

## FINAL REPORT

### COUNTY OF SONOMA

### FIRE PROTECTION SERVICE PROVIDERS MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW

Prepared for:

Sonoma Local Agency Formation Commission

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### Note

This report was revised as of September 29, 2005, to include the following changes:

1. Page 15, fourth paragraph. "Camp Meeker CSD" changed to "Occidental CSD."
2. "Next Steps" Memo added as Appendix B.

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# I. INTRODUCTION

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## MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEWS

In 1997, the State Legislature convened a special commission to study and make recommendations to address California's rapidly accelerating growth. The Commission on Local Governance for the 21st Century focused energies on ways to empower the already existing County Local Agency Formation Commissions (LAFCOs). The Commission's final report, *Growth within Bounds*, recommended various changes to local land use laws and LAFCO statutes. Assembly Speaker Robert M. Hertzberg encompassed the recommendations of the Commission in Assembly Bill 2838, which passed into the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000. The new law endows LAFCO with more responsibilities and more influence to oversee growth in California.

One of the major new responsibilities of LAFCO is to conduct comprehensive, regional studies of municipal services (Municipal Service Reviews, or MSRs) every five years, in conjunction with reviews of city and district spheres of influence (SOIs). LAFCOs are directed to review and update agencies' SOIs, as necessary, every five years, according to Government Code Section 56425. Section 56430 requires MSRs to be conducted prior to or in conjunction with the sphere updates. MSRs must address at least the following nine factors:

1. Infrastructure needs or deficiencies
2. Growth and population projections for the affected area
3. Financing constraints and opportunities
4. Cost avoidance opportunities
5. Opportunities for rate restructuring
6. Opportunities for shared facilities
7. Government structure options, including advantages and disadvantages or consolidation or reorganization of service providers
8. Evaluation of management efficiencies
9. Local accountability and governance

Sonoma LAFCO retained Economic & Planning Systems, Inc. (EPS) to develop the MSRs for cities and special districts in Sonoma County. An initial survey was mailed to each fire protection service provider with a request for documents such as general plans, budgets, and maps. EPS used the completed surveys, supporting documents, and information from telephone interviews to write provider profiles and to make the nine determinations required by law for each provider. The provider profiles were submitted to each fire protection service provider for its review.

## **FIRE PROTECTION IN SONOMA COUNTY**

Fire protection service providers in Sonoma County can be divided into three major categories: city fire departments, independent fire protection districts (FPDs), and the County-run Department of Emergency Services. The area served by each of these entities is shown on **Figure 1**. Coverage is also provided by the California Department of Forestry (CDF), discussed further below.

This report addresses the fire protection services provided by the following agencies: 18 independent fire protection districts throughout the County, designated on the map as “FPDs,” 2 community services districts (CSDs), and 6 city fire departments. The County Department of Emergency Services provides fire protection within a County-dependent CSA 40. Although CSAs are not required to be the subject of an MSR, both CSA 40 and CDF are included in this report because of their role as significant providers of fire protection services in Sonoma County.

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) in Sonoma County are provided by a combination of fire districts, City departments, the Coastal Valley Regional EMS Agency, and private ambulance companies. The subject of EMS lies outside the scope of this report, which focuses on the provision of fire protection services.

## **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

In addition to service issues specific to each fire protection provider, the MSR has identified a number of service issues applicable to fire protection generally in Sonoma County. These issues, and potential actions to help maintain and improve fire protection in the County, are summarized below.

### ***1. There is a significant diversity of fire protection and emergency services demands and circumstances throughout the County.***

Fire protection demands vary greatly given the diversity of land use intensity and the large rural portion of the County. The urban areas, primarily the incorporated cities, concentrate service demands in a relatively contained geography making fire protection services efficient. The less densely populated rural residential and rural portions of the County are much more difficult to serve efficiently because of the travel distances between homes and businesses and fire stations, and the lack of water infrastructure. Because of this diversity there will always be a significant variation in the level of fire protection service that can be provided.

Going forward it will be important to provide better public information and education regarding fire protection services, including costs, funding, and service standards, throughout the County. A better educated public will be more willing to support changes needed to sustain and improve fire protection and emergency medical services.

***2. There is ongoing fiscal stress on fire protection services associated with continued manipulation of local government funding sources by the State.***

Ever since the adoption of Proposition 13 in 1978, fire protection services, especially the fire protection districts, have often lacked adequate fiscal resources. The ongoing fiscal crisis at the State government level and the related ERAF (the state-mandated Educational Revenue Augmentation Fund) property tax re-alignment has worsened the situation for many fire districts. Some cities and districts have responded by gaining voter support for special assessments and taxes, although others with similar service demands have failed to do so. In addition, there is often wide variation in the tax rates allocated to fire protection agencies by various tax rate areas in Sonoma County, resulting in further differences in the taxes collected by those agencies. As a result, in Sonoma County there is significant variation in the resources available to the individual fire protection agencies and these differences ultimately result in variations in levels of service. Even in the better-funded agencies, costs of fire service, driven by increasing employee-related costs and continuing growth and demands for service, are increasing faster than the underlying revenue base, causing continued stress.

***3. Sustainability of volunteer-based fire protection services is threatened by demographic changes.***

The rural fire protection agencies have historically depended upon volunteer fire fighters. The use of community-based fire fighters has been a benefit to the community, providing a cost-effective way of providing fire protection and also engendering a focus of community activity and identity. However, ongoing changes in the rural portions of the County, including the loss of resource-based jobs, high housing prices and a general aging of the population, have reduced the ranks of potential volunteers. The fact that volunteers increasingly work outside of their communities has also reduced the resources available to the volunteer fire departments. Given that the cost of supporting a volunteer force is based upon the number of volunteers enlisted, it is getting to the point where a full-time paid staff may become necessary to maintain service levels.

***4. Growth and increasing demands for service have reduced service standards in some areas.***

While overall growth in the County has been modest in recent years, some communities continue to grow briskly. There has also been a proliferation of exclusive homes in rural portions of the County that are very remote from the nearest fire station. New development generates new demands for fire protection service, and unless this growth provides a proportional increase in fiscal resources, fire protection services will be increasingly challenged to maintain existing service levels.

The increasing gap between expenditures and available revenues ultimately translates into a declining ability to provide adequate services. This situation, in turn, could lead in some cases to increased insurance costs to businesses and residents. In extreme cases, new development may not be able to proceed if the fire agency cannot commit to provide service. This issue is particularly problematic where the agency permitting new development is not the same as the fire protection agency (e.g., cities provided fire protection service by a special district).

***5. The existing number and configuration of fire protection agencies may be less than optimal.***

The 20 existing fire protection entities have historically provided fire protection services to their communities and have also been a focal point of community identity, involvement, and local governance. However, ongoing fiscal stresses and opportunities to reduce unit costs and improve services make increasing cooperation and reorganization compelling. While consolidation may not be appropriate in all cases it should be considered as one means to sustain and improve fire protection services under specific circumstances.

***6. The central dispatch system and the activities of CSA 40 provide examples of functional consolidation that have served the County well and could be considered for other services.***

The central dispatch system (Redwood Empire Dispatch Communications, or REDCOM) is a cooperative effort among the County's fire protection agencies. This system has reduced cost to the taxpayers and improved services. CSA 40 provides an organizational framework for 15 of the rural fire protection districts, including budget control, overall management oversight, and equipment and facility funding. There are a number of other opportunities that could also be considered for regional cooperation and/or functional consolidation that could provide economies of scale and reduce costs, including fire fighter training and equipment acquisition. Funding initiatives may also enjoy a greater likelihood of success if initiated on a regional basis.

***7. LAFCO and fire protection providers in the County should continue to cooperate in seeking opportunities to improve services in the County.***

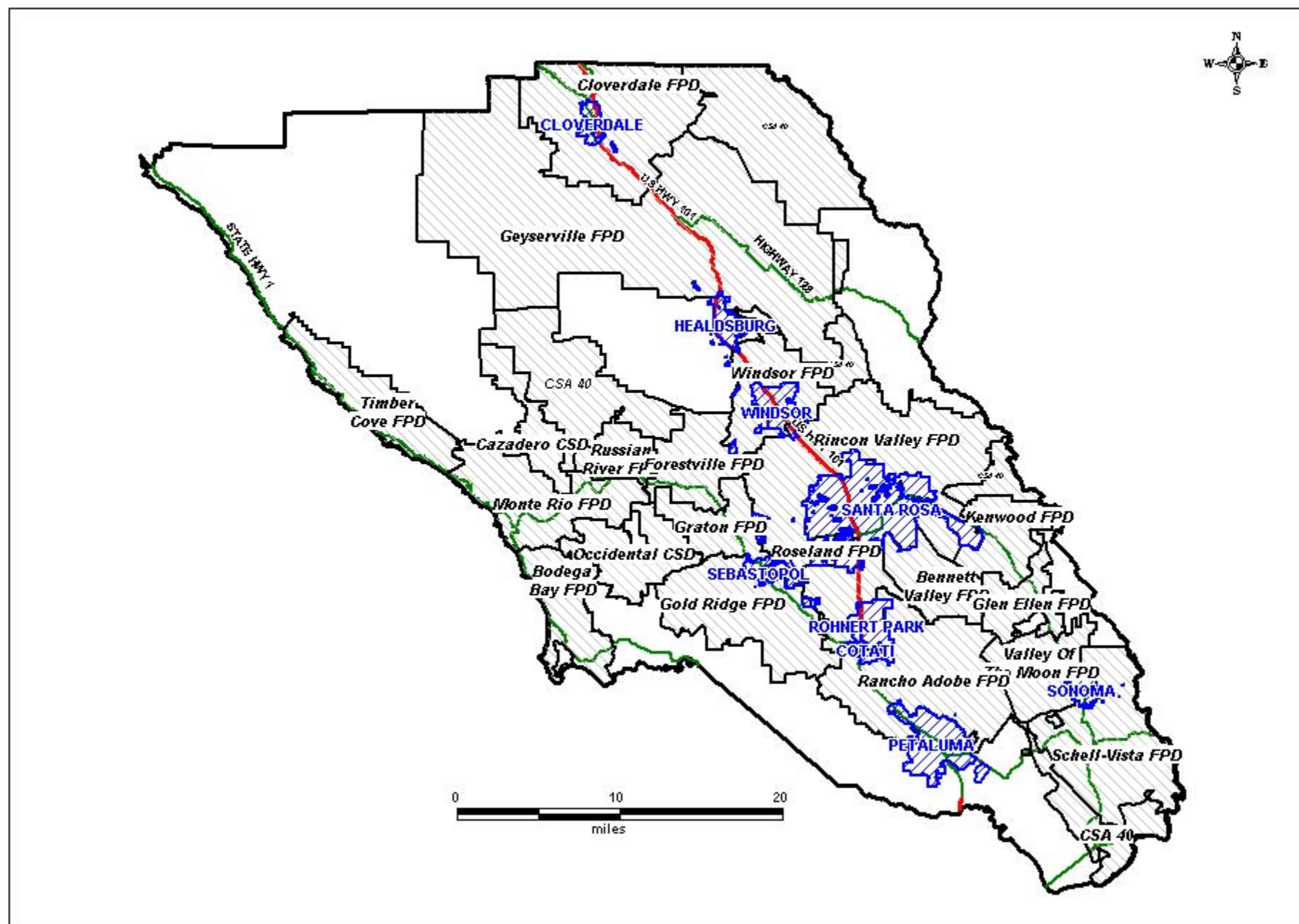
Currently, LAFCO provides technical and support services to local fire protection entities seeking to reorganize. LAFCO's role could be broadened to facilitate investigation of specific reorganization opportunities or regional cooperation efforts in order to improve services while maintaining the local control and community-based volunteerism which are the strengths of the current system of fire protection in Sonoma County.

## **REGIONAL COOPERATION AND REORGANIZATION**

Reorganization has the potential to improve fire protection services, as has occurred in a number of California communities. For example, the Orange County Fire Authority, formed in 1980, provides fire protection services to 1.3 million people in 22 cities and unincorporated Orange County. More recently, San Diego County took the first step toward potential reorganization with the November 2004 passage of Measure A, an advisory measure asking for voter opinion on the potential consolidation of 35 existing fire protection agencies; the measure received 81 percent approval. A partial list of recent California consolidations and other reorganizations is provided in **Appendix A**. Reorganization opportunities currently under consideration in Sonoma County include discussions of potential consolidation among Russian River, Monte Rio, and Bodega Bay Fire Protection Districts.

Regional cooperation offers a number of opportunities to address issues that are identified in this MSR. More detailed analysis should be pursued to further clarify ways in which agencies could work together to maintain and improve services. For example, regional implementation of a sales tax measure, County adoption of impact fees, and a Countywide special tax are options that could be investigated as a way to address current funding inadequacies. Other direct benefits to residents could be achieved through regional actions. For example, automatic aid, which depends upon a regional dispatch system, is one of several factors determining whether a community can achieve a "Rural 5" ISO rating, which in turn can reduce fire insurance costs to residents.

**Figure 1:  
Sonoma County Fire Districts**





## **FIRE PROTECTION SERVICE PROVIDERS**

### **GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS**

#### **Personnel and Mutual Aid**

Each of the fire protection districts and community services districts operates as an independent entity under its own Board of Directors. City fire departments are responsible to their city councils. As shown in **Table 1**, most districts have a small number of paid staff and varying numbers of volunteers to serve the population within their service boundaries. In some cases, certain services are contracted out to neighboring fire departments or districts. City fire departments tend to have larger numbers of paid staff, although several also rely on volunteer contingents.

