

**SPHERE OF INFLUENCE STUDY  
FOR SONOMA COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT  
AND WEST COUNTY  
FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICE AGENCIES**

**Subject Agencies:**

**Sonoma County Fire District**

**Forestville Fire Protection District**

**Russian River Fire Protection District**

**Monte Rio Fire Protection District**

**Cazadero Community Service District (Fire and EMS)**

**Bodega Bay Fire Protection District**

**County Service Area 40 – Fire Services:**

**Fort Ross Volunteer Fire Company**

**Bodega Volunteer Fire Company**

**Valley Ford Volunteer Fire Company**

**Bloomfield Volunteer Fire Company (Service Area)**

**Incident Response Plan Areas 51, 56, and 61**

**Public Review Draft**

**Sonoma Local Agency Formation Commission**

**November 2019**

**Project Name:** Sphere Of Influence Study For Sonoma County Fire District and West County Fire And Emergency Service Agencies

**Conducted By:** Sonoma Local Agency Formation Commission  
111 Santa Rosa Avenue, Ste. 240  
Santa Rosa, CA 95404

**Date:** November 2019

**Subject Agencies:** Sonoma County Fire District  
  
Forestville Fire Protection District  
  
Russian River Fire Protection District  
  
Monte Rio Fire Protection District  
  
Cazadero Community Service District (Fire and EMS)  
  
Bodega Bay Fire Protection District  
  
County Service Area 40 – Fire Services:  
  
    Ft. Ross Volunteer Fire Company  
  
    Bodega Volunteer Fire Company  
  
    Valley Ford Volunteer Fire Company  
  
    Bloomfield Volunteer Fire Company (Service Area)  
  
    Integrated Response Plan Areas 51, 56, and 61

**Agency Contacts:** Sean Grinnell, Chief  
Bodega Bay Fire Protection District  
  
Dave Franceschi, Chief  
Forestville Fire Protection District  
  
Steve Baxman, Chief  
Monte Rio Fire Protection District

Mark Heine, Chief  
Sonoma County Fire District

Ryan Lance, Interim Chief  
Russian River Fire Protection District

Steve Krausman, Chief  
Cazadero Community Services District

Terri Wright, Administrative Analyst  
County Administrator's Office  
Sonoma County  
(County Service Area 40 – Fire Services)

Ron Albin, Chief  
Bodega Volunteer Fire Company

Ron Caselli, Chief  
Valley Ford Volunteer Fire Company

Steve Ginesi, Chief  
Fort Ross Volunteer Fire Company

**Date of Last MSR/SOI  
Adopted by LAFCO:**

Confirmation of Spheres of Influence in 2006

Municipal Service Review for Windsor, Bennett Valley,  
and Rincon Valley Fire Protection Districts and CSA 40  
(Mountain VFD), 2018

Municipal Service Review for West County Fire and  
Emergency Service Agencies, 2019

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## **SOI STUDY BACKGROUND**

### **ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF LAFCO**

The Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000, as amended ("CKH Act") (California Government Code §§56000 et seq.), is LAFCO's governing law and outlines the requirements for preparing Municipal Service Reviews (MSRs) for periodic Sphere of Influence (SOI) updates.

MSRs and SOIs are tools created to empower LAFCO to satisfy its legislative charge of "discouraging urban sprawl, preserving open-space and prime agricultural lands, efficiently providing government services, and encouraging the orderly formation and development of local agencies based upon local conditions and circumstances (§56301).

CKH Act Section 56301 further establishes that "one of the objects of the commission is to make studies and to obtain and furnish information which will contribute to the logical and reasonable development of local agencies in each county and to shape the development of local agencies so as to advantageously provide for the present and future needs of each county and its communities."

Based on that legislative charge, LAFCO serves as an arm of the State; preparing and reviewing studies and analyzing independent data to make informed, quasi-legislative decisions that guide the physical and economic development of the state (including agricultural uses) and the efficient, cost-effective, and reliable delivery of services to residents, landowners, and businesses.

