**RESOLUTION**

**SHORT TITLE:** Solar and Wind Project Moratorium

**SPONSOR CD:** North Central Area Association

**AREA:** NW SW ⌧NC SC NE SE

**RESOLUTION TYPE:**

 **Policy**

⌧**Position Statement**

**Recognition**

 **Study**

**RESOLUTION ACTION AGENCY** (check any option that applies):

⌧**WACD**

⌧**WSCC**

 **OTHER STATE AGENCY**

 **NRCS**

 **NACD**

 **NON-STATE/FEDERAL PARTNER**

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**BACKGROUND/PROBLEM STATEMENT:** Legal processes have insulated solar and wind developers from local regulations. Many local jurisdictions have not updated their ordinances to address the construction of these proposed industrial projects and even those jurisdictions that have may be superseded by the State of Washington’s Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council (EFSEC or Council). EFSEC bypasses local authority by issuing recommended approvals and associated Site Certification Agreements to the governor for wind and solar projects in lieu of individual state or local agency permits.

Large-scale industrial solar and wind projects are not compatible with the Growth Management Act’s (GMA) requirements which seek to protect agricultural and natural resource lands. Notable GMA Goals, as they relate to the impacts of these types of projects include the following:

• Natural Resource Industries - Maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries, including productive timber, agricultural, and fisheries industries. Encourage the conservation of productive forest lands and productive agricultural lands, while discouraging incompatible uses.

• Environment - Protect the environment and enhance the state's high quality of life, including air and water quality, and the availability of water.

Additionally, many of these projects are proposed on land that is designated as long-term commercial significance. Per RCW 36.70A.030 this land designation includes the growing capacity, productivity, and soil composition of the land for long-term commercial production, in consideration of the land's proximity to population areas, and the possibility of more intense uses of the land. GMA requires each county to designate appropriate agricultural lands that are not already characterized by urban growth and that have long-term significance for the commercial production of food or other agricultural products.

Locating large industrial projects, not consistent with

Locating large-scale industrial developments in agricultural areas, in most cases, creates a situation where the lands will no longer be able to meet the criteria for an agricultural land of long-term commercial significance designation. If the lands no longer meet the criteria, they need to be de-designated as such. Siting of these facilities in these agricultural areas would require a County to properly de-designate lands where these facilities are located or the County’s become vulnerable to an appeal, and in turn lose valuable agricultural lands that should be preserved and protected under the GMA.

In addition to lacking consistency with the GMA, these projects are often sited in areas designated as critical areas, including wetlands, frequently flooded areas, geologically hazardous areas, and fish and wildlife conservation areas. These types of projects can negatively impact Washington State’s Voluntary Stewardship Program, a landmark State program that seeks to protect critical areas while also maintaining and enhancing agricultural viability in the County. The disturbance of additional acres of habitat can detrimentally impact the objectives of this program by creating a significant loss of habitat without providing mitigation to bank a similar number of acres for conservation.

Large-scale wind and solar projects create countless barriers to the vast tracts of open space that currently exist across eastern Washington. Fragmenting the landscape and creating physical barriers to any wildlife connectivity. The Washington Wildlife Habitat Connectivity Working Group, a group of state and federal agencies, universities, and environmental groups has created guidance that promotes the long-term viability of wildlife populations in Washington State through a science-based, collaborative approach that identifies opportunities and priorities to conserve and restore habitat connectivity. This goal of creating habitat corridors and connectivity has also been identified as a priority by the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife. Wildlife corridors seek to keep large, connected patches of undeveloped native vegetation intact by encouraging areas of low development, managing road systems to minimize the number of new roads and new barriers to important animal movement corridors, and implementing appropriate planning for open space to incorporate high-value habitat and corridors for animal movement.

A 2009 study of the impact of solar farms, identified detrimental impacts including landscape fragmentation, vegetation degradation, interference with flora and fauna as well as microclimatic changes caused by the daytime warming of the surface of solar arrays (Chiabrando R, Fabrizio E, Garnero G (2009) The territorial and landscape impacts of photovoltaic systems: definition of impacts and assessment of the glare risk. Renewable and Sustainable Energy Review, 13(2009):2441–2451).

Lastly, Wind turbines, solar arrays, and associated infrastructure will contribute to additional ignition sources for increased wildfire risk. Initial construction activities increase the burden on local emergency services as the construction activities can lead to an increase in emergency calls for medical and fire services. Additionally, due to the height of the wind turbines, air support resources, which are commonly used in eastern Washington to combat wildfires may not be able to be deployed. The solar arrays are also an additional hazard for firefighters as they are difficult to disconnect and deenergize which would increase the emergency responders’ risk of electrical shock.

Further, water cannot be used to combat fire within the solar sites, special recovery equipment and techniques will be required.

**PROPOSED RESOLUTION LANGUAGE:** Resolution to adopt a moratorium of new solar and wind installations until sufficient environmental and habitat studies can be done on the impact on shrub-steppe habitat.

**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.

**ARE WACD RESOURCES (FUNDING, STAFF CAPACITY, ETC.) REQUIRED TO IMPLEMENT THE POLICY?**

 **NO**

⌧ **YES** (briefly explain):