All the districts and departments have some form of mutual aid agreement with adjacent jurisdictions and/ or CDF. With the exception of Cloverdale FPD, the City of Rohnert Park, and the City of Petaluma, all the districts and city fire departments participate in the Sonoma County REDCOM system. This joint powers authority was created to dispatch ambulances and fire department first responders in Sonoma County simultaneously on all medically related incidents fielded through the 9-1-1 system. Automatic aid and mutual aid agreements among districts and departments are built into REDCOM's computer-assisted dispatch system, which generates deployment tables based on aid agreements and equipment availability.

#### **Funding**

Most districts depend on small shares of the property tax collected within the district. This property tax share can be affected by changes in governance; when unincorporated territory served by an independent fire protection district is annexed into a city and some responsibility is transferred to the city, the fire district transfers the property revenue it was receiving from that piece of land. While annexation may result in a reduction of direct service responsibility, if fixed overhead and staffing costs cannot be reduced by an equal amount, adverse financial impacts can result.

As shown in **Table 2**, many districts also collect special taxes. In some cases, these taxes are charged according to a fixed cost per unit; in other cases, districts may establish a cost per "unit of risk," with different numbers of units assigned to various types of structure. Revenue losses due to ERAF and local redevelopment fund allocations have increased financial pressures on the districts. The resulting dependence on special taxes, which can be increased only through ballot measures, often makes it difficult to raise funds for needed improvements as facilities age.

**Table 1**  
**Summary of Fire Protection Service Providers**  
**Sonoma County LAFCO Municipal Service Reviews, EPS #13023**

	Fire Protection Provider	Size (sq. miles)	Pop.	ISO Rating		Paid staff (full-time equivalent)	Volunteer staff	Location	
				w/ public water and station access (1)	no public water				
8	Districts								
	Bennett Valley FPD	25	2,300	(2)	6	8	5	30	1 station in Santa Rosa
	Bodega Bay FPD	37	20,000		5	9	11	20	1 station in Bodega Bay
	Cloverdale FPD	76	11,500		4	8	7	20	1 station in Cloverdale
	Forestville FPD	24	8,000	(3)	4	8	6	24	1 station in Forestville
	Geyserville FPD	216	5,000		6	8	2	31	2 stations in Geyserville, 1 in Healdsburg
	Glen Ellen FPD	27	7,500		4	8	3	32	2 stations in Glen Ellen
	Gold Ridge FPD	75	25,000	6	8b	4.5	92	3 stations in Sebastopol	
	Graton FPD	26	14,000	n/a	9	0	30	1 station in Graton	
	Kenwood FPD	25	3,000	6	8	2	29	1 station in Kenwood	
	Monte Rio FPD	45	3,000	4	8	0.5	14	3 stations in Monte Rio, Jenner, Duncan Mills	
	Rancho Adobe FPD	80	26,000	4	8-9	17	40	3 stations in Cotati, Penngrove, Petaluma	
	Rincon Valley FPD	125	30,000	4	8b	22	30	4 stations in Santa Rosa	
	Roseland FPD	3	5,000	(4)	3	9	0.5	0	1 station in Roseland
	Russian River FPD	18	10,000		4	8	11	10	2 stations in Guerneville, Rio Nido
	Schell-Vista FPD	75	5,000		5	8	0	40	2 stations in Sonoma
	Timber Cove FPD	48	500	n/a	8b	0	24	1 station in Cazadero	
	Valley of the Moon FPD	29	20,000	3	8	15	26	3 stations in Sonoma	
	Windsor FPD	30	30,000	3	8	6	33	2 stations in Windsor	
	Cazadero CSD	18	1,500	n/a	8	2	20	2 stations in Cazadero	
Occidental CSD	25	5,000	5	8	1	25	1 station in Occidental		
Cities									
Healdsburg	4	11,522	(5)	4	n/a	7.5	(6)	35	1 station in Healdsburg
Petaluma	160	70,000		3	n/a	57		4 stations in Petaluma	
Rohnert Park	7	42,000		4	n/a	31		4 stations in Rohnert Park	
Santa Rosa	45	152,900	3	9	141	(7)			8 stations in Santa Rosa
Sebastopol	2	7,800	4	n/a	2		33	1 station in Sebastopol	
Sonoma	2	9,284	4	n/a	21		20	1 station in Sonoma	

Source: Individual Fire Protection Districts/ Departments, Economic & Planning Systems, Inc.

**Table 1**  
**Summary of Fire Protection Service Providers**  
**Sonoma County LAFCO Municipal Service Reviews, EPS #13023**

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Notes:

- (1) Defined as within 1,000 feet of a hydrant and within 5 miles of a fire station.
- (2) Summer population; winter population is 2,000.
- (3) Includes 2,000 Sonoma Developmental Center employees.
- (4) Summer population; winter population is 5,000
- (5) EMS Service Area. Fire Service Area is within City limits only (14 square miles).
- (6) Includes 12 Public Safety Officers (trained in fire protection services but primarily responsible for law enforcement) and shared admin staff.
- (7) Does not include between 45 and 60 part-time paramedics and EMTs employed based on seasonal demand.

**Table 2**  
**Special Tax Funding Sources for Fire Protection Service Providers**  
**Sonoma County LAFCO Municipal Service Reviews, EPS #13023**

District/ Department	Tax Rate	Typical Single Family Residence
Bennett Valley FPD	\$37.50/ unit of risk	\$150.00 (1)
Bodega Bay FPD	\$130/ unit of risk	\$520.00
Cloverdale FPD		\$22.00
Forestville FPD	\$10/ unit of risk	\$40.00
Geyserville FPD		none
Glen Ellen FPD		none
Gold Ridge FPD	\$5/ unit of risk	\$20.00 (2)
Graton FPD		none
Kenwood FPD	\$10/ unit of risk	\$40.00
Monte Rio FPD		none (3)
Rancho Adobe FPD	\$10/ unit of risk	\$40.00
Rincon Valley FPD	\$36/ residential parcel	\$36.00 (4)
Roseland FPD		none
Russian River FPD		\$40.00 (5)
Schell-Vista FPD	\$44/ residential unit	\$44.00 (6)
Timber Cove FPD	\$15/ unit of risk	\$75.00
Valley of the Moon FPD	\$10/ unit of risk	\$40.00
Windsor FPD	\$45/ unit of risk	\$68.00 (7)
Cazadero CSD		none
Occidental CSD	\$12/ unit of risk	\$48.00 (8)
Healdsburg Fire Department	Measure passed in Nov. 2004 permits City Council to dedicate a 2% increase of the City's Transient Occupancy Tax to public safety.	
Petaluma Fire Department	none	
Rohnert Park Fire Department	\$24/ single family residence	\$24.00
Santa Rosa Fire Department	Measure passed in Nov. 2004 dedicates 1/4 cent sales tax to public safety operations and facilities.	
Sebastopol Fire Department	Citywide 1/4 cent sales tax passed in Nov. 2002 and Nov. 2004 is designated by the City Council for citywide capital improvements.	
Sonoma Fire Department	none	

Source: Individual Districts, Economic & Planning Systems, Inc.

- (1) Voter-approved maximum of \$180 per single family residence
- (2) Attempt to get voter approval for an additional \$40 flat tax failed in November 2004.
- (3) District will attempt to pass tax of \$40/ SFR in Nov. 2005
- (4) \$12 per additional unit
- (5) District plans to attempt to raise tax in 2005
- (6) Mello-Roos tax with \$44 maximum. Taxes decrease as additional parcels are added to District.  
This funding goes directly to service the Mello-Roos bond passed to pay for construction of a new station and is not included in the District's operating budget.
- (7) Attempt to raise tax failed in November 2004.
- (8) Voter-approved maximum of \$20 per unit of risk, currently set below maximum.

Some districts have chosen to fund equipment purchases using alternative sources, such as Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grants; however, such grants are very competitive and funding is not guaranteed. In addition, some districts receive impact fees through the incorporated communities that they serve. Fire districts do not otherwise have the authority to impose impact fees. Currently, Rincon Valley FPD and Windsor FPD collect impact fees adopted by the County Board of Supervisors in unincorporated areas. It is anticipated that this issue will be raised later this year for further discussion before the County Board of Supervisors.

Almost all of the districts maintain some form of reserve fund, which varies in magnitude. Districts with more secure revenue streams or newer equipment and facilities may not require large reserves. Although it is difficult to establish a universal standard for what constitutes adequate reserves, as a general rule, general reserves of less than 5 percent of overall expenditures may be a sign of financial trouble.<sup>1</sup>

The six city fire departments receive the majority of their funding from General Fund revenues. Additional funding may come from various enterprise funds, grants, contracts for service, and impact fees.

## INFRASTRUCTURE, FACILITIES, AND SERVICES

Infrastructure and facilities relating to fire protection vary widely among districts and cities. Every fire protection agency in the County has at least one fire station and multiple vehicles. Many districts have “informal” capital improvement plans, under which new equipment is purchased at five- or ten-year intervals. However, a general lack of funding limits acquisitions and upgrades of aging equipment and facilities (particularly fire stations). In some cases, facilities are shared; for example, Russian River FPD shares one of its facilities with the local post office, and Cloverdale FPD shares a facility with a local law enforcement agency.

While city fire departments tend to serve relatively contained areas, fire districts often provide service to large rural areas with varying levels of infrastructure and development. As a result, the level of service provided by Sonoma’s fire protection providers can vary widely. One standard measure of service is the Public Protection Classification (PPC) rating assigned to each district by Insurance Services Office (ISO), Inc., a national supplier of information used by insurance companies in calculating premiums. ISO fire ratings range from 1 to 10, with 1 being the best. They are based on a combination of factors. Ten percent of overall grading is based on how well a fire

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<sup>1</sup> A 2000 report titled “Management of Public Funds – The Adoption of Reserve Policies in California Cities” by Anita Lawrence, Finance Director for the City of Camarillo, found that maintaining reserves equal to ten percent of operating expenditures was the most common reserve policy among responding cities, though policies of 15, 20, and even 50 percent were also reported (p. 41). However, these policies offer only very general guidelines. The report emphasizes the fact that required reserves levels depend on a wide range of factors.

department receives alarms and dispatches its fire-fighting resources; this component takes into account communications systems and dispatch circuits. Fifty percent is based on the number of engine companies and the amount of water that a department needs in order to fight a fire. Quality of equipment maintenance and staff training also affect this portion of the rating. The remaining 40 percent of ISO rating is based on a given community's water supply and availability, including the distribution of hydrants and other components of the water supply system.

Due to the importance of water supply in determining overall ISO ratings, fire districts serving rural areas without public water supply and fire hydrants may find it difficult to earn a PPC grade of less than 9. Sixteen percent of ISO-rated communities in California and over 40 percent nationwide have a PPC rating of 8 or above; only 43 communities in the country achieve a "1" rating.<sup>2</sup> In some communities, ISO develops a split classification, in which the first, better class applies to properties within five road miles of a fire station and with access to public water (generally defined as being within a thousand feet of a fire hydrant). The second class—a 9 in most cases—applies to properties within 5 road miles of a fire station but beyond 1,000 feet of a hydrant. ISO generally assigns Class 10 to properties beyond five road miles of a fire station. A new class 8b rating was recently introduced to recognize "superior Class 9" communities that provide superior fire-protection services and fire-alarm facilities but lack the water supply required for a PPC of Class 8 or better. Many insurance companies use ISO ratings to determine property insurance premiums; the better a community's rating, the lower the insurance premiums. In the case of residential property, insurers generally group PPC classes into bands; for example, an insurer might group PPC Classes 1 to 6 as the first band, Classes 7 and 8 as the second band, Classes 8b and 9 as the third band, and Class 10 as the fourth band, with different rates assigned to each band.<sup>3</sup> ISO ratings among Sonoma County fire protection districts range from 4 to 9, depending on proximity to stations and public water. Among the volunteer fire companies in CSA 40 ratings range from 4 to 9; however, the majority of the companies have ratings of 8 or 9. All of Sonoma County's city fire departments maintain ISO ratings of 3 or 4.

## FIRE PROTECTION SERVICE DEMAND AND CAPACITY

A few of the fire protection providers are experiencing significant population increases in the districts or cities that they serve, which will affect the need for fire protection services in those areas.

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<sup>2</sup> ISO Mitigation Online, <[www.isomitigation.com](http://www.isomitigation.com)>.

<sup>3</sup> ISO ratings' effect on insurance premiums varies based on area and insurance company. In a study by the League of Minnesota Cities, insurance premiums on a \$150,000 residence ranged from \$670 for PPC classes 1 through 7 to \$777 for Class 8 and \$1,072 for Class 10. The study found the effect of ISO ratings on commercial insurance premiums to be greater, with rates for a \$1 million office building going from \$2,950 for a PPC class 1 to \$3,060 for a class 5 and \$3,710 for a class 10. (League of Minnesota Cities, "The ISO Fire Protection Rating System," <<http://www.lmnc.org/lmcit/memos.cfm>>.)

- The City of Cloverdale is experiencing rapid growth and a rise in demand for services.
- New development in the City of Cotati may affect the provision of services in the Rancho Adobe area.
- The Windsor FPD is still working to accommodate the growth that has occurred in Windsor over the past 15 years, while at the same time adapting to new types of development such as multistory mixed-use buildings that require specialized firefighting equipment.
- The City of Sonoma Fire Department anticipates that it will face similar challenges due to a new emphasis on high-density, multistory development.
- The Petaluma Fire Department reports that calls for service have been outpacing population growth in recent years.