While SOIs are required to be updated every five years, they are not time-bound as planning tools by the statute, but are plans meant to address the "probable physical boundaries and service area of a local agency" (§56076). SOIs therefore guide both the near-term and long-term physical and economic development of local agencies and their broader county area, and MSRs provide the near-term and long-term time-relevant data to inform LAFCO's SOI determinations.

### **PURPOSE OF A MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW**

As described above, MSRs are designed to equip LAFCO with relevant information and data necessary for the Commission to make informed decisions on SOIs. The CKH Act, however, gives LAFCO broad discretion in deciding how to conduct MSRs, including geographic focus, scope of study, and the identification of alternatives for improving the efficiency, cost-effectiveness, accountability, and reliability of public services.

The purpose of an MSR in general is to provide a comprehensive inventory and analysis of the services provided by local municipalities, service areas, and special districts. An MSR evaluates the structure and operation of the local municipalities, service areas, and special districts and discusses possible areas for improvement and coordination.

This Sphere of Influence Study relies on information, evaluation and determinations in two Municipal Service Reviews adopted by the Commission:

- Municipal Service Review for Windsor, Bennet Valley, and Rincon Valley Fire Protection Districts and CSA 40 (Mountain VFD), 2018
- Municipal Service Review for West County Fire and Emergency Service Agencies, 2019

## **PURPOSE OF A SPHERE OF INFLUENCE**

In 1972, LAFCOs were given the power to establish SOIs for all local agencies under their jurisdiction. As defined by the CKH Act, "'sphere of influence' means a plan for the probable physical boundaries and service area of a local agency, as determined by the commission" (§56076).

SOIs are designed to both proactively guide and respond to the need for the extension of infrastructure and delivery of municipal services to areas of emerging growth and development. Likewise, they are also designed to discourage urban sprawl and the premature conversion of agricultural and open space resources to urbanized uses.

The role of SOIs in guiding the State's growth and development was validated and strengthened in 2000 when the Legislature passed Assembly Bill ("AB") 2838 (Chapter 761, Statutes of 2000), which was the result of two years of labor by the Commission on Local Governance for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, which traveled up and down the State taking testimony from a variety of local government stakeholders and assembled an extensive set of recommendations to the Legislature to strengthen the powers and tools of LAFCOs to promote logical and orderly growth and development, and the efficient, cost-effective, and reliable delivery of public services to California's residents, businesses, landowners, and visitors.

The requirement for LAFCOs to conduct MSR's was established by AB 2838 as an acknowledgment of the importance of SOIs and recognition that regular periodic updates of SOIs should be conducted on a five-year basis (§56425(g)) with the benefit of better information and data through MSR's (§56430(a)).

Pursuant to Sonoma LAFCO policy, a SOI includes an area adjacent to a jurisdiction where development might be reasonably expected to occur in the next 20 years. A MSR is conducted prior to, or in conjunction with, the update of a SOI and provides the foundation for updating it. In Sonoma County, a SOI for fire and emergency service agencies is intended to be predictive of reorganizations that would take place within a five-year time horizon.

LAFCO is required to make five written determinations when establishing, amending, or updating a SOI for any local agency that address the following (§56425(c)):

1. The present and planned land uses in the area, including agricultural and open-space lands.

2. The present and probable need for public facilities and services in the area.
3. The present capacity of public facilities and adequacy of public services that the agency provides or is authorized to provide.
4. The existence of any social or economic communities of interest in the area if the commission determines that they are relevant to the agency.
5. For an update of a SOI of a city or special district that provides public facilities or services related to sewers, municipal and industrial water, or structural fire protection, the present and probable need for those public facilities and services of any disadvantaged unincorporated communities within the existing sphere of influence (see next section).

## SCOPE OF STUDY

Fire and emergency service agencies throughout the county have been conducting discussions to determine if a regional consolidation program would best serve communities and underpin a sustainable service model for the future.

