

# MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW AND SPHERE OF INFLUENCE STUDY

FOR THE

GEYSERVILLE FIRE  
PROTECTION DISTRICT

FINAL REPORT



**Project Name:** Municipal Service Review and Sphere of Influence  
Amendment for Geyserville Fire Protection District

**Conducted By:** Sonoma Local Agency Formation Commission  
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**Date:** February 2018

**Subject Agency:** Geyserville Fire Protection District

**Agency Address:** 20975 Geyserville Ave.  
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**Date of Last MSR/SOI  
Adopted by LAFCO** November 2014  
(Combined MSR with Cloverdale FPD; no Sphere  
Amendment)

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## **MSR/SOI 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 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 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 a Municipal Services Review (MSR) in general is to provide a comprehensive inventory and analysis of the services provided by local municipalities, service areas, and special districts. A MSR evaluates the structure and operation of the local municipalities, service areas, and special districts and discusses possible areas for improvement and coordination.

The MSR is intended to provide information and analysis to support a sphere of influence update. A written statement of the study's determinations must be made in the following areas:

1. Growth and population projections for the affected area;
2. The location and characteristics of any disadvantaged unincorporated communities within or contiguous to the sphere of influence;
3. Present and planned capacity of public facilities, adequacy of public services, and infrastructure needs or deficiencies including needs or deficiencies related to sewers, municipal and industrial water, and structural fire protection in any disadvantaged, unincorporated communities within or contiguous to the sphere of influence;
4. Financial ability of agencies to provide services;
5. Status of, and opportunities for, shared facilities;
6. Accountability for community service needs, including governmental structure and operational efficiencies; and
7. Any other matter related to effective or efficient service delivery, as required by commission policy.

The MSR is organized according to these determinations listed above. Information regarding each of the above issue areas is provided in this document.

#### **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 MSRs 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 MSRs (§56430(a)).

Pursuant to Sonoma LAFCO policy, an SOI includes an area adjacent to a jurisdiction where development might be reasonably expected to occur in the next twenty years. An MSR is conducted prior to, or in conjunction with, the update of a SOI. In Sonoma County, a SOI generally has two planning lines. One is the 10-year boundary which includes the area that may likely be annexed within 10 years, while the 20-year boundary is anticipated to accommodate boundary expansions over a 20-year horizon.

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

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 an 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).

### **DISADVANTAGED UNINCORPORATED COMMUNITIES**

SB 244 (Chapter 513, Statutes of 2011) made changes to the CKH Act related to disadvantaged unincorporated communities," including the addition of SOI determination #5 listed above. Disadvantaged unincorporated communities, or "DUCs," are inhabited territories (containing 12 or more registered voters) where the annual median household income is less than 80 percent of the statewide annual median household income.

On March 26, 2012, LAFCO adopted a "Policy for the Definition of 'Inhabited Territory' for the Implementation of SB 244 Regarding Disadvantaged Unincorporated Communities", which identified 21 inhabited unincorporated communities for purposes of implementing SB 244.

CKH Act Section 56375(a)(8)(A) prohibits LAFCO from approving an annexation of more than ten acres if a DUC is contiguous to the annexation territory but not included in the proposal, unless an application to annex the DUC has been filed with LAFCO. The legislative intent is to prohibit "cherry picking" by cities and districts of tax-generating land uses while leaving out under-served, inhabited areas with infrastructure deficiencies and lack of access to reliable potable water and wastewater services. DUCs are recognized as social and economic communities of interest for purposes of recommending SOI determinations pursuant to Section 56425(c).

## ORGANIZATION OF MSR/SOI STUDY

This report has been organized in a checklist format to focus the information and discussion on key issues that may be particularly relevant to the subject agency while providing required LAFCO's MSR and SOI determinations. The checklist questions are based on the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Act, the LAFCO MSR Guidelines prepared by the Governor's Office of Planning and Research and adopted Sonoma LAFCO local policies and procedures. This report covers the following:

- Provides a description of the subject agency;
- Provides any new information since the last MSR and a determination regarding the need to update the SOI;
- Provides MSR and SOI draft determinations for public and Commission review; and
- Identifies any other issues that the Commission should consider in the MSR/SOI.

## AGENCY PROFILE

The Geyserville Fire Protection District provides fire and emergency services to a large portion of the northern Sonoma County region once designated as "Zone 6", and now as "Region 6", by fire service agencies.

The District has primary responsibility for serving over 200 square miles of territory, including the Alexander Valley, Chalk Hill, Dry Creek Valley, and Geyserville. A map of the District territory is shown in Figure 1.

The District maintains a central station in the unincorporated community of Geyserville, and has mutual aid agreements with other agencies in Region 6, including the City of Healdsburg, Cloverdale Fire Protection District, the Dry Creek Rancheria fire department, CAL FIRE (seasonal) and Knights Valley Volunteer Fire Company. The Windsor Fire Protection District, Mountain Volunteer Fire Company, and the City of Calistoga are also mutual aid partners.

The "Geyserville Fire Department" was formed as early as 1915 according to available records; the District was formed in 1996.

The District relies on both career and non-career (volunteer) fire and emergency service professionals.

Primary funding for the District comes from property ad valorem property taxes (the District does not assess a parcel tax). The District also has an associated firefighter association that raises funds from the community and provides ancillary support to the District.

