policy.  🞏 Substantive change to existing policy. If in doubt, check the box.  ⌧ New policy. |

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| **BACKGROUND DESCRIBING THE ISSUE/PROBLEM STATEMENT:**  With the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the USDA Forest Service (USFS) was given $1 billion to spend on communities that are at-risk to catastrophic wildfire. This program is supposed to seek out proposals from these at-risk, low income or severely impacted communities for major projects for a maximum of $10 million per project with an additional category of funding for Community Wildfire Protection Plans.  Since the first round in 2022, the Community Wildfire Defense Grant (CWDG) program has been implemented with a secretive and error ridden scoring rubric making it unclear how and why they are making decisions regarding funding packages. Communities with the highest risk in Washington state have been passed over due to many errors. In the first round, the scoring criteria failed to include an accurate list of communities that have been severely impacted by wildfires within the last 10 years resulting in many central Washington communities being scored lower than they deserved. The response was “we will fix it next year”. In the most recent round the scores were released and they skipped over multiple high scoring proposals in favor of lower scoring ones. In both cases there has been very little transparency with the USFS only providing “raw” scores and not indicating what additional manipulation of scores or transparency they utilized to select their preferred projects.  The result of this is a program that does not adequately prioritize the most at-risk communities in Washington State. As of the WACD meeting, there has been no significant funding awarded to most of the communities on the top 25 at-risk communities according to the Washington Department of Natural Resources’ prioritization, criteria that the CWDG program is supposed to use. |

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| **PROPOSED RESOLUTION LANGUAGE:**  WACD shall work with NACD to support working with the USDA Forest Service on improving their scoring criteria transparency for the Community Wildfire Defense Grant program and any subsequent, related programs. |

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| **IS THERE A WACD RESOURCE IMPLICATION TO IMPLEMENT THE POLICY? (Funding required, staff time, etc.)**  🞏 **NO**  ⌧ **YES** (briefly explain): It will include the effort to bring this forward to NACD and support it at the NACD annual meeting. There are no expected substantial policy impacts. |

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| **PROPOSED RESOLUTION LANGUAGE:**  If this resolution is adopted by NACD and included in the NACD Policy book it must clearly and concisely, using active verbs, state the specific action(s) expected of NACD; must be based on fact, avoiding opinions and beliefs; the statement should make sense even without the background. (THIS IS GENERALLY NOT WHERE A “WHEREAS” STATEMENT WOULD GO)  *NACD supports working with the USDA Forest Service on improving their scoring criteria transparency for the Community Wildfire Defense Grant program and any subsequent, related programs.* |

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| **SPONSOR(S) ACTIONS TO DATE:** (What has been done to address the issue; which agencies and organizations have addressed it also.)  Cascadia CD and Okanogan CD reached out to USFS regional and national staff seeking clarification. We were provided with a whitepaper developed by a consultant discussing their statistical analysis methodology but were not provided with the actual modified scores. In addition, the same Districts asked questions of USFS through their federal elected officials. |

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| **IMPACT ON EXISTING NACD POLICY (if any):** (Review NACD Policy Book for existing policies covering this issue.) |
| IF APPROPRIATE, POTENTIAL FISCAL IMPACT ON NACD’s OR A FEDERAL AGENCY BUDGET:  (*E.*g., travel, training, equipment, etc.)  Staff time to community the request to USFS. Participation in meetings regarding this topic. No impact on federal agency budget except for improved transparency mechanisms. |