To enable reorganization proposals involving the subject agencies, the spheres of influence of the agencies must be modified. (The request to prepare the SOI Study came formally from the Sonoma County Fire District.)

If the Commission adopts this Sphere of Influence Study and its determinations and agrees to amend spheres of influence as proposed, it would be expected that Sonoma County Fire District will file an application for reorganization with LAFCO involving the Russian River Fire Protection District, and possibly the Forestville and Bodega Bay Fire Protection Districts.

### *Note Regarding Terminology*

A “reorganization” of a special district encompasses any action that changes a district’s boundaries, including annexing or detaching territory, dissolution of the district and assignment of its functions to a successor agency, or a consolidation of one or more districts.

For this study, LAFCO is proposing that any eventual reorganization of the subject agencies would be accomplished by dissolution of a given district and annexation to another, or in the case of the County Service 40 – Fire Services territory, detachment from CSA 40 and annexation to a given district.

Technically, a “consolidation” (Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg §56030) is defined as uniting or joining two or more special districts into a single new successor district. In order to accommodate differing taxation structures (and, in particular, parcel tax rates), the preferred means to “consolidate” special districts is to conduct a reorganization that involves the aforementioned “dissolution/annexation” process.

In order to make this report clearer to the public, when the term "consolidation" is used it denotes the dissolution/annexation process rather than the formal definition denoted in state code.

### **AFFECTED AGENCIES**

Per Government Code Section 56427, a public hearing is required to adopt, amend, or revise a sphere of influence. Notice shall be provided at least twenty-one days in advance and mailed notice shall be provided to each affected local agency or affected County, and to any interested party who has filed a written request for notice with the executive officer.

Per Government Code Section 56014, an affected local agency means any local agency that overlaps with any portion of the subject agency boundary or SOI (including any proposed changes to the SOI).

The affected local agencies for this SOI study are:

- County of Sonoma (various departments and dependent districts)
- Sonoma Resource Conservation District
- Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District
- Coast Life Support District
- Sweetwater Springs Water District
- Town of Windsor

Although there are no registered interested parties for this study, notices and draft copies of this report have been provided as a courtesy to:

- CALFIRE
- Coastal Valleys EMS Agency

## SPHERES OF INFLUENCE STUDY AND RECOMMENDED AMENDMENTS

The existing Spheres of Influence for all subject agencies are contiguous with their boundaries. Spheres of influence must be amended to allow for agencies to submit reorganization proposals involving the dissolution of districts and subsequent annexation to another agency.

Staff has considered a series of potential sphere of influence amendments for the subject agencies; in addition, there is a request for a sphere of influence study from five agencies that includes three of the subject agencies (the CSA 40 territory served by the Bodega, Valley Ford, and Bloomfield Volunteer Fire Companies).

### *Sphere of Influence Scenarios*

After the completion and adoption of the Municipal Service Review for fifteen West County fire and emergency service agencies, staff had considered bringing four potential sphere of influence amendment proposals to the Commission for consideration. These proposals would include:

- Amendment of the sphere of influence of the Russian River Fire Protection District to include territory served by the Forestville and Monte Rio FPDs; the Cazadero CSD (for fire and emergency services); and CSA 40 territory served by Fort Ross VFC, and Incident Response Plan areas 51, 56, and 61.

This proposal would generally encompass the Advanced Life Support/ambulance area that Russian River FPD serves. (There are small areas of Forestville FPD that are served by other providers; the northern third-or-so of the Fort Ross territory is served by Coast Life Support; and Russian River provides ALS coverage for the southern quarter-or-so of the Timber Cove FPD territory.)

- Amendment of the Bodega Bay Fire Protection District sphere of influence to include the CSA 40 territory to the south covered by the Bodega, Valley Ford, and Bloomfield Volunteer Fire Companies. (The Bloomfield VFC is defunct, with the territory now covered by Two Rock VFC.)