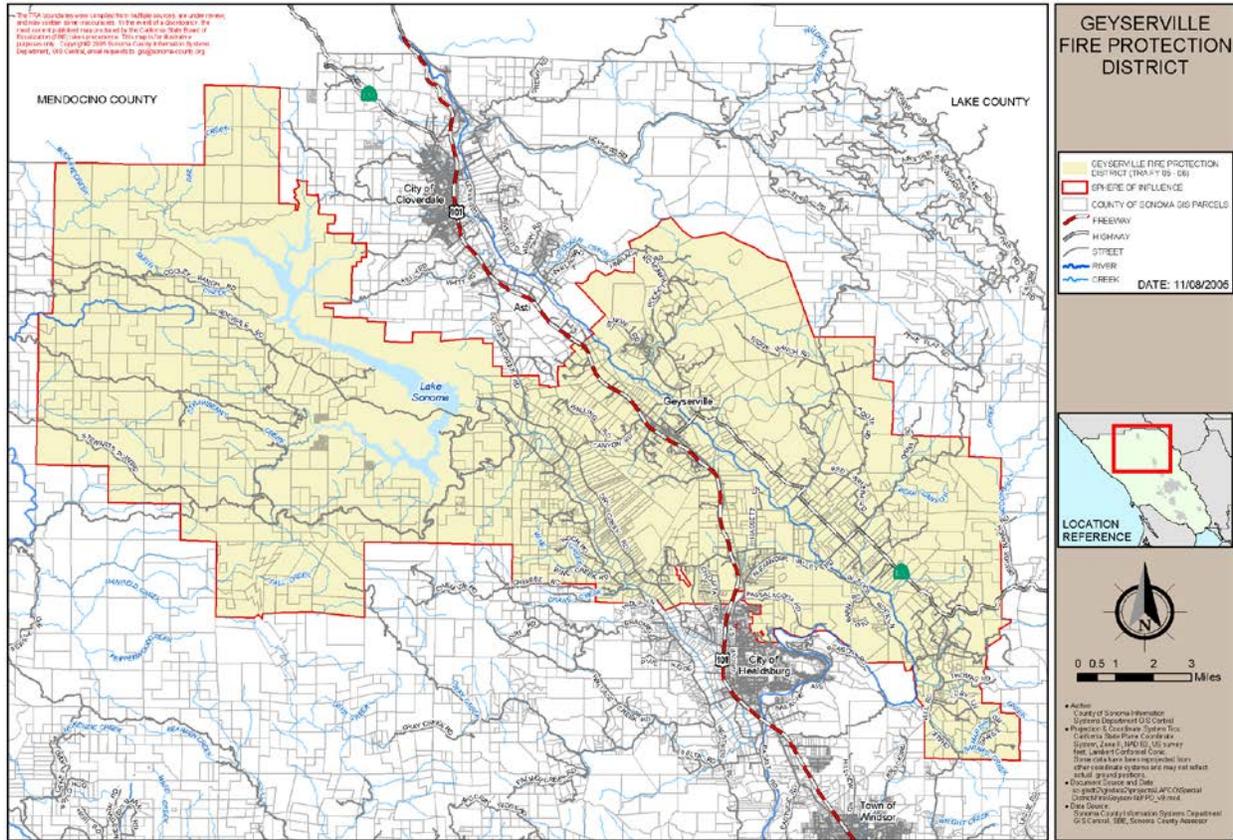
A profile of the District is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: District Profile**

Date of District Formation	1996
District Area	The District covers an area of 216 square miles in northern Sonoma County, bordering on the City of Healdsburg, the Windsor Fire Protection District, the North Sonoma Coast Fire Protection District, the Cloverdale Fire Protection District, and unincorporated areas included within County Service Area 40 (Fire Services)
Enabling Legislation	Fire Protection District pursuant to Health and Safety Code Sections 13800 et seq.
Authorized Services	The Health and Safety Code authorizes the following services, which the District provides: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fire protection services</li> <li>2. Rescue services</li> <li>3. Emergency medical services</li> <li>4. Hazardous material emergency response services</li> </ol>
Aid Agreements (mutual or automatic)	Aid agreements exist with the Cloverdale Fire Protection District, City of Healdsburg, CAL FIRE, Dry Creek Rancheria Fire Department, Knights Valley Volunteer Fire Company (CSA 40), and the Windsor Fire Protection District. For mutual aid, the District is part of a County-wide system managed through REDCOM.
Properties and Facilities Managed	The District has three fire stations located at <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Station 1 – 20975 Geyserville Avenue, Geyserville, CA – in downtown Geyserville.</li> <li>• Station 2 – 6571 Highway 128, Healdsburg, CA – in the Alexander Valley.</li> <li>• Station 3 – 3970 Dry Creek Road, Healdsburg, CA – in Dry Creek Valley.</li> </ul>
Selection of Board Members	Registered voters residing within District boundaries elect the Board of Directors.

Number of Board Members	The District is governed by a five-member Board.
Members Terms of Office	Directors are elected to four-year staggered terms.
District Funding Source	The District's primary source of revenue is the general property tax based on either a flat 1% rate applied to the adjusted 1975/1976 full value or on 1% of the sales price of the property on sales transactions and construction after the adjusted 1975/1976 valuation.
Property Tax Allocation	Funds are allocated to the District through the County tax collection process. The amount is based on the property tax rate allocable to the District through the tax rate areas within the District.
Special Taxes or Assessments	None
District Staffing and Employees	The District has one part-time fire chief, three full-time firefighters, three part-time firefighters on a seasonal basis, one part-time administrative assistant, and stipend and volunteer firefighters.
Meeting Schedule	The regular meeting of the Board of Directors is held on the second Wednesday of each month.
Meeting Location	20975 Geyserville Avenue, Geyserville, CA
Office Location	20975 Geyserville Avenue, Geyserville, CA 95441
Contact Information	Mailing Address: PO Box 217, Geyserville, CA 95441 Phone Number: (707) 857-4373
Web Site	<a href="http://www.geyservillefire.com">www.geyservillefire.com</a>

Figure 1: Map of Existing GFPD Boundaries



**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 (included proposed changes to the SOI).

The affected local agencies for this MSR/SOI are:

- County of Sonoma (various departments)
- Sonoma Resource Conservation District
- North Sonoma County Health Care District

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

- Cloverdale Fire Protection District
- City of Healdsburg
- Knights Valley Volunteer Fire Company
- Sonoma County Fire Services Advisory Council
- CAL FIRE
- North Sonoma Coast Fire Protection District
- Cazadero Community Services District
- Mountain Volunteer Fire Company
- Windsor Fire Protection District
- City of Calistoga
- Napa Local Agency Formation Commission
- Coastal Valleys EMS Agency
- Dry Creek Rancheria

## **MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW**

### **SCOPE OF STUDY**

It is important to note that this study is being prepared with a deliberately limited scope, at the request of the applicant (Geyserville FPD) and the Knights Valley Volunteer Fire Company, and at the discretion of Sonoma LAFCO staff.