In general, however, few of Sonoma County's cities and fire protection districts anticipate major growth within their service areas in the near future. According to Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Department (PRMD) projections, annual population growth in the County overall is expected to be 0.88 percent between 2000 and 2020; annual growth in unincorporated areas outside of cities' Urban Service Areas (USAs) is expected to be 0.69 percent during the same period.<sup>4</sup>

Despite these relatively low levels of growth, many departments and districts are experiencing staffing problems that may limit their ability to meet current and future demand. All of the fire protection districts and four of the city fire departments depend on volunteers for some or all of their operations, and many rural districts face challenges in attracting and retaining volunteers. Even with a large number of volunteers, districts may have difficulty providing emergency response during the day, when volunteers are working at other jobs outside their district service area. Cooperative arrangements with other fire protection agencies and "sleeper" programs, in which volunteer firefighters spend nights at the station, can mitigate some of these problems. However, such measures do not necessarily provide solutions for shortages in daytime staffing or low

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<sup>4</sup> Sonoma County General Plan 2020, Overview Draft. <<http://www.sonoma-county.org/prmd/gp2020/draft1/index.htm>> Accessed 2 Nov. 2004. PRMD projections are based on "Projections 2002," prepared by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), with adjustments made to reflect development constraints, recent construction trends, and individual cities' population estimates. Projections are developed for a total of nine planning areas: seven areas centered on the cities of Cloverdale (the "rural Northeast"), Healdsburg ("rural Healdsburg"), Santa Rosa ("rural Santa Rosa"), Sebastopol ("rural Sebastopol"), Rohnert Park-Cotati ("rural Rohnert Park-Cotati"), Petaluma ("rural Petaluma"), Sonoma ("rural Sonoma Valley"), and two additional areas covering the Sonoma Coast and Russian River regions. These subareas are further divided into City Urban Service Areas (USAs) and unincorporated areas outside city USAs. PRMD projections for unincorporated areas are used throughout the Fire Districts section of this report. In the section on city fire departments, individual cities' population projections (or ABAG projections, if cited by a given city in its General Plan) are used.

county-wide volunteer numbers. Without significant cost-savings or increased funding for paid staff, some fire districts will be unprepared to accommodate even minimal growth.

Staffing problems may be exacerbated by the need to comply with recent changes in fire safety regulations. Because California has an Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) state plan agreement, California fire protection agencies are subject to OSHA policies, including the 1998 regulation known as the “two-in/ two-out” requirement. This requirement is part of OSHA Section 1910.134, which governs respiratory protection for employees. It mandates that, in an interior structure fire, at least two firefighters must enter the area designated as “Immediately Dangerous to Life or Health” (IDLH) and must remain in visual or voice contact with each other at all times. In addition, at least two firefighters must be stationed outside the IDLH atmosphere (though not necessarily outside the structure), in voice or visual contact with those inside. Because these “outside” firefighters are responsible for monitoring the safety of those inside the IDLH atmosphere, only one may be assigned to an additional role and that role cannot interfere with his or her primary rescue duties. As a result, additional firefighters are generally required to perform other emergency tasks. These regulations present challenges to fire protection service providers with limited staff.



## II. CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY

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The California Department of Forestry (CDF) responds to wildland fires, structure fires, automobile accidents, hazardous material spills, and a variety of other emergency incidents. Department personnel and equipment throughout the State are responsible for the protection of over 31 million acres of privately owned wildlands designated as State Responsibility Areas (SRAs), i.e., areas designated by the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection in which the State bears the primary financial responsibility for fire prevention and suppression. These include lands covered wholly or in part by timber, brush, undergrowth or grass, whether of commercial value or not; lands which protect the soil from erosion, retard run-off of water or accelerated percolation; lands used principally for range or forage purposes; lands not owned by the Federal government; and lands not incorporated. By Board regulations, unless specific circumstances dictate otherwise, lands are removed from SRAs when housing densities average more than 3 units per acre over an area of 250 acres.<sup>5</sup>

Areas that are not federal or state responsibility are commonly referred to as "Local Responsibility Areas" or LRAs. CDF may provide additional coverage to LRAs under Public Resources Code 4144, known as the Amador Plan, which allows local agencies to contract with CDF for local agency fire protection services during the "non-fire" season period. CDF has contracts for service in LRAs in 36 of California's 58 counties.<sup>6</sup>

In Sonoma County, CDF services are provided by the Sonoma-Lake-Napa Unit. CDF staffs nine stations within the County, as well as the Sonoma Air Attack Base; total summertime staff is 115, with a reduced staff of approximately 50 during the winter (non-fire season). In addition, CDF has a contract with CSA 40 to provide one engine company, co-located with the CDF Sea Ranch station. CDF also has Amador contracts with Cloverdale FPD and Wilmar VFC during the wintertime to staff a station and one engine.<sup>7</sup>

CDF has a number of automatic aid agreements and mutual threat zones with fire protection agencies throughout Sonoma County, including the Santa Rosa Fire Department, Rincon Valley FPD, Occidental CSD, Graton FDP, Forestville FPD, Russian River FPD, Cazadero CSD, the Petaluma Fire Department, Wilmar VFC, Rancho Adobe FPD, Kenwood FPD, Glen Ellen FPD, Valley of the Moon FPD, Schell Vista FPD, Geyserville FPD, and the Healdsburg Fire Department. These agreements provide for varying levels of service, including responses to fires, traffic accidents, and/or medical aid.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> CDF Website, "Fire Terminology," <<http://www.fire.ca.gov/cdf/incidents/terminology.html#50>>.

<sup>6</sup> CDF Website, "Fire Terminology," <<http://www.fire.ca.gov/cdf/incidents/terminology.html#50>>.

<sup>7</sup> Personal communication from CDF Unit Chief Ernie Loveless, 2 Aug. 2005.

<sup>8</sup> Personal communication from CDF Unit Chief Ernie Loveless, 2 Aug. 2005.

### III. COUNTY SERVICE AREA 40

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County Service Area 40 covers 640 square miles of unincorporated land scattered throughout Sonoma County and includes the following volunteer fire companies: Annapolis, Bloomfield, Bodega, Camp Meeker, Fort Ross, Knight's Valley, Lakeville, Mayacamas, Mountain, San Antonio, Sea Ranch, Soyotome, Two Rock, Valley Ford, and Wilmar. Its total service population is approximately 160,110.<sup>9</sup> Fire protection in CSA 40 is coordinated by the County's Department of Emergency Services, Fire Services Division.<sup>10</sup>

#### GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

CSA 40 was formed in 1994 with the merger of Sonoma County's volunteer fire companies. At the time, many of these companies had been in existence for years; the transition to CSA 40 guaranteed them a more reliable revenue stream from the County, as described below. The 15 VFCs continue to exist as independent nonprofit corporations but operate under the oversight of the County. The Department of Emergency Services coordinates all fire activities in CSA 40; its responsibilities include advising the Board of Supervisors on fire service issues, assisting with disaster response planning, responding to emergency incidents, and providing training for the VFCs.<sup>11</sup>

A Fire Chief/ Department Director oversees all County Emergency Services. Additional full-time staff in the Fire Services Division include one deputy chief/ fire marshal, one assistant chief, two fire inspectors, one plans examiner, one material handler, and one instructor. The Division also employs 6 part-time material handlers, 12 part-time instructors, and 4 part-time inspectors as needed. A five-person clerical staff performs administrative duties for the entire Department of Emergency Services. The Division also staffs a customer service counter at the Permit Resource Management Department that represents all fire districts within the County.<sup>12</sup>

In addition, the 15 VFCs have a total of approximately 240 volunteer firefighters.<sup>13</sup> (The total is 239 as of January 2005.<sup>14</sup>) As a County entity, CSA 40 is responsible to the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors, which holds weekly public meetings.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Communication from Department of Emergency Services Assistant Chief Barry Gaab, 21 Jan. 2005.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Department of Emergency Services Director Vern Losh, 16 Dec. 2004.

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Department of Emergency Services Director Vern Losh, 16 Dec. 2004. Sonoma County Department of Emergency Services Website, <[http://www.sonoma-county.org/des/fire\\_service.htm](http://www.sonoma-county.org/des/fire_service.htm)>.

<sup>12</sup> Department of Emergency Services Director Vern Losh, Letter to Carole Cooper, 1 July 2005.

<sup>13</sup> Sonoma County Department of Emergency Services Organization Chart, <[http://www.sonoma-county.org/des/pdf/administ/visio\\_des\\_org\\_chart.pdf](http://www.sonoma-county.org/des/pdf/administ/visio_des_org_chart.pdf)>.

<sup>14</sup> Communication from Department of Emergency Services Assistant Chief Barry Gaab, 18 Jan. 2005.

<sup>15</sup> Sonoma County Board of Supervisors Website, <<http://www.sonoma-county.org/board/index.htm>>.

CSA 40 funding comes from a small percentage of property tax. Additional funding sources include inspection fees and contracts for training and administrative services. Although each VFC maintains its own budget and receives some funding from fundraising and grants, the County covers all expenses relating to insurance, safety equipment, and other basic fire suppression. It also provides each VFC with a \$5,000 annual stipend and \$25 per call to pay additional costs.<sup>16</sup> CSA 40's total expenditure budget for FY 04-05 is \$3.19 million.<sup>17</sup> The current undesignated reserve fund balance is \$820,400.<sup>18</sup>

CSA 40 and all of the individual VFCs participate in the REDCOM dispatch system, through which they give and receive aid to/ from neighboring fire protection districts and city fire departments.<sup>19</sup>

## INFRASTRUCTURE, FACILITIES, AND SERVICES

In 2003, VFCs within CSA 40 responded to 1,142 calls for service, of which about 23 percent were for fire suppression.<sup>20</sup> Calls for service in 2004 totaled 1,031.<sup>21</sup> The VFCs' ISO ratings range from 4 to 9; however, the majority of the companies have split ISO ratings of 8/9 or 9/9.<sup>22</sup> CSA 40 staff state that, in 2004, CSA 40 worked closely with ISO to insure that all VFCs had a rating of at least 9, resulting in reduced insurance rates for residents of the County Service Area.<sup>23</sup>

CSA 40 includes a total of 22 fire stations, in addition to Sonoma County Department of Emergency Services office facilities. Four of the VFCs (Bodega, Lakeville, Two Rock, and Valley Ford) also have buildings that are detached from their fire stations and are used for meetings and social events. In most cases, the volunteer fire companies own their buildings and are responsible for the costs of maintenance. CSA 40 pays for liability insurance coverage of these stations. According to the Department of Emergency Services, CSA 40 facilities are currently adequate for the rural communities that they serve.<sup>24</sup> However, it should be noted that many of these facilities are barns on rural properties that may prove inadequate to serve future population growth and service demands. San Antonio VFC was recently displaced from its facility and will need to relocate.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Interview with Department of Emergency Services Director Vern Losh, 16 Dec. 2004.

<sup>17</sup> Sonoma County FY 04-05 Final Budget.

<sup>18</sup> Communication from Department of Emergency Services Accountant Terri Bolduc, 25 Jan. 2005.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Department of Emergency Services Director Vern Losh, 16 Dec. 2004.

<sup>20</sup> Sonoma County Department of Emergency Services Website, <[http://www.sonoma-county.org/des/fire\\_service.htm](http://www.sonoma-county.org/des/fire_service.htm)>.

<sup>21</sup> Department of Emergency Services Director Vern Losh, Letter to Carole Cooper, 1 July 2005.

<sup>22</sup> Communication from Department of Emergency Services Assistant Chief Barry Gaab, 18 Jan. 2005.

<sup>23</sup> Department of Emergency Services Director Vern Losh, Letter to Carole Cooper, 1 July 2005.

<sup>24</sup> Communication from Department of Emergency Services Assistant Chief Barry Gaab, 18 Jan. 2005.

<sup>25</sup> Department of Emergency Services Director Vern Losh, Letter to Carole Cooper, 1 July 2005.

CSA 40 agencies own a combined total of over 75 vehicles, including 21 engines, 8 rescue vehicles, 19 pumpers, 8 tankers, and 12 wildland engines. The majority of these vehicles are owned by the VFCs. Vehicles obtained through the FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program, though housed and used by the VFCs, are owned by the County. The County currently owns 11 such vehicles, in addition to the cars used by County fire staff. According to the Department of Emergency Services, existing apparatus in CSA 40 is not adequate to meet demand. Most of the engines are 15 to 20 years old and are increasingly likely to break down in emergency situations. It has also become more difficult to obtain the parts needed for basic maintenance and repairs. There is currently no funding source for apparatus or equipment replacement outside of FEMA grants and fundraisers put on by the individual VFCs.<sup>26</sup>

The Department of Emergency Services' grant team assists VFCs in preparing grant applications to purchase new equipment. In 2003, the grant team successfully applied for over \$170,000 in funding to benefit CSA 40. FEMA grants went toward new equipment for a number of VFCs, including a new feeder hose for Mayacamas VFC and a new pumper for Lakeville VFC. A \$50,000 grant from the USDA paid for construction of a truck and equipment facility for Annapolis VFC.<sup>27</sup> The DES grant team has also assisted many fire districts in applying for grants to pay for communications and extrication equipment.<sup>28</sup>

## FIRE PROTECTION DEMAND AND CAPACITY

There have been discussions between Rancho Adobe FPD and CSA 40 concerning possible reorganization. A formal model for reorganization has not yet been determined.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Sonoma County Department of Emergency Services Website, <[http://www.sonoma-county.org/des/fire\\_service.htm](http://www.sonoma-county.org/des/fire_service.htm)>.

<sup>28</sup> Department of Emergency Services Director Vern Losh, Letter to Carole Cooper, 1 July 2005.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Department of Emergency Services Director/RAFPD Chief Vern Losh, 16 Dec. 2004.

## IV. FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICTS

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### BENNETT VALLEY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

The Bennett Valley Fire Protection District (BVFPD) provides service to 2,300 residents in an area of 25 square miles. As shown in **Figure 2**, the District is located southeast of Santa Rosa and borders on Kenwood, Glen Ellen, Rancho Adobe, and Rincon Valley Fire Protection Districts.