This proposal would align Bodega Bay FPD's sphere of influence with its Advanced Life Support/ambulance territory.

- Amendment of the sphere of influence of North Sonoma Coast Fire Protection District to include territory served by the Timber Cove Fire Protection District.
- Amendment of the sphere of influence of the Occidental Community Services District to encompass the CSA 40 territory served by the Camp Meeker Volunteer Fire Company. (This amendment would be offered as a likely interim step in the move towards a broader regional agency.)

Sonoma County Fire District has requested a sphere amendment encompassing the Russian River, Forestville, and Bodega Bay FPDs, with the understanding that LAFCO would likely recommend sphere amendments for all agencies within the ALS/ambulance territories of the Russian River and Bodega Bay Fire Protection Districts.

Staff has also received a request from the Gold Ridge Fire Protection District, Graton Fire Protection District, Occidental Community Services District, North Bay Fire, Inc. (representing Volunteer Fire Companies), and the City of Sebastopol, requesting that a sphere of influence study be conducted for eleven West County and South County agencies, which includes the CSA 40 territory served by Bodega, Valley Ford, and Bloomfield VFCs. The request is not specific with regard to what sphere of influence amendments are being proposed or sought.

(Staff has also received a request from the Rancho Adobe Fire Protection District seeking a sphere of influence amendment to encompass four Volunteer Fire Companies that overlap with the request noted above, but not with any of the subject agencies.)

#### *Recommended Sphere Amendments*

Staff is recommending that the Commission consider amending Sonoma County Fire District's sphere to include the territory served by the remaining subject agencies.

(For the Cazadero Community Services District, the sphere amendment would be solely for the provision of fire and emergency services; the remaining services provided by the District would be retained, pending potential further reorganization activity.)

The spheres for Forestville, Russian River, Monte Rio, and Bodega Bay FPDs would be set to "zero", indicating that the Commission expects them to be dissolved and annexed into a regional agency within a five- to ten-year time frame.

The sphere for County Service Area 40 – Fire Services would have the territories served by the Fort Ross, Bodega, Valley Ford, and Bloomfield Volunteer Fire Companies, and the Integrated Response Plan areas 51, 56, and 61, removed from its sphere.

Staff recognizes that additional amendments to spheres may be desired in preparation for potential future reorganizations. These areas include but are not limited to the northern third-or-so of the Fort Ross VFC-served territory, and the southern quarter-or-so of the Timber Cove FPD territory. These areas may require sphere amendments in recognition of operational considerations that would suggest alignment with another regionally-reorganized agency.

Please note that the Commission does not have an adopted policy regarding a "zero" sphere designation, but that the term can be defined as:

“a transitional sphere of influence designation assigned to a local agency indicating that the public service responsibility and functions of the agency should ultimately be abandoned or re-allocated to another government agency”

It is expected that a plan for services prepared for a reorganization proposal will rely on the extension of Sonoma County Fire District's parcel tax structure to annexed territory in order to ensure the viability of service levels and long term financial sustainability.

It should be reiterated that registered voters and landowners in territories included in a reorganization proposal would have the opportunity to protest at lower “hurdle rates” than those for approving special taxes.

A cohort of either 50% of registered voters or 50% of landowners can nullify a reorganization proposal through protest proceedings; approval of special tax measures requires a two-thirds-plus one approval by registered voters.

If a cohort of 25% or more of registered voters or 25% or more of landowners protest the reorganization, a balloted election will be conducted, with registered voters eligible to participate. A voter threshold of fifty percent-plus-one is required to confirm the reorganization.

Reorganization of the subject agencies, based on the proposed sphere of influence amendments, would not preclude the formation of broader regional agencies or a County-wide agency at a later date.