Fire and emergency service agencies in Region 6 have been conducting discussions to determine if a regional consolidation program would best serve the region and underpin a sustainable service model for the future. These discussions have focused on a potential consolidation of Geyserville and Cloverdale FPDs, but have otherwise been expansive, including options of including territory covered by County Service Area 40 (Fire Services) both in the Knights Valley and Geysers areas.

The Commission adopted a Municipal Service Review of Geyserville and Cloverdale FPDs in 2014 and at that time declined to approve amendments to any agency Spheres of Influence in Region 6 as a whole, and for the two districts in particular, citing a lack of sustainable funding for combined operations.

However, the Knights Valley Volunteer Fire Company has indicated that they are unable to maintain adequate staffing to provide responsive service, and that the Company and community at large support consolidation with Geyserville FPD as an emergency measure to address this staffing crisis. Furthermore, a large portion of the territory of Knights Valley was destroyed in the October 2017 Tubbs Fire.

Knights Valley VFC staffing consists of a fire chief and several volunteers, and does not include a trained emergency medical technician (EMT). The VFC has not had a new volunteer recruit in over two years (and has lost two volunteers in that time period). The status of company staffing post-fire disaster is unknown, but three of four volunteers lost their homes in the disaster.

Knights Valley has historically been dispatched to twenty to twenty-five calls annually, but has been able to respond to only about a third of the incidents that they are

“toned out” for. The Dry Creek Rancheria and Mountain Volunteer Fire Company are providing automatic aid, with Geyserville FPD responding to call-outs requiring more resources.

The County of Sonoma, which is the oversight body for County Service Area 40, has indicated a willingness to execute a tax exchange agreement with Geyserville FPD that is likely to satisfy both parties, providing funding to Geyserville FPD commensurate with the costs for providing services to the Knights Valley area.

Therefore, this Municipal Service Review focuses *solely on providing a review of Geyserville FPDs current status, and whether a Sphere of Influence amendment is warranted to encompass the Knights Valley area.* The study will *not* evaluate broader reorganization or consolidation opportunities in Region 6, but should also *not* be seen as precluding those opportunities.

If the Commission adopts this Municipal Service Review and its determinations, and agrees to amend Geyserville FPD’s sphere of influence, it would be expected that Geyserville would immediately seek annexation of the territory. (Staff has indicated this possibility in the referral documents sent to affected agencies and interested parties.

**POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT MSR DETERMINATIONS**

The MSR determinations marked below are potentially significant, as indicated by “yes” or “maybe” answers to the key policy questions in the checklist and corresponding discussion on the following pages.

- 1. Growth and Population
- 2. Disadvantaged Communities
- 3. Capacity, Adequacy & Infrastructure to Provide Services X
- 4. Financial Ability X
- 5. Shared Services X
- 6. Accountability X
- 7. Other

**DETERMINATION 1. GROWTH AND POPULATION**

Growth and population projections for the affected area.

	YES	MAYBE	NO
a. Is the agency’s territory or surrounding area expected to experience any significant population change or development over the next 5-10 years?			No
b. Will population changes have an impact on the subject agency’s service needs and demands?			No

c. Will projected growth require a change in the agency's service boundary?			No
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**Determinations**

- The region served by GFPD will continue to experience minimal development and population growth due to land use policies enacted by the County of Sonoma and managed by the County's Permit and Resource Management Department (Permit Sonoma).

**Discussion**

The required level of staffing and other resources for a fire and emergency services agency is linked to three primary categories:

- The population of residents and workers within the territory.
- Transient populations, included travelers through the territory (on roads or other transit systems), and visitors (to event centers and recreational areas).
- The amount and type of development in the territory (i.e. commercial, industrial, residential, and the composition of each). This factor is also informed by the age, type of construction, and building standards of the development.

*Population*

Because there are no incorporated cities within Geyserville FPD's service area, land use planning is the responsibility of the County of Sonoma's Permit Sonoma department.

The County General Plan 2020 divides the County into nine planning areas. Planning Area Objectives and Policies recognize the circumstances of each of the nine planning areas of the County and the fact that each area warrants its own unique policies. These policies also provide specific guidance regarding the use of individual properties. Most urbanized growth is expected to occur within Urban Service Areas.

The County has two goals that reinforce the philosophy of City centered growth. These goals are as follows:

- GOAL LU-2:** Accommodate the major share of future growth within the nine existing cities and their expansion areas and within selected unincorporated communities, which are planned to have adequate water and sewer capacities.
- GOAL LU-3:** Locate future growth within the cities and unincorporated Urban Service Areas in a compact manner using vacant "infill" parcels and lands next to existing development at the edge of these areas.

In implementing the County General Plan 2020 goals and policies, the plan identifies two planning areas in Fire Region 6, Cloverdale/Northeast County and Healdsburg and Environs. Geyserville FPD serves territory within both of these planning areas.