A special tax established in 2002 has allowed the District to increase its level of service to meet current and anticipated demand. BVFPD's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Gold Ridge Fire Protection District may also reduce some staffing costs.

### GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

BVFPD was formed in 1948. Its services include fire protection and prevention, emergency medical response and rescue, public education, and hazardous materials emergency medical response. BVFPD employs three full-time firefighters, three part-time firefighters, and a part-time bookkeeper. It has about 30 volunteers. Under an MOU, Gold Ridge Fire Protection District provides a fire chief, three battalion chiefs, and an administrative assistant to BVFPD. The District is governed by a five-member Board of Directors, which meets the second Tuesday of every month. These meetings are open to the public. Information regarding fire protection services is also published in the newsletter of the local homeowners' association.<sup>30</sup>

BVFPD currently owes \$22,855 on a recently purchased pick-up truck and \$241,787 on a fire engine. Its reserves total approximately \$355,000, or 48 percent of its FY 04-05 expenditure budget of \$741,508. Approximately 70 percent of the District's funding comes from property taxes, with additional revenues from charges for service and a special tax passed in November 2002. This tax has a maximum rate of \$180 per residential unit and is currently set at \$150 per single-family residence.<sup>31</sup>

In addition to its staff-sharing with Gold Ridge FPD, BVFPD participates in Sonoma County's REDCOM dispatching program and has individual automatic aid agreements with all of its neighboring districts. State Responsibility Areas within the District automatically receive coverage from CDF.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> LAFCO Request for Information, 2003.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with BVFPD Administrative Assistant Ruth Newman, 22 July 2004. BVFPD 2004/2005 Budget Worksheet.

<sup>32</sup> Interview with BVFPD Administrative Assistant Ruth Newman, 22 July 2004.

## INFRASTRUCTURE, FACILITIES, AND SERVICES

BVFPD has an ISO rating of 6 with access to a fire hydrant and 8 without access.<sup>33</sup> The District has one station, recently upgraded and equipped with two structural engines, two wildland interface engines, a water tender and a pick-up truck.<sup>34</sup>

## FIRE PROTECTION DEMAND AND CAPACITY

According to the projections of the Sonoma County PRMD, the population of “rural Santa Rosa” (the unincorporated region outside the Santa Rosa Urban Service Area, including the majority of Bennett Valley FPD) will grow from 24,899 to 28,100 between 2000 and 2020, an annual increase of around 0.6 percent.<sup>35</sup> The District does not anticipate any changes in its boundaries over the next five years. The special tax passed in November 2002 has allowed BVFPD to increase its level of service, adding three part-time positions and a sleeper program to provide better emergency response.<sup>36</sup> District facilities, equipment, and staff appear adequate to meet current and future demand.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Interview with BVFPD Administrative Assistant Ruth Newman, 28 Sept. 2004.

<sup>34</sup> LAFCO Request for Information, 2003. Interview with BVFPD Engineer Bryon Reid, 22 July 2004.

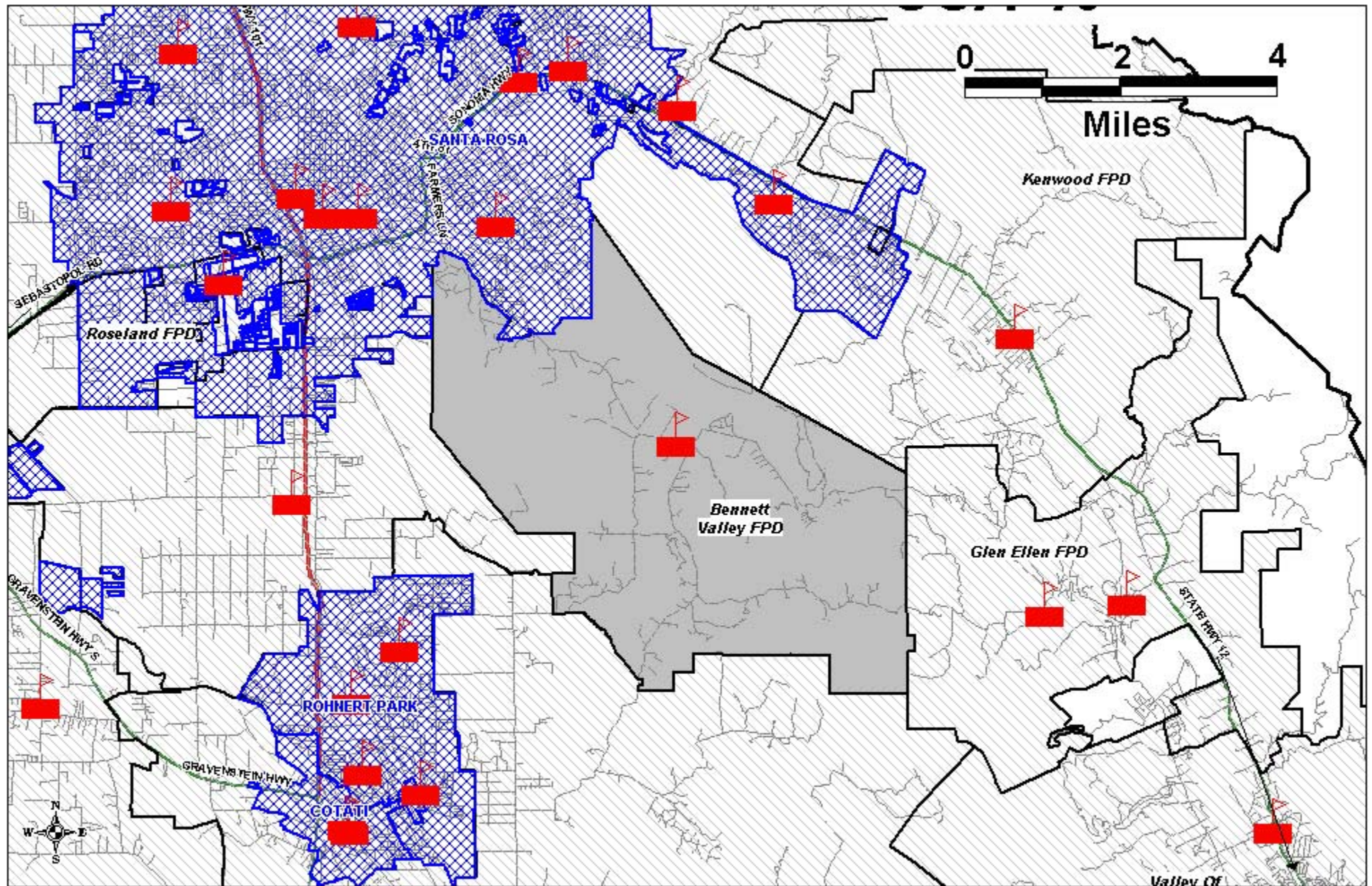
<sup>35</sup> Sonoma County General Plan 2020, Overview Draft. <<http://www.sonoma-county.org/prmd/gp2020/draft1/index.htm>> Accessed 2 Nov. 2004.

<sup>36</sup> LAFCO Request for Information, 2003.

<sup>37</sup> Interview with BVFPD Administrative Assistant Ruth Newman, 28 Sept. 2004.



**Figure 2:  
Bennett Valley Fire Protection District**



## BODEGA BAY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

The Bodega Bay Fire Protection District (BBFPD) provides service to an area of 37 square miles in western Sonoma County, bordering on Monte Rio FPD and parts of CSA 40 (see **Figure 3**). It has a resident population of 2,000 and a transient population of 20,000. Its ambulance zone extends to approximately 200 square miles.<sup>38</sup>

Increasing financial pressures, high debt, and a lack of reserve funds could make it necessary for the District to consider possible consolidation or other cooperative arrangements in the future.

## GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

The Bodega Bay Fire Protection District was formed in 1984 and is empowered to provide fire protection, prevention, and suppression, and emergency medical and paramedic services. The District has 11 full-time employees, with an additional part-time, volunteer, and intern staff of around 20. It is governed by a five-member Board of Directors, which holds public meetings the second Tuesday of each month at the Fire Station.<sup>39</sup>

BBFPD has a current operating budget of \$1.3 million, of which around 11 percent comes from ad valorem property taxes. Ambulance service charges and a special tax of \$130 per unit of risk (last updated in November 2003) generate additional revenues.<sup>40</sup> As of 2003, the District was carrying \$1.60 million in debt on its newly built fire station; this debt will be paid off through special taxes over the next 20 years. The District is also making payments on its recently purchased ambulance and engine; these debts will be paid off over the next six years. BBFPD does not have reserves.<sup>41</sup>

BBFPD has mutual aid agreements with surrounding districts and volunteer fire companies. Neighboring volunteer agencies tend to respond with less frequency and fewer people, relative to the response provided by BBFPD, and the District is sometimes the sole responder to calls for service in VFC areas outside of District boundaries.<sup>42</sup> Since January 2005, BBFPD has had a contract to provide Russian River FPD with a shared fire chief; in March 2005, RRFPD and BBFPD also agreed to share the chief's executive assistant for a minimum of six months. It is currently investigating other opportunities

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<sup>38</sup> LAFCO Request for Information, 2002.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> A single-family residence is assigned 4 units of risk, for a total charge of \$520 per dwelling. Interview with BBFPD Chief Sean Grinnell, 27 Dec. 2004. BBFPD Final Budget FY 04-05. LAFCO Request for Information, 2002.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with BBFPD Chief Sean Grinnell, 28 Sept. 2004.

<sup>42</sup> Communication from BBFPD Chief Sean Grinnell, 27 Jan. 2005.



for cooperation; in January 2005, the boards of directors of BBFPD, Russian River FPD, and Monte Rio FPD voted to pursue possibilities relating to the consolidation of their districts.

## INFRASTRUCTURE, FACILITIES, AND SERVICES

The District's ISO rating is 5 in areas within 1,000 feet of public water and within five miles of a fire station (about three quarters of the district) and 9 in areas outside this range. It responded to 511 calls in 2004; in the case of 54 percent of these calls, BBFPD arrived on scene in ten minutes or less.<sup>43</sup>

BBFPD's equipment inventory includes two engines, two ambulances, a utility truck, and a sedan. One engine and one ambulance were replaced three years ago. Although the remaining vehicles are aging, the District lacks the funds to replace them. BBFPD has one fire station, built in 1997.<sup>44</sup>

## FIRE PROTECTION DEMAND AND CAPACITY

Sonoma County PRMD projections for the Sonoma Coast Planning Area (encompassing the length of the County's coast and extending as much as 15 miles inland) anticipate an increase of 3,283 between 2000 and 2020, or annual growth of nearly 2 percent.<sup>45</sup> The BBFPD Fire Chief does not anticipate any specific changes in the District's service area or service responsibilities over the next five years. However, to attract and retain employees, the District may need to increase wages as much as 20 percent in the near future, which would require an increase in tax revenue.<sup>46</sup> If taxes are not increased, the District will be required to decrease its level of service or seek alternative cost-saving measures over the next two to three years. The District's lack of reserve funds could make this situation especially critical.

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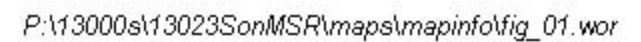
<sup>43</sup> Communication from BBFPD Chief Sean Grinnell, 27 Jan. 2005.

<sup>44</sup> Interview with BBFPD Chief Sean Grinnell, 28 Sept. 2004.

<sup>45</sup> Sonoma County General Plan 2020, Overview Draft. <<http://www.sonoma-county.org/prmd/gp2020/draft1/index.htm>> Accessed 2 Nov. 2004.

<sup>46</sup> LAFCO Request for Information, 2002.

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## CLOVERDALE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

The Cloverdale Fire Protection District (CFPD) covers an area of 76 square miles, bordering on Sonoma County's northern boundary and encompassing the City of Cloverdale (2.7 square miles) in addition to unincorporated areas (see **Figure 4**). It provides fire protection services to a population of 11,500.

The District has had difficulty obtaining sufficient funding to meet the demands of new growth. Renegotiation of its property tax sharing arrangement with the City of Cloverdale could help address the District's financial situation.

## GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

CFPD was formed in 1996. Prior to 1996, the County provided fire protection services under contract with the City of Cloverdale. The Fire Protection District was formed in order to stabilize funding from the County for services previously provided by the City of Cloverdale Fire Department to CSA 39 by contract.<sup>47</sup> The District provides services that include fire suppression, rescue, EMT response, fire prevention, and public education. CFPD has a staff of 3 paid sworn firefighters, 2 support administrative staff, and 20 volunteer firefighters, as well as 2 full-time firefighters provided by CDF under an Amador contract.<sup>48</sup> It is directed by its own five-member Board of Directors, which meets the second Monday of each month at the Fire Station. Meetings are open to the public. The District also publishes fire safety news and information in the local newspaper.<sup>49</sup>

CFPD's revenue comes in part from a percentage of property taxes, which account for around 20 percent of total revenue. Other revenues include a \$22-per-unit special assessment and fees for service. Funds to support the cost of fire service in the District's unincorporated area are provided through a share of property taxes. Funds to support the cost of fire service within the incorporated boundaries of the City of Cloverdale are provided through a negotiated Settlement Agreement with a fixed dollar amount provided by the City to the District on an annual basis. This settlement agreement will expire in 2007 and will be renegotiated in the near future.<sup>50</sup> CFPD also receives impact fees, collected by the City of Cloverdale at the rate of \$987 per residential unit and \$0.62 per commercial square foot.<sup>51</sup> The District is carrying about \$500,000 in debt on

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<sup>47</sup> City of Cloverdale Police Department and Cloverdale Fire Protection District Request for Proposal, Update of Master Needs Assessment and Police/ Fire Development Impact Fee Update, 2004.