#### *Justification of Recommended Amendments*

The Commission adopted a set of criteria in October 2019 for evaluation of proposed sphere of influence amendments for fire and emergency service agencies. In summary, these criteria are:

- Operational Fit
- Financial Sustainability
- Advanced Life Support/Ambulance Territory
- Agency Request/Preference
- Elimination of CSA 40 Territory
- Preservation of Further Consolidation Opportunities

Staff believes that inclusion of the River area agencies, as a group, within Sonoma County Fire District's sphere of influence is non-controversial with regard to evaluation against these criteria. In particular:

- SCFD can provide the River area agencies with superior leadership, management, and administrative services, making an eventual consolidation a good operational fit.

- The extension of SCFD's parcel tax structure to the Forestville FPD, Cazadero CSD, and CSA 40 territories will generate meaningful revenue to support the continued provision of service within the region.
- The sphere amendment and potential reorganization of the entire River area territory will almost wholly align with the current provision of ALS/ambulance services by the Russian River FPD.
- SCFD has requested the sphere amendments and has support from two of the Fire Protection Districts, and potential support from the remaining agencies.
- Significant territory of CSA 40 is included in the proposed sphere amendment, portending inclusion of that territory in a regional agency.
- The sphere amendment and potential reorganization activity does not preclude further regional consolidation opportunities.

As noted previously, there are competing interests with regard to the three Volunteer Fire Company territories that staff recommends be included in any sphere amendment involving Bodega Bay Fire Protection District. With regard to the Commission's evaluation criteria, staff notes:

- Bodega Bay FPD provides Advanced Life Support/ambulance coverage to the CSA 40 territories to the south, as well as primary service support (Bodega Bay is dispatched to all calls within the region). With regard to broader operational fit, Bodega Bay FPD is a well-functioning agency without any need for additional leadership, management, or administrative support.

Although there are ancillary benefits for Bodega Bay's inclusion in a broader regional agency (coherent training, opportunities for career advancement), there isn't a compelling need from an operational standpoint for regional consolidation other than inclusion of the CSA territories with Bodega Bay.

- A reorganization that annexes Bodega Bay FPD to another district will lead to a significant reduction in parcel tax revenue. Bodega Bay FPD levies a parcel tax of \$524 per year for single-family homes; Sonoma County Fire District's levy varies by home size, but is typically \$185 per year. If Gold Ridge Fire Protection District was the reorganization "partner", the levy would be approximately \$260 per year.

The reduction in revenue noted above would be partially recouped by assigning property tax revenue from the CSA 40 territory to the annexing district, and extension of parcel taxation. However, this revenue would be quite modest (on the order of \$80,000 for property tax revenue, and \$80,000 to \$130,000 in parcel tax revenue depending on rate schedule).

In summary, a reorganization involving Bodega Bay FPD and the accompanying CSA 40 territory would require significant ongoing financial contributions to meet a financial sustainability evaluation, regardless of which agency partner.

- Inclusion of the CSA 40 territories in any sphere of influence amendment or reorganization involving Bodega Bay FPD would recognize that Bodega Bay provides ALS/ambulance service within the region.
- Bodega Bay FPD is supportive of a potential reorganization with Sonoma County Fire District, and therefore supportive of the proposed sphere of influence amendments. As noted previously, there is other agency interest in the CSA territory. It should be noted that the County has not declared a preference for sphere amendments or potential reorganizations involving said territory.
- Including CSA territory in any proposed sphere amendment involving Bodega Bay FPD will allow for reorganization proposals that will portend eventual annexation of that territory to a regional agency, thereby reducing CSA 40.
- The sphere amendment and potential reorganization activity does not preclude further regional consolidation opportunities.