The County General Plan describes the features of each area and expected population growth as follows (emphasis added):

### 3.2 CLOVERDALE /NORTHEAST COUNTY

*The Cloverdale/Northeast County Planning Area includes the city of Cloverdale and the community of Geyserville. The rugged Mendocino Highlands on the west and the Mayacamas Mountains on the east surround the fertile Russian River Valley, including Dry Creek and Alexander Valleys. The area is also rich in other resources, including streams, riparian zones, fish and wildlife habitat, geothermal steam, construction aggregates, and water for domestic and agricultural use. Lake Sonoma and the Russian River also provide many recreational opportunities. Lands outside of the valley floors are severely constrained and relatively inaccessible.*

*The Land Use Element provides for a population of 18,460, a gain of 5,709 residents from year 2000. 11,200 of these residents are anticipated to live within the Cloverdale Urban Service Area. While agriculture, geothermal development, and manufacturing are the primary sources of employment, major growth is primarily in the retail and service sectors.*

*Lake Sonoma and increased tourism related to the wine industry, particularly in Dry Creek and Alexander Valleys, will create pressure for additional recreation and visitor serving uses. In recent years, increases in tourism have been primarily associated with winery promotions and events.*

*Demand for rural residential uses may increase in the agricultural valleys due to their scenic value and proximity to urban areas. Resource production must be regulated to avoid conflicts with other land uses, damage to the river, and loss of agricultural land. Many of the hillside areas are subject to severe constraints, poor access and shortage of services.*

### 3.3 HEALDSBURG AND ENVIRONS

*The Healdsburg and Environs Planning Area is located in north central Sonoma County. High quality wines are produced from the vineyards in Dry Creek Valley and the Russian River Basin. The Basin is also used for gravel mining and recreation. Adjacent valley floors are subject to flooding. The steep and geologically unstable hillsides of the Mendocino Highlands on the west have limited access and are primarily used as grazing lands. The Mill Creek area has extensive timber stands.*

*Healdsburg and Windsor are the two urban centers and are located along the Highway 101 corridor. Areas outside of the valley floors and lower foothills are relatively inaccessible and sparsely populated. Employment is provided by agriculture, manufacturing, and service industries.*

The land use plan anticipates a total population of 51,460, an increase of 10,664 residents over the 2000 level. Most future growth is expected in Healdsburg and Windsor. The rural area is projected to have little growth. Employment growth is expected in the service and retail sectors and growth in the tourism industry. As in the Cloverdale Planning Area, increased reliance upon tourism has spurred tremendous growth in agricultural promotion activities.

The unique agricultural, resource, scenic, and recreational values of this planning area create development pressures and land use conflicts. At issue is the protection of agricultural and resource lands, the extent of urban development in physically constrained areas with few services, the location and extent of visitor serving uses, and the extent of Urban Service Areas for Windsor and Healdsburg.

The County General Plan population projections for the Cloverdale and Healdsburg Planning Areas are stated in Tables 2 and 3 below.

**Table 2: Cloverdale/Northeast County Projected Growth**

Planning Area/City Urban Service Areas	1980	1990	2000	Projected 2020	Projected Change 2000-2020
Cloverdale Urban Service Area	5,509	5,500	7,052	11,200	4,148
Unincorporated Area Outside City Urban Service Area	3,471	5,348	5,699	7,260	1,561
Cloverdale Planning Area	8,980	10,848	12,751	18,460	5,709
County Totals:	299,684	388,222	458,614	546,030	87,416

Sources: U.S. Census, Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and PRMD.  
Notes: (1) County totals for historical data are from U.S. Census. (2) All historical city data include unincorporated Urban Service Areas (USAs), as estimated by ABAG. (3) Projections for cities reflect General Plans or estimates, and include existing unincorporated USAs. (4) Projections for unincorporated areas are by PRMD, and reflect modifications to ABAG's "Projections 2002." See text for additional explanation.

**Table 3: Healdsburg and Environs Projected Growth**

Planning Area/City Urban Service Areas	1980	1990	2000	Projected 2020	Projected Change 2000-2020
Healdsburg Urban Service Area	8,422	10,299	11,253	13,160	1,907

Planning Area/City Urban Service Areas	1980	1990	2000	Projected 2020	Projected Change 2000-2020
Windsor Urban Service Area	6,160	11,809	22,744	30,300	7,556
Unincorporated Area Outside City Urban Service Areas	4,917	7,247	6,799	8,000	1,201
Healdsburg and Windsor Planning Area	19,499	29,355	40,796	51,460	10,664
Healdsburg Planning Area and Unincorporated Area	13,339	17,546	18,052	21,160	3,108
County Totals	299,684	388,222	458,614	546,030	87,416
Sources: U.S. Census, Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and PRMD. Notes: (1) County totals for historical data are from U.S. Census. (2) All historical city data include unincorporated Urban Service Areas (USAs), as estimated by ABAG. (3) Projections for cities reflect General Plans or estimates, and include existing unincorporated USAs. (4) Projections for unincorporated areas are by PRMD, and reflect modifications to ABAG's "Projections 2002." See text for additional explanation.					

Although Geyserville FPD does not serve the entirety of the unincorporated regions within the two planning areas, the projected growth rates for those areas serve as an appropriate proxy for population growth within the District's service area.

The total growth rate projected between 2000 and 2020 for the unincorporated areas in the two planning areas is 22%, yielding an annual compound rate projection of 1.003%.

Can a conclusion be made regarding whether this resident population growth rate will affect the District's ability to provide sustainable fire and emergency services within its territory? Fundamentally, yes. The District is able to meet its service goals with existing staffing and equipment resources, and rarely relies on mutual aid from neighboring agencies except in cases (like major structure or wildland fires) where operational needs demand support.

This operational effectiveness will not be affected by the very low resident population growth in the region served by the District.

### *Transient Population*

Fire and emergency services agencies respond to "transient" populations as well as resident populations within their service areas. For some agencies, the service needs for transient populations can greatly exceed the needs for resident populations. For example, the Schell Vista Fire Protection District has a preponderance of service calls

for vehicle accidents on the highways that traverse its territory, and the Bodega Bay Fire Protection District has a very heavy call load from coastal visitors rather than residents.

Geyserville FPD serves transient populations including visitors to recreation areas (e.g. Lake Sonoma), travelers on major highways (e.g. Highways 101 and 128), and visitors at event centers such as wineries.

It is unknown what proportion of incident calls come from this population subset, but there are no indications that call volume will grow to an extent that the District will be challenged to provide sufficient resources to continue to provide reasonable service in the area.