<sup>48</sup> The Amador Plan allows local fire agencies to contract with CDF for fire protection services during non-fire-season months.

<sup>49</sup> LAFCO Request for Information, 2002. Interview with Fire Chief Brian Elliott, 27 July 2004.

<sup>50</sup> City of Cloverdale Police Department and Cloverdale Fire Protection District Request for Proposal, Update of Master Needs Assessment and Police/ Fire Development Impact Fee Update, 2004.

<sup>51</sup> City of Cloverdale Development Impact Fee Schedule, Effective May 23, 2004.

apparatus leases, to be paid out of the budget's capital apparatus fund. In FY 04-05, CFPD budgeted \$967,000 in operating expenditures (including \$28,750 in appropriations for contingency), with reserves equal to approximately 10 percent of that total.<sup>52</sup>

The District relies on a consultant's study addressing service requirements through 2011 as its Master Plan. However, the District is in the process of updating this plan in cooperation with the City of Cloverdale; a Request for Proposal (RFP) has already been prepared for a public safety Master Plan to be undertaken jointly with the City and the Cloverdale Health Care District.<sup>53</sup>

In addition to its contract with CDF, CFPD has automatic aid agreements with Geyserville and Hopland. Cooperative arrangements with the City of Cloverdale include the joint Master Plan and a shared public safety facility.<sup>54</sup>

## INFRASTRUCTURE, FACILITIES, AND SERVICES

CFPD's ISO rating is 4 with access to public water and 8 without. Its average response time within the City is approximately five minutes. CFPD responds to approximately 900 calls each year, of which about 70 percent generally come from within City limits.<sup>55</sup>

The District's facilities and equipment include one utility vehicle, one combination water tender/pumper, one interface engine, one rescue engine, and three city fire engines. Equipment is housed in a building located at 116 Broad Street in Cloverdale. This facility, built in 1978, is shared with the Cloverdale Police Department; the Fire Protection District occupies around 5,500 square feet of the building, with the Police Department occupying the remaining 1,500 square feet. According to the District, a 1992 study by Hughes, Heiss, and Associates determined that this facility was undersized and inadequate. Recent seismic retrofitting improved the existing facility's earthquake safety; according to the District, however, these measures have not brought the building up to the standard recommended by a structural engineer. CFPD has secured a vacant lot suitable for the construction of a new fire station, but has not succeeded in obtaining funding for construction, despite efforts that included a general obligation bond measure (April 2002) and an attempt to create an assessment district (July 2003). The first of these two measures lost by a narrow margin, receiving 62 percent approval rather than the required two-thirds.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Interview with CFPD Chief Brian Elliott, 27 July 2004. CFPD Operating Fund July 2004 – June 2005.

<sup>53</sup> Interview with CFPD Chief Brian Elliott, 27 July 2004.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Interviews with CFPD Chief Brian Elliott, 27 July 2004 and 1 Oct. 2004.

<sup>56</sup> City of Cloverdale Police Department and Cloverdale Fire Protection District Request for Proposal, Update of Master Needs Assessment and Police/ Fire Development Impact Fee Update, 2004. Interview with Fire Chief Brian Elliott, 1 Oct. 2004.

## FIRE PROTECTION DEMAND AND CAPACITY

The City of Cloverdale is among the fastest growing communities in Sonoma County. The Sonoma County PRMD projects that the Cloverdale Urban Service Area's population will grow by 4,148, to 11,200, between 2000 and 2020 – an annual increase of almost 3 percent. The population of the rural northeast area (i.e., the unincorporated area outside the City USA) is expected to grow by 1,561 during the same period, an annual increase of 1.37 percent.<sup>57</sup>

Increases in the demand for services have made it difficult for CFPD to provide adequate fire protection. An Amador Contract for two full-time firefighters from CDF has allowed the District to provide adequate services in recent years. The costs of this contract have risen rapidly; last year, the District depended on a \$48,000 contribution from the City of Cloverdale in order to pay for CDF support. CDF charges are expected to reach even higher levels next year.<sup>58</sup> The City of Cloverdale has agreed to provide funding assistance for 2004-05, but, according to the City's RFP for an updated master needs assessment, this could be the last year that the District is able to contract with CDF.<sup>59</sup>

The lack of adequate revenue places limits on the District's capacity to expand services. CFPD does not get pass-through funds from property taxes on areas annexed by the City, but instead receives a fixed amount, unadjusted for inflation or growth. The District believes this arrangement has contributed to its difficulty in financing the new facilities and staff required to serve new development. The District and City are currently discussing this issue and plan to renegotiate the arrangement following the completion of the joint public safety Master Plan.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Sonoma County General Plan 2020, Overview Draft. <<http://www.sonoma-county.org/prmd/gp2020/draft1/index.htm>> Accessed 2 Nov. 2004.

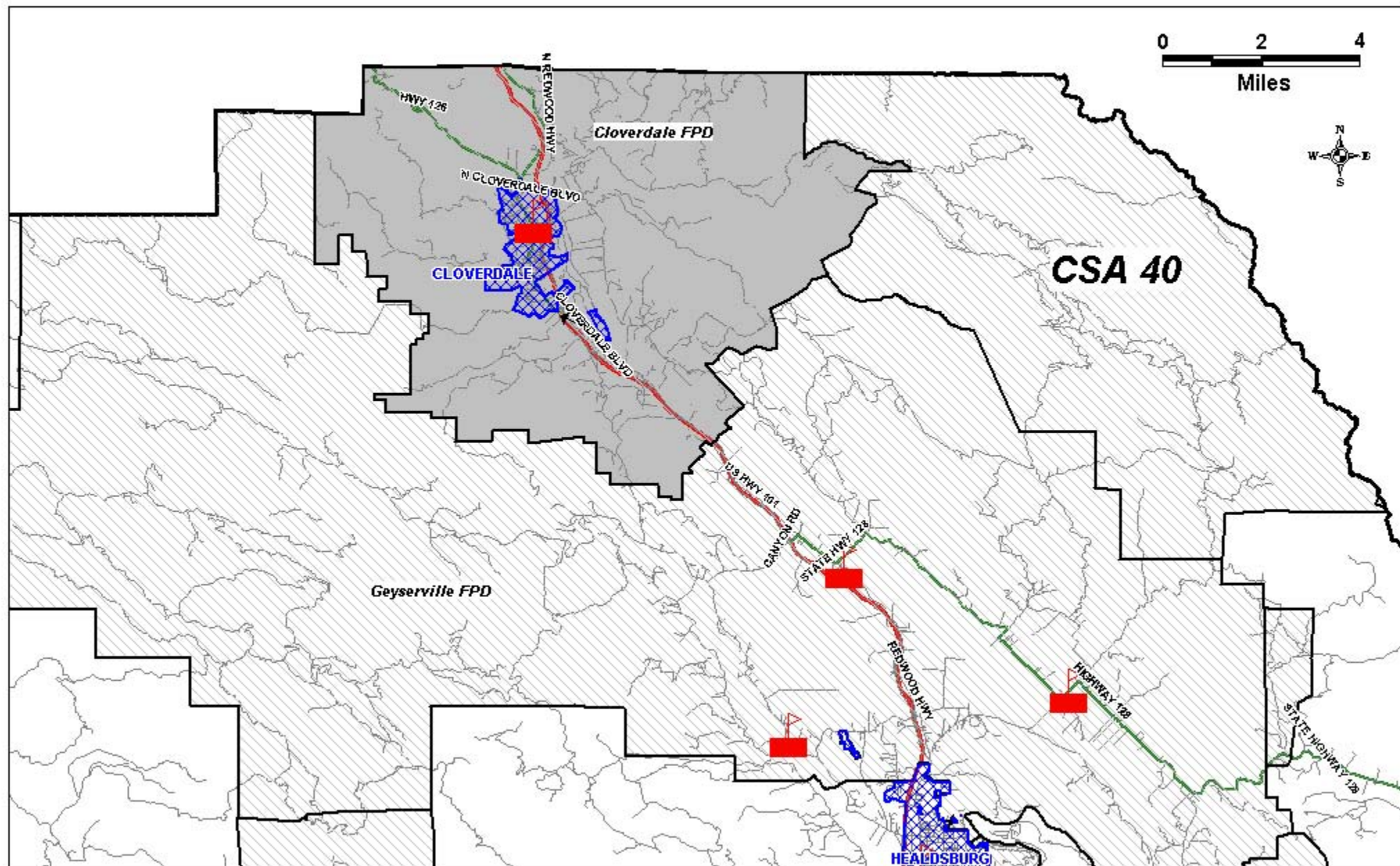
<sup>58</sup> Interview with CFPD Chief Brian Elliott, 27 July 2004.

<sup>59</sup> City of Cloverdale Police Department and Cloverdale Fire Protection District Request for Proposal, Update of Master Needs Assessment and Police/ Fire Development Impact Fee Update, 2004.

<sup>60</sup> Interview with CFPD Chief Brian Elliott, 27 July 2004. Interview with Cloverdale City Manager Jennifer Murray, 15 Oct. 2004.



**Figure 4:  
Cloverdale Fire Protection District**



## FORESTVILLE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

The Forestville Fire Protection District (FFPD) provides services to a population of about 8,000 in an area of approximately 24 square miles, shown in **Figure 5**.<sup>61</sup> Its service area includes the community of Forestville and surrounding rural areas. It borders on the following fire protection agencies: Monte Rio FPD, Russian River FPD, Windsor FPD, Rincon Valley FPD, Graton FPD, and CSA 40.

The District's lack of general reserves may hinder its ability to respond to unanticipated needs or emergencies. While a past consolidation effort by the District failed, FFPD has not ruled out the possibility of cooperative arrangements with other jurisdictions.

### GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

FFPD was formed in 1948 and is empowered to provide fire protection and prevention, as well as rescue and medical services. FFPD has a staff of 6 career firefighters and 24 volunteers.<sup>62</sup> It is governed by its own five-member Board of Directors, which meets the second Tuesday of each month at the Fire Station. Meetings are open to the public.<sup>63</sup> Fire safety information is also disseminated to the public via the fire station's bulletin board, a yearly letter to property owners, information tables at community events, and presentations by the fire chief to homeowners' associations.<sup>64</sup>

The District's major sources of revenue are a portion of property taxes, which provide over 80 percent of total revenues, and a special tax passed over 20 years ago and currently set at \$10 per unit of value, or \$40 per single-family dwelling.<sup>65</sup> Other revenue sources include state funds, service fees, and private donations and fundraisers. FFPD's budgeted expenditures for FY 04-05 are approximately \$1.2 million, with designated reserves of \$92,000, or almost 8 percent of operating expenditures. The District does not have general reserves. FFPD is carrying \$220,000 in debt on a recently purchased engine; this debt will be paid off through special tax revenues.<sup>66</sup>

The District has mutual aid agreements with neighboring districts and CDF. It also participates in county-wide group purchasing, shared grant writing, and Sonoma County's REDCOM joint communication system. A 1998 attempt to consolidate with Guerneville (now Russian River Fire Protection District) ended after two years of negotiation. The District had hoped the consolidation might reduce staffing needs and

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<sup>61</sup> LAFCO Request for Information, 2002.

<sup>62</sup> Interview with FFPD Chief Gary Duignan, 21 July 2004.

<sup>63</sup> LAFCO Request for Information, 2002.

<sup>64</sup> Interview with FFPD Chief Gary Duignan, 21 July 2004.

<sup>65</sup> Single-family dwellings have four units of value, mobile homes have two, and commercial property may have as many as 10 to 20.

<sup>66</sup> Interview with FFPD Chief Gary Duignan, 21 July 2004. Forestville Fire Protection District Final Budget FY 2004/2005.

allow for more efficient and cost-effective fire protection services. However, disagreements over the consolidation process, including composition of a board of directors and volunteer firefighters, led the District to believe that no benefit would result for residents. The District states that it continues to explore ways to work with other districts to improve local services and reduce costs.<sup>67</sup>

## INFRASTRUCTURE, FACILITIES, AND SERVICES

FFPD's ISO rating within 1,000 feet of a hydrant is 4; outside of that area, its ISO rating is 8. The District has a response time of 1 to 2 minutes out the door, though it can take as long as 20 minutes to drive to remote parts of the Forestville service area. The District responds to an average of 600 calls per year, 60 percent of which are medical emergencies.<sup>68</sup>

FFPD's equipment and facilities include two engines, two water tenders, a rescue vehicle, a pick-up truck, two boats, and a single fire station, located in Forestville. The District does not have a Capital Improvement Plan; however, its policy is to buy a new engine every ten years in order to keep equipment up-to-date. Of the District's current equipment, one engine unit will need to be replaced within one to two years, while another will need to be replaced one year after that.<sup>69</sup>

## FIRE PROTECTION DEMAND AND CAPACITY

A new development in central Forestville that includes affordable housing and office space will slightly increase demand for fire services in that area. A shrinking volunteer pool, growing costs, and the loss of some state funding to ERAF (estimated by the District at \$130,000 to \$140,000 over the past ten years) have placed additional pressures on the District.<sup>70</sup> Sonoma County PRMD growth projections indicate that the population of the entire Russian River area will grow from 16,462 in 2000 to 18,960 in 2020, an average increase of 0.76 percent annually.<sup>71</sup> A voter-approved special tax is currently at the maximum rate approved by voters and FFPD may not have the additional revenues necessary to add facilities, equipment, and staff to serve projected growth or unanticipated population increases.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Interview with FFPD Chief Gary Duignan, 23 Sept. 2004.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> LAFCO Request for Information, 2002. Interview with FFPD Chief Gary Duignan, 21 July 2004.