Staff has summarized evaluation of the proposed sphere of influence amendments against the Commission's adopted set of criteria in Table 1:

**Table 1: Sphere of Influence Amendment Evaluation Summary**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Operational Fit</b></p> <p>Does the proposed SOI make sense from an operational perspective?</p>	<p>The Sonoma County Fire District is able to provide leadership, management, and administrative services at a superior level to River-area agencies, and a comparable level to Bodega Bay FPD. It should be noted however that SCFD does not have experience managing ALS/ambulance transport service.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Financial Sustainability</b></p> <p>Will a future reorganization offer opportunities to increase revenues or decrease costs?</p>	<p>Extension of SCFD's parcel tax schedule to all agencies other than Monte Rio and Bodega Bay FPDs will generate additional sustainable revenue. (Monte Rio FPD's tax schedule is essentially</p>	<p>Russian River FPD could remain independent, possibly pursuing reorganizations with the remaining four River-area agencies.</p>

	<p>the equivalent of SCFD's; Bodega Bay's tax schedule is substantially higher, so a revenue loss would be expected through a reorganization.) The CSA 40 areas would redirect property taxes to SCFD, and generate new parcel tax revenue. The County, through a property tax exchange agreement, could also make additional revenue contributions for reorganizations of CSA 40 territories.</p> <p>A reorganization would raise incremental revenue (per above). There may be modest cost savings opportunities through fleet evaluation and reduction, and a modified staffing plan for facilities.</p>	<p>Bodega Bay FPD could remain independent, with or without the addition of CSA 40 territory served by the three VFC agencies to the south, but in any event requires additional, dedicated funding to maintain service levels.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Advanced Life Support/Ambulance Service Territory</b></p> <p>Is the SOI amendment consistent with existing ambulance service territories, if applicable?</p>	<p>The proposed SOI amendment is consistent with the existing ALS/ambulance transport territories of Russian River and Bodega Bay FPDs, with the exception of portions of the Forestville and Timber Cove FPDs and a portion of the Fort Ross VFD territory.</p>	<p>Staff recognizes that future adjustments of spheres of influence for the Fort Ross VFD and Timber Cove FPD territories may be warranted to align with existing ALS/ambulance transport areas. Staff asserts that adjustments to the Forestville FPD territory can be averted through existing operational agreements with neighboring ALS/ambulance providers.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Agency Request/Preference</b></p> <p>Do the subject agencies support the sphere amendment, with the understanding that it predicts eventual reorganizations?</p>	<p>Forestville, Russian River, and Bodega Bay FPDs support the proposed sphere of influence amendments. The balance of the subject agencies have not taken a position regarding the proposed amendments.</p>	<p>A group of five agencies including North Bay Fire, Inc., which represents the Volunteer Fire Companies that provide service to CSA 40 territories, has requested a sphere of influence study that would include the three VFC areas to the south of Bodega Bay FPD. That request is unclear with regard to what specific sphere amendments are being sought. Please see further discussion below.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Elimination of CSA 40 Territory</b></p> <p>Does the sphere amendment address remaining CSA 40 and IRP territory in the region?</p>	<p>Yes, all of the CSA 40 territory underlying the proposed sphere of influence amendments are included.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Preservation of Further Consolidation Opportunities</b></p> <p>Does the sphere amendment preclude other options for future reorganizations?</p>	<p>While the proposed sphere of influence amendments may be in conflict with another proposal, further potential reorganizations involving neighboring agencies (most likely to the south) would not be precluded.</p>	

## POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT SOI DETERMINATIONS

As noted previously, in order to make sphere of influence amendments, the Commission is required by law to make determinations with regard to the following:

1. The present and planned land uses in the area, including agricultural and open-space lands.
2. The present and probable need for public facilities and services in the area.
3. The present capacity of public facilities and adequacy of public services that the agency provides or is authorized to provide.
4. The existence of any social or economic communities of interest in the area if the commission determines that they are relevant to the agency.
5. For an update of a SOI of a city or special district that provides public facilities or services related to sewers, municipal and industrial water, or structural fire protection, the present and probable need for those public facilities and services of any disadvantaged unincorporated communities within the existing sphere of influence.

The following sections address these evaluation criteria.