*Development*

The County of Sonoma has sole jurisdiction over land use and planning for the area served by the District. Permit Sonoma does not anticipate any significant residential, commercial development in the areas served by the District. Projects with the largest impact on the District would be new wineries or other event centers with associated event activity.

It is not anticipated that the very modest population growth in the area and limited development activity would in any way affect the District’s ability to provide fire and emergency services at current levels and response times.

**DETERMINATION 2. DISADVANTAGED UNINCORPORATED COMMUNITIES**

The location and characteristics of any disadvantaged unincorporated communities within or contiguous to the sphere of influence.

	YES	MAYBE	NO
a. Does the subject agency provide public services related to sewers, municipal and industrial water, or structural fire protection?			No
b. Are there any “inhabited unincorporated communities” (per adopted Commission policy) within or adjacent to the subject agency’s sphere of influence that are considered “disadvantaged” (80% or less of the statewide median household income)?			No
c. If “yes” to both a) and b), it is feasible for the agency to be reorganized such that it can extend service to the disadvantaged unincorporated community (if “no” to either a) or b), this question may be skipped)?			No

**Determination**

- There are no county-designated disadvantaged unincorporated areas within Region 6, and fire and emergency service provision is exempted from provisions of SB 244.

**Discussion**

Because the District does not provide a service that triggers the provisions of SB 244, a LAFCO determination regarding any disadvantaged unincorporated communities within or adjacent to the agency’s sphere of influence is not required.

Further, there are no areas within or adjacent to the District that are designated as disadvantaged unincorporated communities.

**DETERMINATION 3. CAPACITY AND ADEQUACY OF PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

Present and planned capacity of public facilities, adequacy of public services, and infrastructure needs or deficiencies including needs or deficiencies related to sewers, municipal and industrial water, and structural fire protection in any disadvantaged, unincorporated communities within or contiguous to the sphere of influence

	YES	MAYBE	NO
a. Are there any deficiencies in agency capacity to meet service needs of existing development within its existing territory?			No
b. Are there any issues regarding the agency’s capacity to meet the service demand of reasonably foreseeable future growth?			No
c. Are there any concerns regarding public services provided by the agency being considered adequate?			No
d. Are there any significant infrastructure needs or deficiencies to be addressed?			No
e. Are there changes in state regulations on the horizon that will require significant facility and/or infrastructure upgrades?			No
f. Are there any service needs or deficiencies for disadvantaged unincorporated communities related to sewers, municipal and industrial water, and structural fire protection within or contiguous to the agency’s sphere of influence?			No

**Determinations**

- The Geyserville Fire Protection District effectively provides fire and emergency services within its existing service area and is expected to be able to serve potential population and development growth for the foreseeable future.
- The District is currently meeting recommended standards to operate a combination fire department under NFPA 1720. (A combination department is one that relies on both career and non-career staffing.)
- The District will likely face the same challenge that most fire protection districts in Sonoma County face with regards to transitioning from a primarily volunteer-based staffing model to a paid staffing model, due to declines in the availability of volunteers.
- The District already provides mutual aid response to the area served by Knights Valley Volunteer Fire Company.

### Discussion

The District provides fire and emergency services within its boundaries, and provides mutual aid support to neighboring agencies. Table 4 indicates the types of incidents that the District responds to, and their historical frequency.

**Table 4: Historical Call for Service Volumes**

Type of Call for Service	2014	2015	2016	Total	Percentage
Emergency Medical/Rescue/Auto Accidents	193	211	226	630	40.5%
Structure Fire	21	17	13	51	3.3%
Wildland Fire	28	24	33	85	5.4%
All other Fires	7	12	6	25	1.6%
Other / Public Assistance	267	259	239	765	49.2%
Total	516	523	517	1,556	100%
Response time (Min/sec) from crew notify to 1 <sup>st</sup> Unit On-Scene for 90% of the annual emergencies	12 min / 31 sec	12 min / 56 sec	15 min / 15 sec		

This data indicates that the number of incident calls the District responds to is increasing, as is the response time (a measure of how quickly resources arrive at the incident scene). The District indicates that historically, response time data has not included Code 2 incidents, which are non-emergency responses. The District responds

to fire alarms as Code 2, which increases overall response rates, and there are increasing numbers of Code 2 incidents in general in the area.

### *Response Standards*

There are no mandatory federal or state regulations directing the level of fire service response times and outcomes for suppression or fire engine-based Emergency Medical Services (EMS). The body of regulations on the fire suppression service provides that if fire services are provided, they must be done so with the safety of the firefighters and citizens in mind.

Thus in an informed public policy debate, a governing board “purchases” the fire and EMS service levels the community needs and can afford. The design of fire services is therefore a local choice issue.

However, over the last twenty years a number of state and federal laws, regulations, and court cases based on firefighter safety have affected the flexibility of fire agencies in determining their staffing levels, training, and methods of operation. Some of these are given an abbreviated overview below:

1. 1999 OSHA Staffing Policies – Federal OSHA applied the confined space safety regulations for work inside tanks and underground spaces to America’s firefighters. This requirement pertains to atmospheres that are “IDLH” (Immediately Dangerous to Life and Health): teams of two members inside and two members outside must be in constant communication: the outside team has to be equipped and ready to rescue the inside team. This situation occurs in building fires where the fire and smoke conditions are serious enough to require the wearing of self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA). This is commonly called the “2-in/2-out” policy. This policy requires that firefighters enter serious building fires in teams of two, while two more firefighters are outside and immediately ready to rescue them should trouble arise.
2. May 2001 National Staffing Guidelines – The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standard on Career and Combination (volunteer) Fire Service Deployment provides guidance to local districts and has been widely adopted as a response standard.