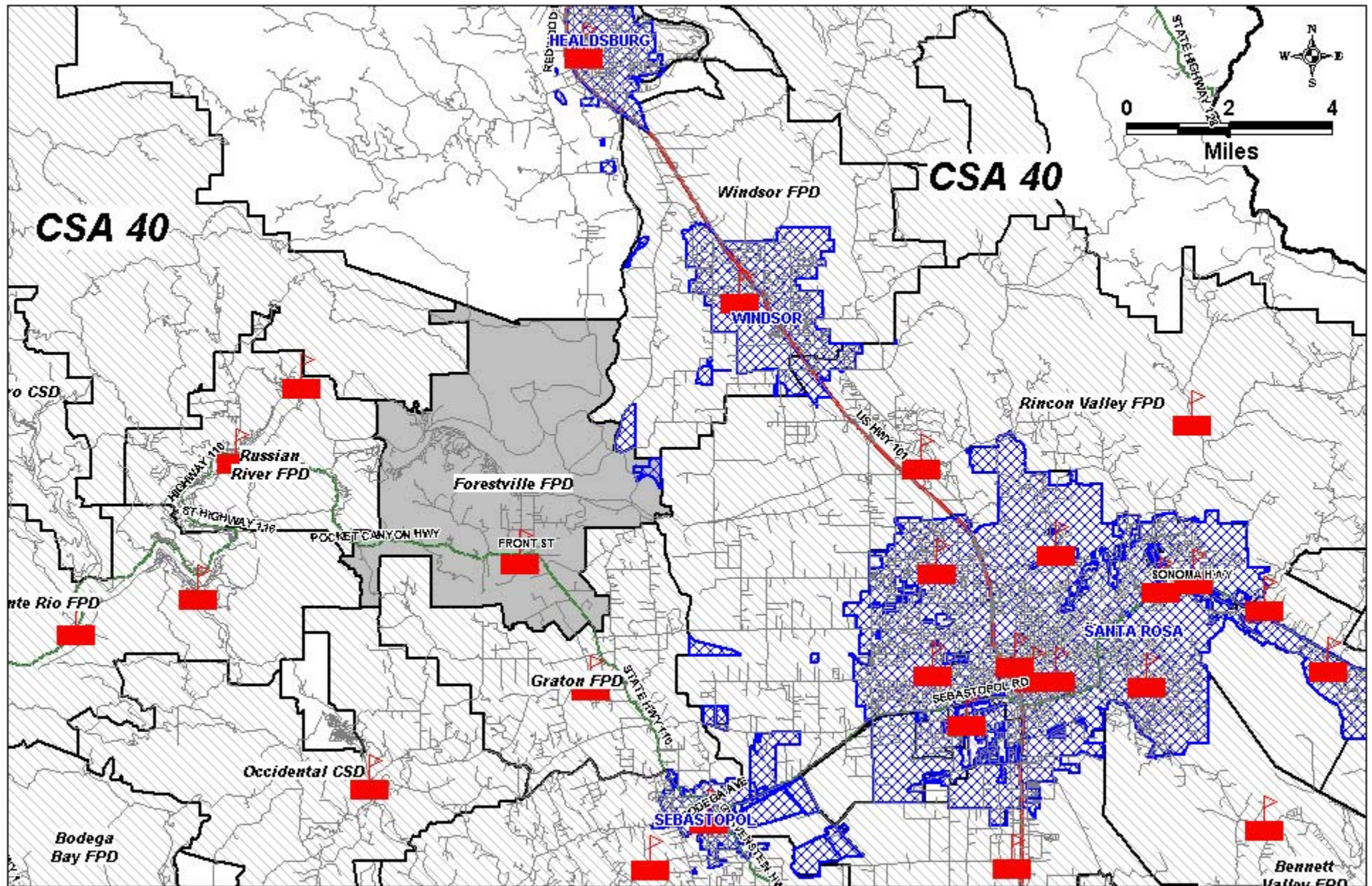
<sup>70</sup> Interview with FFPD Chief Gary Duignan, 23 Sept. 2004.

<sup>71</sup> Sonoma County General Plan 2020, Overview Draft. <<http://www.sonoma-county.org/prmd/gp2020/draft1/index.htm>> Accessed 2 Nov. 2004.

<sup>72</sup> Interview with FFPD Chief Gary Duignan, 21 July 2004.



**Figure 5:  
Forestville Fire Protection District**



## GEYSERVILLE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

The Geyserville Fire Protection District (GFPD) covers an area of 216 square miles in northern Sonoma County, bordering on the City of Healdsburg, the Cloverdale Fire Protection District, and various unincorporated areas under the jurisdiction of the county (see **Figure 6**). It serves a population of approximately 5,000.

The District receives the majority of its funding from a combination of property taxes and a contract with the Dry Creek Band of Pomo Indians, which owns a local casino. These sources are sufficient for the District to meet current and anticipated demand.

### GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

GFPD was formed in 1996 and is empowered to provide services including fire protection, rescue, emergency medical care, and hazardous material emergency response. It is primarily a volunteer force, with a contract fire inspector, part-time administrative assistant, a fire chief who receives a small stipend, and 31 volunteers. It is governed by its own five-member Board of Directors, which meets the second Wednesday of every month. Meetings are open to the public. The District also posts a call log in the local newspaper and maintains a web site.<sup>73</sup>

Property taxes comprise approximately 12 percent of the District's total revenues. Other funding comes primarily from a contract for service with the Dry Creek Band of Pomo Indians, which owns the River Rock Casino. Negotiated in December 2003, the contract requires the Pomo tribe to contribute \$336,000 per year toward emergency services. The Pomos also committed to providing an adequate water supply and including coverage for the fire district in their \$2 million liability insurance policy.<sup>74</sup> The District does not charge any special taxes or fees. Its FY 04-05 budget includes \$1.4 million in operating expenditures, with reserves of around \$339,000, or approximately 24 percent of operating expenditures. The District has a \$3.5 million lease purchase obligation on its new station, built in 2000 in Dry Creek Valley.<sup>75</sup> This lease purchase obligation will be paid back over the next 20 years.<sup>76</sup>

GFPD has automatic response agreements with neighboring districts to provide more efficient coverage to high-risk areas. It does not share staff or facilities, nor does it contract with CDF.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Fax from Michael Pigoni, GFPD Board of Directors, 12 Aug. 2004.

<sup>74</sup> Paul Payne, "River Rock, Geyserville Fire District OK \$336,000 Deal," *The Press Democrat*, 17 Jan. 2004.

<sup>75</sup> Interview with Michael Pigoni, GFPD Board of Directors, 23 Sep. 2004. GFPD Final Budget FY 04-05.

<sup>76</sup> Fax from Michael Pigoni, GFPD Board of Directors, 12 Aug. 2004.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

## INFRASTRUCTURE, FACILITIES, AND SERVICES

GFPD's ISO rating is 8 in nonhydrant areas and 6 in areas with access to water. Because the District covers such a wide area, response times can range from 4 minutes to as long as 30 minutes. The District responds to between 550 and 600 calls per year; in general, 50 to 60 percent are for medical emergencies, 20 percent are for fires, and the remaining 20 to 30 percent are vehicle accidents or miscellaneous incidents.<sup>78</sup>

The District's equipment includes five engines, one water tender, one rescue squad, one rehab trailer, and two support vehicles. GFPD has three fire stations, located in Geyserville, Alexander Valley, and Dry Creek Valley. Rebuilding of the main Geyserville station will begin in late 2004. Funding for the new construction has been secured through a lease purchase agreement. The District purchased a new fire engine this year; no additional new acquisitions are anticipated for the next five years. The District states that current revenue sources are adequate to cover necessary equipment upgrades.<sup>79</sup>

The District believes that general improvements to local infrastructure, such as better water mains or roads, will also contribute to the District's overall cost and management efficiency.<sup>80</sup>

## FIRE PROTECTION DEMAND AND CAPACITY

The District does not anticipate any major growth beyond the current rate of 1 to 2 percent per year. According to Sonoma County PRMD projections, the population of the rural northeast area (i.e., the unincorporated area outside the Cloverdale USA) is expected to grow by 1,561 between 2000 and 2020, an annual increase of 1.37 percent.<sup>81</sup> Growth in the unincorporated area outside Healdsburg is anticipated to be somewhat less, increasing from 6,799 in 2000 to 8,000 in 2020, an average of 0.88 percent annually.<sup>82</sup>

The arrival of the new River Rock Casino in 2002 led to increased call volume for GFPD. Because the tribe that runs the casino is exempt from paying property taxes, GFPD negotiated a revenue-sharing deal with the Pomo tribe. At present, the arrangement has allayed the District's fears regarding its capacity to meet increasing demand for services in the short term. There is a possibility that the casino may eventually provide its own fire protection, but this is unlikely to happen in the near term.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Interview with Michael Pigoni, GFPD Board of Directors, 23 Sep. 2004.

<sup>79</sup> Fax from Michael Pigoni, GFPD Board of Directors, 12 Aug. 2004. GFPD Final Budget FY 04-05.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Sonoma County General Plan 2020, Overview Draft. <<http://www.sonoma-county.org/prmd/gp2020/draft1/index.htm>> Accessed 2 Nov. 2004.

<sup>82</sup> ABAG Projections, 2003.

<sup>83</sup> Interview with Michael Pigoni, GFPD Board of Directors, 23 Sep. 2004.

The District hopes to develop a Master Plan in the near future, which will help it to plan for any future growth.



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## GLEN ELLEN FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

Glen Ellen Fire Protection District (GEFPD) provides services to an area of 27 square miles, located southeast of the City of Santa Rosa and within a quarter mile of Sonoma County's eastern border. This area, shown in **Figure 7**, includes the unincorporated community of Glen Ellen, which has 4,500 residents, as well as the Sonoma Developmental Center, with its 2,000 employees and 1,000 patients.<sup>84</sup>

The District's high level of reserves, lack of debt, and recent equipment acquisition suggest that it is financially healthy and will continue to provide adequate levels of service. No significant amounts of service area growth are anticipated.

## GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

GEFPD was formed in 1958. It is empowered to provide services including fire protection, rescue, emergency medical care, and hazardous material emergency response. The District maintains a staff of 2 full-time paid employees and 32 volunteers, supplemented by 2 part-time paid employees, each of whom works one day a week. It is governed by a 5-member Board of Directors. The Board meets the second Tuesday of each month, and meetings are open to the public. GEFPD has arrangements with the Kenwood Press and other local newspapers to publish its monthly response records and other information.<sup>85</sup>

The District has a FY 04-05 budget of \$659,000 and currently maintains reserves of about \$593,000. These reserves are designated for the following purposes: approximately \$97,000 for compensated absences (i.e., vacation and sick leave), \$245,000 for apparatus replacement, \$88,000 for building and land funding, \$5,000 for command and control (dispatch systems), \$55,000 in contingency funds (used to cover, for example, the costs of extra staff support when regular staff is injured), and \$103,000 in general reserves maintained as a buffer against funding shortfalls. General reserves are equal to approximately 15 percent of the District's total operating budget, while total reserves (general and designated) are equal to about 90 percent. GEFPD's primary source of revenue is property tax, which provides nearly 90 percent of total revenues. Unlike many Sonoma County fire districts, it does not have a special tax and has not proposed such a levy. Equipment purchases are supported entirely by private donations and government grants (e.g., FEMA), as well as local fundraising efforts such as selling advertisements on the sides of fire engines. The District is not currently carrying any debt.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Interview with GEFPD Chief William Murray, 21 July 2004.

<sup>85</sup> LAFCO Request for Information, 2002. Interview with GEFPD Chief William Murray, 1 Oct. 2004.

<sup>86</sup> Interview with GEFPD Chief William Murray, 21 July 2004. GEFPD Final Budget FY 04-05.

## INFRASTRUCTURE, FACILITIES, AND SERVICES

The District's ISO rating within 1,000 feet of a hydrant is 4; in areas without public water access, it rates an 8. Daytime response is approximately 45 seconds out the door; the time required to reach emergency sites varies widely based on distance from the station. The District responds to approximately 350 calls per year.<sup>87</sup>

GEFPD facilities include two fire stations, both of which are located in Glen Ellen. The District has purchased three new fire engines over the past three years. It also has one older water tender. The rotation of equipment every five years constitutes an informal capital improvement plan for the District.<sup>88</sup>

The District has automatic aid arrangements with other districts, cities, and Volunteer Fire Companies (administered under CSA 40) through Sonoma County's REDCOM computer-assisted dispatch program. It works closely with Valley of the Moon and Kenwood Fire Protection Districts. GEFPD also has a written agreement for reciprocal support with the state-run fire department of the Sonoma Developmental Center. It has no other plans for shared staff or facilities.<sup>89</sup>

## FIRE PROTECTION DEMAND AND CAPACITY

The District does not anticipate any changes in its borders over the next five years. According to Sonoma County PRMD predictions, population growth in the rural Sonoma Valley area (the unincorporated area outside the City of Sonoma USA) will average 0.71 percent between 2000 and 2020, as the population goes from 30,125 to 34,400.<sup>90</sup> However, although a new 50-room inn was approved within the District's service area in mid-2004, significant growth in Glen Ellen is unlikely due to the lack of open land appropriate for subdivisions or large construction projects. GEFPD does not anticipate any changes in its boundaries or governance. The District cites its large volunteer force and cooperative arrangements with neighboring jurisdictions as key elements in its ability to provide fire protection services. Barring an unexpected decrease in funding, the District predicts that it will be able to continue providing its current level of service for the next five years. (The District's chief has expressed concern that, in the long run, the high cost of living in Glen Ellen may deplete the volunteer pool and compromise the District's level of service, but does not anticipate that this will become a problem in the near future.)<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> LAFCO Request for Information, 2002. Interviews with GEFPD Chief William Murray, 21 July 2004 and 1 Oct. 2004.