### PRESENT AND PLANNED LAND USES

#### Determination:

**Existing and future land use will have only minimal impacts on the provision of fire and emergency services by the subject agencies.**

#### Discussion

As noted in the Municipal Service Review for West County Fire and Emergency Service Agencies, land use and population growth are at most modest drivers of the need for fire and emergency service provision in the territories served by the subject agencies.

The aging of the resident population, existence and growth of transient populations (tourism), and growing need for medical responses are far more impactful.

Additionally, agencies continue to face volunteer staffing availability challenges, and in many cases inadequate infrastructure (stations, vehicles, and equipment).

### NEED FOR PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

#### Determinations:

- **The recommended sphere of influence amendments, if followed by a regional consolidation through annexations, would provide modest operational and cost**

**efficiencies, though these efficiencies would not ensure the continued viability of service provision.**

- **A regional consolidation would, if appropriately financed through a variety of methods, ensure continued service levels in the region.**

### **Discussion**

The financial and operational advantages of a consolidated, regional fire and emergency services agency comprised of the territories of the subject agencies have been outlined in the Municipal Service Review for West County Fire and Emergency Service Agencies.

In summary, these advantages include:

- Generation of additional revenue through the extension of parcel taxes on reorganized territories.
- Provision of leadership, management, and administration services at larger scale and efficiency.
- Coordinated and consistent training of personnel.
- Greater options for career advancement for paid professional staff.
- Opportunities to adjust readiness levels throughout the region through assignment of staff and equipment, based on community service needs.

### **CAPACITY AND ADEQUACY OF PROVIDED SERVICES**

#### **Determinations:**

- **The proposed sphere of influence amendments will allow for reorganization proposals that will address service level deficiencies that are extant at the majority of the subject agencies.**
- **A regional reorganization is best suited to maintain or enhance service levels, most importantly for Advanced Life Support/ambulance service.**

### **Discussion**

As outlined in the Municipal Service Review for West County Fire and Emergency Service Agencies, most of the subject agencies are experiencing volunteer staffing declines that are reducing service levels to communities. In addition, several of the subject agencies have critically-deficient facilities, and many face vehicle and equipment deficiencies.

A regionally re-organized agency under the purview of Sonoma County Fire District, is best positioned to seek appropriate funding (beyond revenue increases from the extension of parcel taxes) to address these deficiencies.

In particular, the Advanced Life Support/ambulance services provided by the Russian River and Bodega Bay Fire Protection Districts throughout the territories served by the

subject agencies must be preserved and maintained, given the criticality of these services to the communities in the region.

### **SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC COMMUNITIES OF INTEREST**

#### **Determinations:**

- **Portions of the region served by the subject agencies are economically disadvantaged. Territory throughout the region is “difficult to serve” in terms of density, access, and geography.**
- **Portions of the region are heavily impacted by transient populations (tourism), leading to impacts on the provision of fire and emergency services.**

#### **Discussion**

Much of the area served by the subject agencies is predominantly rural, with communities that are economically disadvantaged. Generating revenue solely through local taxation to support fire and emergency service provision, as well as a host of other community needs, will likely prove difficult.

Additionally, there are large portions of the region that are geographically challenging for the provision of services due to access issues. Much of the region is wildland, or urban/wildland interface territory, making fire prevention and vegetation management important.

Both the coastal and River areas face the additional challenge of serving visitors, and the remaining area is subjected to tourist traffic that generates significant call volumes due to accidents.

### **DISADVANTAGED UNINCORPORATED COMMUNITIES**

#### **Determination:**

- **There are four LAFCO-designated disadvantaged unincorporated communities served by subject agencies.**

#### **Discussion**

As noted in the Municipal Service Review for West County Fire and Emergency Service Agencies, there are four designated disadvantaged communities served by the subject agencies: Cazadero, Guerneville, Monte Rio, and Valley Ford.

The proposed sphere of influence amendments and potential reorganizations will likely help preserve and perhaps enhance service provision to these areas, as well as to the region as a whole.