NFPA 1720 (2010 Edition) for Substantially Volunteer Departments applies to Geyserville FPD because the District has more reserve, stipend, and volunteers than they do fulltime career firefighters recommends:

NFPA1720 Section 4.1 on Fire Suppression Organization states that “fire suppression operations shall be organized to ensure that the fire department’s fire suppression capability includes sufficient personnel, equipment, and other resources to deploy fire suppression resources efficiently, effectively, and safely.”

Table 5 shows the staffing and response time recommendation contained in the NFPA standards. GFPD serves a “remote” area.

Table 5: NFPA #1720 – Table 4.3.2 Staffing and Response Time

Demand Zone	Demographics	Staffing and Response Time – FF/Minutes	Percentage of Completion
Urban	>1000 people/mi. <sup>2</sup>	15/9	90
Suburban	500–1000 people/mi. <sup>2</sup>	10/10	80
Rural	< 500 people/mi. <sup>2</sup>	6/14	80
Remote*	Travel distance $\geq$ 8 mi.	4/Not Applicable	90

\* Upon assembling the necessary resources at the emergency scene, the fire department should have the capability to safely commence an initial attack within 2 minutes 90 percent of the time.

Note that the NFPA standards do not indicate a recommended response time for rural areas, only a staffing level for the responding team (four).

Therefore, the District is meeting NFPA standards for response to incidents in its service area.

### *Facilities*

A critical factor in providing effective and efficient fire service is the location and quality of equipment.

Determining the location for fire station facilities should take in a number of considerations and include an analysis of service area demographics, roadway data, and occupancy types, population, emergency response data, workforce and response trend analysis.

The District serves the small population center of Geyserville and large rural and wildland areas that are lightly populated. The District area also includes wineries and other visitor-serving facilities, and the Lake Sonoma recreational area.

Appropriately, the District maintains one main fire station/headquarters, and has two supplemental stations where equipment can be stored.

### *Staffing*

GFPD is similar to many fire protection districts in the County in that firefighter and EMT staffing is supplied primarily by non-career volunteers, rather than paid career employees. The District provides training, equipment, stipends, and other support for volunteers.

For many districts this staffing model is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain primarily due to demographic changes, including an aging population, and an increasing dislocation between where people live and work.

This problem is often even more acute for volunteer fire companies serving rural areas that are sparsely populated, and so have very small pools of potential volunteers.

Fire protection districts are responding to declining volunteer pools in several ways, including:

- Strengthening recruitment efforts, and in some cases coordinating these efforts with neighboring agencies.
- Offering stipends for volunteers, paying them “by the call” (for each incident that they respond to) or “by the shift” (for shifts served at district’s facility).
- Transitioning to a paid workforce.

Of these options, transitioning to a paid workforce presents by far the greatest financial challenge – many districts simply do not have sufficient current revenue to contemplate this approach.

Geyserville FPD has managed to maintain its volunteer staffing model, but it should be noted that the District clearly has no financial “head room” to transition to a fully paid career workforce. If that transition becomes necessary, the District would have to consider raising revenues through a parcel tax or other assessment, or from other sources. The District has begun discussions regarding forming a benefit assessment area.

**DETERMINATION 4. FINANCIAL ABILITY**

Financial ability of agencies to provide services

	YES	MAYBE	NO
a. Does the organization routinely engage in budgeting practices that may indicate poor financial management, such as overspending its revenues, failing to commission independent audits, or adopting its budget late?			No
b. Is the organization lacking adequate reserve to protect against unexpected events or upcoming significant costs?		Maybe	
c. Is the organization’s rate/fee schedule insufficient to fund an adequate level of service, and/or is the fee inconsistent with the schedules of similar service organizations?			No
d. Is the organization unable to fund necessary infrastructure maintenance, replacement and/or any needed expansion?		Maybe	
e. Is the organization lacking financial policies that ensure its continued financial accountability and stability?			No
f. Is the organization’s debt at an unmanageable level?			No

## Determination

- The Geyserville Fire Protection District is meeting its expenses without difficulty and is able to provide some funding for infrastructure needs (primarily vehicle and equipment replacement). Financial reserves are not keeping pace with expected long-term infrastructure needs, however.
- The District might be faced with additional financial challenges if it is unable to continue to rely on volunteers, requiring a shift to more paid professional staffing.
- Financial management of the District is sound, and is independently audited on an annual basis.

## Discussion

### *Budget*

GFPD staff prepares annual budgets in the spring for consideration and approval by the Board of Directors prior to the upcoming fiscal year (July through June). The staff seeks guidance from the Board, and District customers are able to comment, in successive board meetings prior to budget approval.

Geyserville staff are not part of a retirement system, which significantly reduces annual expenses, though the District established a 457 plan in 2017, with District contributions made as budget allows.

### *Reserves*

The District maintains cash reserves and manages them per a board-adopted Financial Reserve policy.

Current reserves amount to approximately \$1.7 million, and are intended for capital expenditures and operational deficits, as needed.

As Table 6 illustrates, annual operational deficits have been declining, and are now lower than \$25,000. At this level, the District can comfortably cover operational deficits, though at the expense of funds for capital expenditures.

**Table 6: Geyserville Fire Protection District Budget Review**

Fiscal Year	Revenue	Salaries and Benefits	Operating and Capital Expenditures	Deficit
FY 14-15	\$862,313	\$498,546	\$437,483	(\$73,716)
FY 15-16	\$891,141	\$509,799	\$447,684	(\$66,342)
FY 16-17	\$920,985	\$521,399	\$451,724	(\$52,138)
FY 17-18	\$951,882	\$533,359	\$455,794	(\$37,271)
FY 18-19	\$983,867	\$547,519	\$459,894	(\$23,546)

Property tax revenue transferred from CSA 40 (Fire Services), through a tax exchange agreement, for the expected annexation of the Knights Valley service area will provide in the neighborhood of \$80,000 to \$120,000 annually to the District. Because the District expects to be able to serve the Knights Valley area without incurring additional costs (other than contracted support from Calistoga noted below), the tax revenue is expected to bring the District into operational surplus for at least the near term.