<sup>88</sup> Interview with GEFPD Chief William Murray, 21 July 2004.

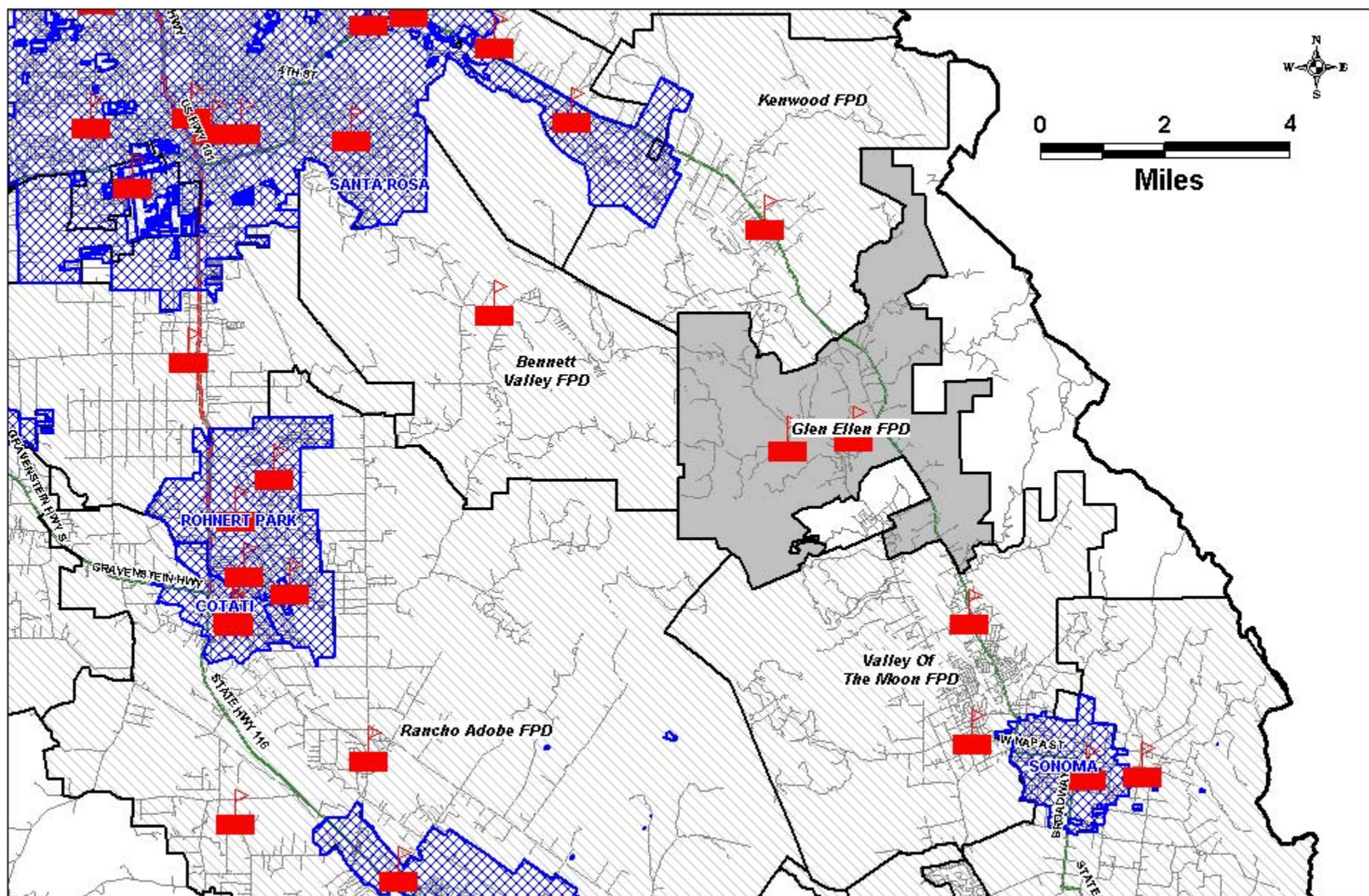
<sup>89</sup> Interview with GEFPD Chief William Murray, 1 Oct. 2004.

<sup>90</sup> Sonoma County General Plan 2020, Overview Draft. <<http://www.sonoma-county.org/prmd/gp2020/draft1/index.htm>> Accessed 2 Nov. 2004.

<sup>91</sup> LAFCO Request for Information, 2002. Interview with GEFPD Chief William Murray, 21 July 2004.



**Figure 7:  
Glen Ellen Fire Protection District**





## **GOLD RIDGE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT**

The Gold Ridge Fire Protection District (GRFPD) is located immediately west of the City of Sebastopol and covers an area of 75 square miles, shown in **Figure 8**. It provides services to a population of 25,000.

The District participates in an MOU with Bennett Valley FPD to save costs. A November 2004 attempt to increase Gold Ridge FPD's special tax did not receive voter approval; a lack of funding may make it difficult for the District to hire new staff to meet future demand.

### **GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS**

GRFPD was formed in 1993 with the merger and reorganization of the Hessel Fire Protection District and the Twin Hills Fire Protection District. It provides fire protection, emergency medical response and rescue, fire prevention, public education, and hazardous materials emergency response. The District employs one part-time chief, three full-time battalion chiefs, and one administrator. It also has about 80 volunteers and twelve unpaid interns. It is governed by its own seven-member Board of Directors, which meets the first Wednesday of every month. Meetings are open to the public. The District publishes a newsletter and places notices in the local newspaper to distribute information to the public.<sup>92</sup>

GRFPD is carrying approximately \$172,000 in debt on its new fire station, to be paid off by 2006. It also has \$240,000 in debt on its recently acquired engine. District reserves are around \$440,000, or around 38 percent of FY 04-05 operating expenditures, which are budgeted to be nearly \$1.2 million. The majority of GRFPD's revenue comes from property taxes, which generate around 75 percent of total revenue, and a special tax of \$5 per year per unit of risk, or \$20 per single-family dwelling.<sup>93</sup> Measure U on the November 2004 ballot attempted to increase this special tax by a flat \$40 per dwelling; the measure lost by a slim margin. Other funding sources include rental income and permit fees.

GRFPD also receives annual payments from the Bennett Valley Fire Protection District for administrative and operational services provided under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Cooperation between the two districts began in 1997, when the Bennett Valley FPD approached GRFPD for administrative assistance. Bennett Valley FPD's chief became a battalion chief for both districts. When this battalion chief resigned, Gold Ridge hired a replacement, and Bennett Valley began paying for shared

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<sup>92</sup> LAFCO Request for Information, 2003. Interview with GRFPD Administrative Assistant Ruth Newman, 22 July 2004.

<sup>93</sup> Four units of risk are assigned to a typical single-family residence.

services through an MOU.<sup>94</sup> Gold Ridge and Bennett Valley currently share a fire chief, three battalion chiefs, and an administrative clerk. The District also participates in Sonoma County's REDCOM dispatching program and has individual automatic aid agreements with all of its neighboring districts.<sup>95</sup>

## INFRASTRUCTURE, FACILITIES, AND SERVICES

The District's ISO rating is 6 with access to a fire hydrant and 8b without access.<sup>96</sup> It responds to around 800 to 900 calls for service each year.<sup>97</sup>

The District has three fire stations, each equipped with a water tender and a wildland interface engine. The Hessel and Twin Hills stations are also each equipped with a structural engine. The Twin Hills station is staffed around-the-clock, while the Freestone station is entirely volunteer-based. A replacement program is intended to ensure that equipment is kept up-to-date but has been unfunded for eight years as funds have been shifted to staffing.<sup>98</sup>

## FIRE PROTECTION DEMAND AND CAPACITY

According to Sonoma County PRMD estimates, rural Sebastopol's growth rate will average 0.24 percent annually between 2000 and 2020, when the area's population will reach 22,100.<sup>99</sup> (This does not encompass the District's entire service area, which may also be affected by growth in the rural Cotati-Rohnert Park area, projected to be 1.1 percent annually between 2000 and 2020.<sup>100</sup>) The District does not anticipate any changes to its boundaries within the next five years. However, the West County area's steady growth has affected District services. While existing equipment is adequate to meet current and projected demand, staffing shortages may become more acute in the near future. GRFPD hopes to hire two new staff members; the recent defeat of a measure to increase the District's special tax may make this plan financially infeasible. The District has already employed cost-cutting measures, such as replacing its full-time fire chief with a part-time chief and applying for federal (FEMA) grants in order to purchase new equipment.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> LAFCO Request for Information, 2003. Interviews with Administrative Assistant Ruth Newman, 22 July 2004 and 28 Sept. 2004.

<sup>95</sup> Interview with GRFPD Administrative Assistant Ruth Newman, 22 July 2004.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Interview with GRFPD Administrative Assistant Ruth Newman, 28 Sep. 2004.

<sup>98</sup> Interview with GRFPD Administrative Assistant Ruth Newman, 22 July 2004. Communication from GRFPD Administrative Assistant Ruth Newman, 7 Jan. 2005.

<sup>99</sup> Sonoma County General Plan 2020, Overview Draft. <<http://www.sonoma-county.org/prmd/gp2020/draft1/index.htm>> Accessed 2 Nov. 2004.

<sup>100</sup> Sonoma County General Plan 2020, Overview Draft. <<http://www.sonoma-county.org/prmd/gp2020/draft1/index.htm>> Accessed 13 Jan. 2005.

<sup>101</sup> LAFCO Request for Information, 2003. Interview with GRFPD Administrative Assistant Ruth Newman, 22 July 2004.



## GRATON FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

The Graton Fire Protection District (GFPD) covers an area of 26 square miles, immediately northwest of the City of Sebastopol (see **Figure 9**).<sup>102</sup> It serves a population of 14,000 people.<sup>103</sup>

The District maintains large reserves; however, they are largely dedicated for future needed facilities. Continued significant increases in call volume will increase the need for expanded facilities and staff.

## GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

GFPD was formed in 1958. It is empowered to provide services including fire protection, rescue, emergency medical care, and hazardous material emergency response. It has an all-volunteer staff of 30 people. The District is governed by a five-member Board of Directors, which meets the second Tuesday of each month. These meetings are open to the public. Information about fire protection services is also published in a local newspaper.<sup>104</sup>

GFPD revenue comes from a combination of property taxes, earned interest, state funds, intergovernmental revenues, and donations.<sup>105</sup> The District's 2004-2005 preliminary budget includes around \$431,000 in general funds and \$20,000 in a special building fund. Reserves for these two accounts are approximately \$13,000 and \$1.0 million, respectively. The District is carrying debt on two loans, with a single payment of \$12,558 remaining on one and six payments totaling \$262,518 remaining on the other, as of mid-2004.<sup>106</sup> The District's general reserves represent less than 5 percent of general expenditures. Although the building fund has over \$1 million, those funds will be necessary for future improvements.

The District has automatic aid agreements with surrounding jurisdictions.<sup>107</sup>

## INFRASTRUCTURE, FACILITIES, AND SERVICES

On the 1-10 ISO scale (1 being the best), GFPD's ISO rating is 8 in residential areas and 9 in commercial areas. Its equipment and facilities comprise six engines with equipment and a fire station, located in Graton. One engine must be stored off-site due to lack of

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<sup>102</sup> LAFCO Request for Information, 2002.

<sup>103</sup> Interview with Chuck Pedersen, GFPD Board of Directors, 29 Sept. 2004.

<sup>104</sup> LAFCO Request for Information, 2002. Interview with Chuck Pedersen, GFPD Board of Directors, 21 July 2004.

<sup>105</sup> County of Sonoma Preliminary Year-End Reports, Fiscal Period 12 2002 June.

<sup>106</sup> Interview with GFPD Treasurer Sue Davis, 17 Aug. 2004.