(It should be noted that the District, should it successfully petition for the annexation of the Knights Valley territory, expects to enter into a contract or assume a contract with the City of Calistoga to supplement services in the southeastern part of the area. This contract is expected to require approximately \$30,000 in annual funding.)

*Financial Policies*

The District has adopted financial policies to help ensure the proper fiscal management, including:

- Budget Spending (Purchasing)
- Financial Reserve Policy
- Financial Policy
- Capital Assets

The District retains an independent contracted auditor to conduct financial reviews annually.

*Resources:*

- GFPD FY 2017/2018 Adopted Budget (Appendix B)
- GFPD FY 2016/2017 Financial Statement (Appendix C)
- GFPD FY 2016/2017 Independent Financial Audit Report (Appendix D)

**DETERMINATION 5. SHARED SERVICES AND FACILITIES**

Status of, and opportunities for, shared facilities.

	YES	MAYBE	NO
a. Is the agency currently sharing services or facilities with other organizations? If so, describe the status of such efforts.			No
b. Are there any opportunities for the organization to share services or facilities with neighboring or overlapping organizations that are not currently being utilized?		Maybe	
c. Are there any governance options that may produce economies of scale and/or improve buying power in order to reduce costs?			No

	YES	MAYBE	NO
d. Are there governance options to allow appropriate facilities and/or resources to be shared, or making excess capacity available to others, and avoid construction of extra or unnecessary infrastructure or eliminate duplicative resources?		Maybe	

**Determination**

- The Geyserville Fire Protection District is appropriately positioned to seek out and enter into agreements with other fire and emergency services providers in Region 6 to take advantage of opportunities to reduce costs, and to provide more efficient and effective services.

**Discussion**

Geyserville FPD manages operations cooperatively with neighboring agencies, notably through mutual response agreements. The District also participates in multi-agency management systems, such as the Redwood Empire Dispatch Communications Authority (REDCOM), which manages emergency services dispatch for the majority of emergency services agencies in the County.

The District no longer invests reserve funds in the County of Sonoma Treasury investment pool, relying instead on a local financial institution.

The District is insured through the Fire Agencies Insurance Risk Authority (FAIRA), and is a member of the Fire Agencies Self-Insurance System (FASIS) for workers' compensation coverage.

Table 7 presents a summary of best practices for fire district coordination with other agencies.

**Table 7: Coordination Best Practices**

Best Practice	Observation and findings
The District participates in the Redwood Empire Dispatch Communications Authority (REDCOM)	Yes.
The Districts has mutual aid Agreements with other Districts.	All of the Region 6 fire agencies participate in multiple mutual and or automatic aid agreements.
The District contracts for accounting and audit services with other districts or the County.	No. The District formerly contracted with the County, but now manages finances independently.

Best Practice	Observation and findings
The District participates with other districts or the County for equipment purchasing or leasing.	Yes.
The District participates in joint insurance programs.	Yes; the District is enrolled in the FAIRA and FASIS joint insurance programs.
The District has an "Amador Contract" with CAL FIRE.	No districts in Region 6 can afford contracts for service from CAL FIRE.
The District participates in joint training with other districts or the County.	Yes.
The District participates with another district or the County for joint administration services.	No. Geyserville secures administration services through a half-time District employee.
The District shares facilities with other districts.	In the event of a region-wide reorganization, there may be opportunities to evaluate the status and staffing of fire stations.
The District shares a fire chief or other staff with another District.	No. Geyserville has a part-time fire chief.
The District participates in joint recruitment with other districts.	Not at this time.
Other	The District has a vehicle maintenance agreement with the Cloverdale Fire Protection District.

*REGIONAL AGENCY CONSOLIDATION*

Geyserville has been an active participant in regional discussions that have taken place over the past half-dozen years or so to consider appropriate fire and emergency service agency consolidation in Region 6. These discussions have included the City of Healdsburg, Cloverdale FPD, the Dry Creek Rancheria, and County Service Area 40 (representing volunteer fire companies).

In 2014, the Commission considered a Municipal Services Review that focused on a reorganization of Geyserville and Cloverdale FPDs, but declined to make sphere of influence amendments that would enable reorganization due to a lack of confidence in the financial sustainability of a combined entity. (In part, that confidence was sapped due to an unclear picture of potential tax exchanges between CSA 40 and the Districts to account for coverage of CSA 40 territory in the Geysers and Knights Valley.)

LAFCO staff continue to monitor fire and emergency services agency consolidation discussions throughout the County, and opine that Region 6 remains at the forefront of possible action in the near term, in part due to the interest of Geyserville FPD and other Region 6 agencies.

**DETERMINATION 6. ACCOUNTABILITY, STRUCTURE AND EFFICIENCIES**

Accountability for community service needs, including governmental structure and operational efficiencies

	YES	MAYBE	NO
a. Are there any issues with meetings being accessible and well publicized? Any failures to comply with disclosure laws and the Brown Act?			No
b. Are there any issues with filling board vacancies and maintaining board members?			No
c. Are there any issues with staff turnover or operational efficiencies?			No
d. Is there a lack of regular audits, adopted budgets and public access to these documents?			No
e. Are there any recommended changes to the organization’s governance structure that will increase accountability and efficiency?			No
f. Are there any governance restructure options to enhance services and/or eliminate deficiencies or redundancies?		Maybe	
g. Are there any opportunities to eliminate overlapping boundaries that confuse the public, cause service inefficiencies, unnecessarily increase the cost of infrastructure, exacerbate rate issues and/or undermine good planning practices?			No

**Determinations**

- The Geyserville Fire Protection District is governed in a manner that not only complies with all statutes and laws, but is fully open to community input. Board directors have been elected and/or appointed appropriately.
- The District undertakes annual independent financial and business practice audits and is in compliance with financial regulations and recommended practices.
- The District is encouraged to continue discussions with all other fire and emergency services providers in Region 6 (and in neighboring counties, as appropriate) regarding opportunities for coordinating service provision to produce efficiencies and cost savings, up to and including potential consolidation of operations in the future.

## Discussion

The Geyserville Fire Protection District is in compliance with all public noticing requirements for board meetings. There have been no noted Brown Act violations by the Directors. The District makes files available to the general public when requested – most documents are posted to the District web site.

The Board of the District has had a complete turnover in representatives since formation in 1996. In that time, only one board vacancy required an election, but the District has also not had difficulty in attracting board candidates. Board members file financial interest statements and comply with State training requirements for public officials.

The District undergoes an annual financial audit, and changes auditors regularly. All District documents are available to the public.

District staff and board members have wholeheartedly supported discussions regarding operational and governance options in Region 6, up to and including a region-wide reorganization and consolidation of fire and emergency service agencies.

**SPHERE OF INFLUENCE STUDY**

On the basis of the Municipal Service Review, staff recommends that the Municipal Service Review does identify and support the need to change the agency’s Sphere of Influence. Therefore, a change to the agency’s SOI is recommended and SOI determinations have been made and are included in this MSR/SOI study.

The existing Sphere of Influence for the District is contiguous with the District’s boundaries. Staff is recommending that the Commission consider amending the District’s sphere to include territory within County Service Area 40 (Fire Services) currently served by the Knights Valley Volunteer Fire Company, and two areas that are part of the Geyserville Integrated Response Plan contract area, which border the District on the east. Figure 4 shows these areas.

The recommended sphere amendment is **not** intended to preclude further amendments to Geyserville Fire’s sphere, future annexations of territory, or other reorganizations and consolidations that may be pursued in the future.

**POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT SOI DETERMINATIONS**

The SOI determinations marked below are potentially significant, as indicated by “yes” or “maybe” answers to the key policy questions in the checklist and corresponding discussion on the following pages.

- 1. Present and Planned Land Uses
- 2. Need for Public Facilities and Services X
- 3. Capacity and Adequacy of Provide Services X
- 4. Social or Economic Communities of Interest
- 5. Disadvantaged Unincorporated Communities

**DETERMINATION 2. NEED FOR PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

The present and probable need for public facilities and services in the area.

	YES	MAYBE	NO
a. Would the SOI conflict with the Commission’s goal to increase efficiency and conservation of resources by providing essential services within a framework of controlled growth?			No
b. Would the SOI expand services that could be better provided by a city or another agency?		Maybe	

c.	Does the SOI represent premature inducement of growth or facilitate conversion of agriculture or open space lands?			No
d.	Are there any areas that should be removed from the SOI because existing circumstances make development unlikely, there is not sufficient demand to support it or important open space/prime agricultural land should be removed from urbanization?			No
e.	Have any agency commitments been predicated on expanding the agency's SOI such as roadway projects, shopping centers, educational facilities, economic development or acquisition of parks and open space?			No

**Determination**

- Although there are other potential models for provision of fire and emergency services to the Knights Valley area, Geyserville Fire Protection District is the best solution in the immediate term. Amending the District's Sphere of Influence to include the territory, with the implication that an annexation of the entire area would quickly follow, is an appropriate response to the immediate need, without precluding other reorganizations within Region 6 in the future.

**Discussion**

Addition of the CSA 40/Knights Valley VFD area to GFPD's SOI, leading to likely annexation, does not conflict with Sonoma LAFCO goals and policy related to the efficient provision of municipal services. Instead, it addresses a pressing need for the provision of fire and emergency services to the Knights Valley area.

There are other potential service models that could address the need for services in Knights Valley, including:

- Having Geyserville FPD, Cloverdale FPD, or the City of Healdsburg Fire Department provide services to the area under contract to County Service Area 40.
- Enacting a more comprehensive reorganization/consolidation of fire and emergency service agencies in Region 7 that would include providing coverage to Knights Valley.

Providing services to Knights Valley on a contract basis is not preferred because it is not as sustainable long-term. And, as noted previously, an eventual annexation of the Knights Valley area into Geyserville FPD does not in any way preclude a subsequent, broader reorganization and consolidation effort in Region 6.

**DETERMINATION 3. CAPACITY AND ADEQUACY OF PROVIDED SERVICES**

The present capacity of public facilities and adequacy of public services that the agency provides or is authorized to provide.

	YES	MAYBE	NO
a. Are there any issues regarding water availability for the proposed SOI territory?			No
b. Are there any issues regarding the agency's willingness and ability to extend services?			No
c. Are there any issues with the agency's ability to maintain an adequate level of service currently and/or with future extension of services per the proposed SOI?			No

**Determinations**

- GFPD has sufficient fire and emergency services capability to meet the needs of the territory presently served by the Knights Valley Volunteer Fire Company.
- GFPD indicates a readiness to assume a contract with the City of Calistoga for support services in the southern portion of the Knights Valley territory, or to negotiate one if none is on place, subsequent to a potential annexation of the area.

**Discussion**

GFPD has indicated a willingness to extend services to the CSA 40 area covered by the Knights Valley Volunteer Fire Company, and may file a proposal for annexation of that territory with Sonoma LAFCO concurrently with the adjudication of this Municipal Services Review or shortly thereafter. GFPD currently provides the majority of mutual aid coverage to Knights Valley VFC, so in effect has a proven ability to provide service in the past.

CSA 40/Knights Valley VFC has identified a need to seek contracted support from the City of Calistoga for emergency service calls in the southern portion of the service area abutting Napa County. The Sonoma County Fire and Emergency Services Department has had preliminary contact with the City of Calistoga but has not yet entered into an agreement.

GFPD has indicated that they would assume a contract with the City of Calistoga if one has been executed, or would seek to negotiate one if there is none in place, subsequent to a potential annexation of the CSA 40/Knights Valley territory.

SPHERE OF INFLUENCE MAPS

Figure 4: CSA 40/Knights Valley Volunteer Fire Company