<sup>107</sup> Interview with Chuck Pedersen, GFPD Board of Directors, 21 July 2004.



space at the existing station. The District is considering construction of a new station and has the funds necessary to start the project, but has not yet found an appropriate location.<sup>108</sup>

## FIRE PROTECTION DEMAND AND CAPACITY

According to Sonoma County PRMD growth projections, the rural Sebastopol area (i.e., the unincorporated area outside the City USA) is projected to experience an annual population increase of 0.24 percent, growing from 21,090 in 2000 to 22,100 in 2020.<sup>109</sup> However, according to Graton's Deputy Fire Chief, GFPD's call volume is increasing by 10 percent annually, due to a combination of population growth and aging among the existing population. The District states that it currently has the busiest all-volunteer station in the county. While GFPD has significant reserves and District personnel believe that facilities and staff are adequate to meet present demand, continued growth in demand will increase the need for a new, expanded station and may require GFPD to seek additional volunteer or professional staff.<sup>110</sup>

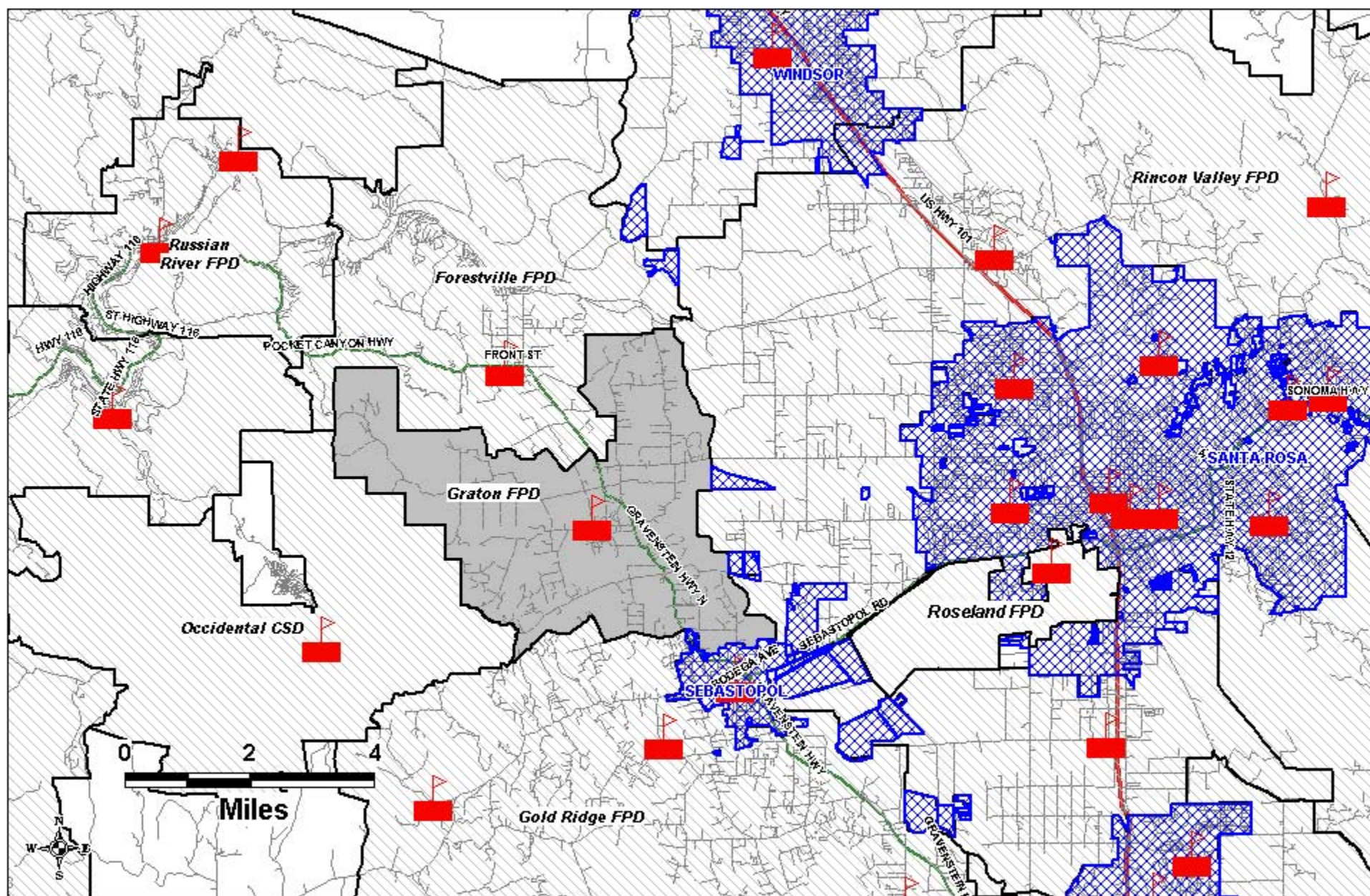
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<sup>108</sup> LAFCO Request for Information, 2002. Interview with Chuck Pedersen, GFPD Board of Directors, 21 July 2004. Communication from Chuck Pedersen, 18 Jan. 2005.

<sup>109</sup> Sonoma County General Plan 2020, Overview Draft. <<http://www.sonoma-county.org/prmd/gp2020/draft1/index.htm>> Accessed 2 Nov. 2004.

<sup>110</sup> Interview with GFPD Deputy Chief Bill Bullard, 27 July 2004.

**Figure 9:  
Graton Fire Protection District**



## KENWOOD FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

The Kenwood Fire Protection District (KFPD) provides services to a population of 3,000 in an area of 25 square miles, slightly southeast of the City of Santa Rosa and bordering on Napa County (see **Figure 10**).

Given that its current budget cannot accommodate additional paid staff, an increase in call volume and demand for services could present challenges to the District.

### GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

KFPD was formed in 1945 and is empowered to provide fire, rescue, and emergency medical services. The District has a staff of two paid firefighters (a captain and a chief) and 29 volunteers. It is governed by its own three-member Board of Directors, which meets the second Tuesday of every month. Meetings are open to the public. Public announcements are published in the local newspaper.<sup>111</sup>

The District's FY 04-05 operating expenditures total \$407,740, with an additional \$270,000 to be transferred from the operating fund to the capital fund for equipment purchases. It has general reserves of \$696,000, over 100 percent of its operating budget, and a capital replacement fund of \$300,000. The District is not carrying any debt. Over 90 percent of KFPD's revenue comes from property taxes, with additional revenues from a special tax of \$10 per unit of risk.<sup>112</sup> This special tax generates about \$44,000 per year.<sup>113</sup>

KFPD has automatic aid arrangements with the City of Santa Rosa and Glen Ellen Fire Protection District, under which KFPD gives and receives aid to structure and wildland fires. In addition, KFPD receives support from the CDF during the summer months when the CDF station (located in Glen Ellen, about five miles from KFPD) is staffed. The level of response provided by CDF varies depending on location. CDF generally responds to local responsibility area (LRA) structure fires with one engine; in the case of state responsibility area (SRA) structure fires, it may respond with a full wildland dispatch. Two thirds of KFPD's total service area is considered to be SRA. The District believes that these arrangements provide adequate coverage; it does not have plans to seek any other shared staff or facilities.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> LAFCO Request for Information, 2002. Interview with KFPD Chief Bob Uboldi, 21 July 2004.

<sup>112</sup> Single-family dwellings generally have four units of risk, mobile homes have two, and commercial property may have as many as ten to twenty.

<sup>113</sup> KFPD Final Budget FY 04-05. Interviews with KFPD Chief Bob Uboldi, 21 July 2004 and 23 Sep. 2004.

<sup>114</sup> LAFCO Request for Information, 2002. Interview with KFPD Chief Bob Uboldi, 23 Sept. 2004.



## INFRASTRUCTURE, FACILITIES, AND SERVICES

KFPD's former ISO rating was 6 within reach of a hydrant, and 8 without access to a hydrant. However, the District recently underwent ISO review and received indication that its ratings would improve. It responds to around 220 calls for service each year; approximately 80 percent of these are medical-related.<sup>115</sup>

As of 2002, the District maintained equipment and facilities valued at \$1,598,569, including one fire station (located in Kenwood).<sup>116</sup> It has since acquired a new engine.<sup>117</sup>

## FIRE PROTECTION DEMAND AND CAPACITY

No major growth is anticipated in the District. According to the projections of the Sonoma County PRMD, the population of "rural Santa Rosa" (the unincorporated region outside the Santa Rosa Urban Service Area) will grow from 24,899 to 28,100 between 2000 and 2020, an annual increase of around 0.6 percent.<sup>118</sup> There is a chance that the District might also be affected by growth in rural Sonoma Valley, where a population increase of 0.17 percent annually is predicted between 2000 and 2020.<sup>119</sup> The annexation of individual parcels by the City of Santa Rosa may very slightly reduce the District's area. With automatic aid arrangements, the District is able to cover its current call volume. However, the District already faces daytime staffing problems and has difficulty attracting and retaining volunteer firefighters. Given that its current budget cannot accommodate additional paid staff, an increase in call volume and demand for services could present challenges to the District.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Interviews with KFPD Chief Bob Uboldi, 21 July 2004 and 23 Sept. 2004. .

<sup>116</sup> LAFCO Request for Information, 2002.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

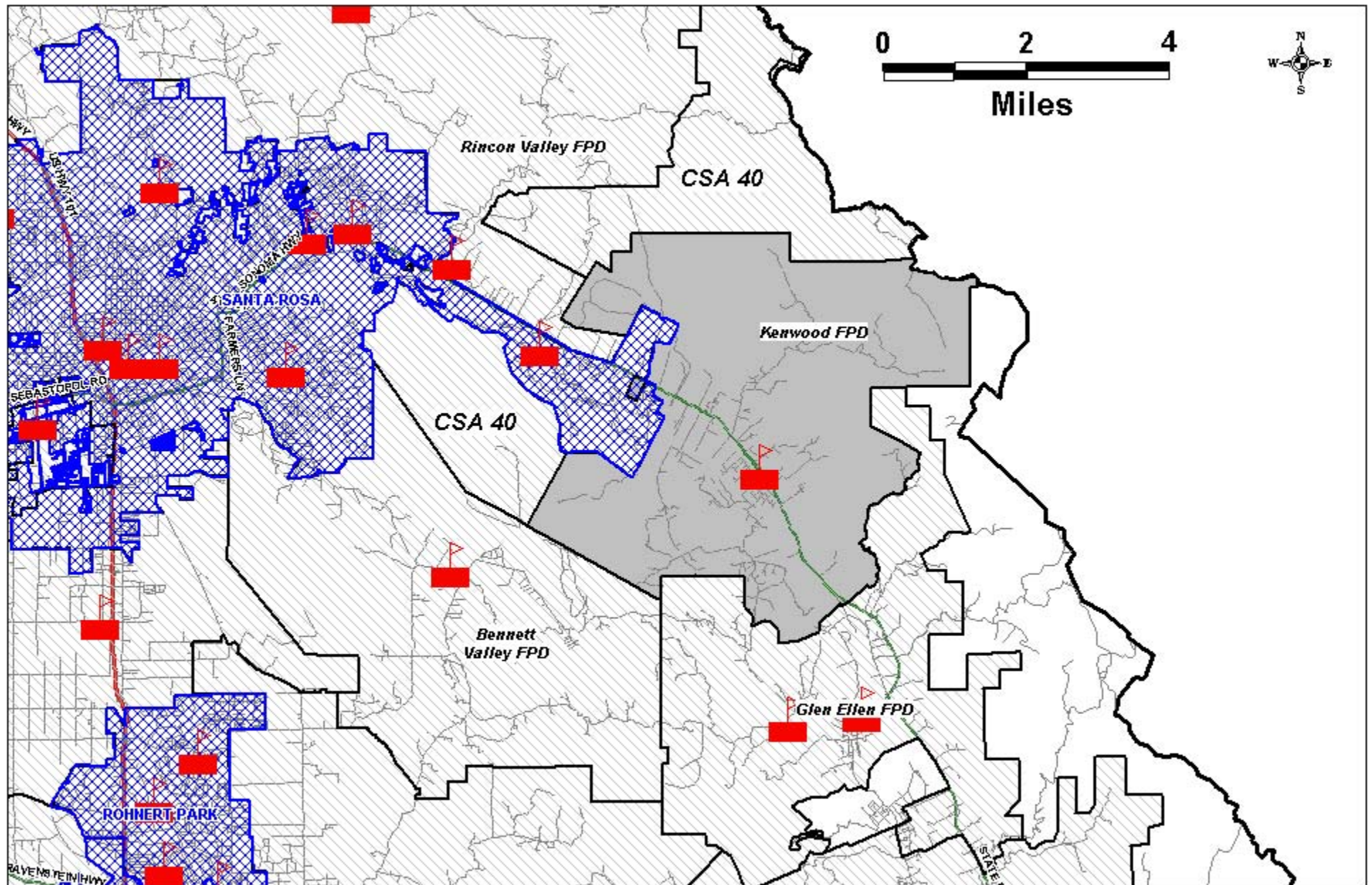
<sup>118</sup> Sonoma County General Plan 2020, Overview Draft. <<http://www.sonoma-county.org/prmd/gp2020/draft1/index.htm>> Accessed 2 Nov. 2004.

<sup>119</sup> Sonoma County General Plan 2020, Overview Draft. <<http://www.sonoma-county.org/prmd/gp2020/draft1/index.htm>> Accessed 2 Nov. 2004.

<sup>120</sup> Interviews with KFPD Chief Bob Uboldi, 21 July 2004 and 23 Sep. 2004.



**Figure 10:  
Kenwood Fire Protection District**



## MONTE RIO FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

The Monte Rio Fire Protection District (MRFPD) covers 45 square miles of western Sonoma County, shown in **Figure 11**. It has a population between 2,500 and 3,000.

Staff shortages and aging facilities may affect the District's ability to meet growing demands for service. A special tax ballot measure planned for November 2005 would allow MRFPD to improve its level of service.

### GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

MRFPD was formed in 1920 to provide fire suppression, medical aid, and rescue services. Its staff consists of 14 volunteers and a part-time administrative assistant employed by the Board of Directors. The District is governed by a five-member Board of Directors. The Board meets the second Tuesday of each month, and its meetings are open to the public. District information is publicized through press releases to the local newspaper.<sup>121</sup>

The District's revenue comes primarily from property taxes. Its operating budget for FY 04-05 is \$441,000. It has paid off two years on a five-year loan for the purchase of a new engine; its current debt is \$125,000. It reserves consist of appropriations for contingency in the amount of \$65,000, or approximately 15 percent of operating expenditures.<sup>122</sup> The District does not currently have any major sources of revenue other than property taxes, which account for over 95 percent of total revenues. However, MRFPD is in the process of trying to pass a special tax that is likely to appear on the ballot in November 2005. The District is working with a consultant to prepare for the election and reports that there is community support for the measure. The tax would probably be assessed at \$40 per unit, as in the neighboring Russian River Fire Protection District.<sup>123</sup>

MRFPD has mutual aid agreements with neighboring districts and participates in joint purchasing and training programs with other fire protection agencies in Sonoma County, including CSA 40. It is also exploring additional opportunities for cooperation. In January 2005, the boards of directors of Bodega Bay FPD, Monte Rio FPD, and Russian River FPD voted to pursue possibilities relating to the consolidation of their districts. Because a consolidation cannot impose new taxes on residents without a vote, Monte Rio must pass its own special tax before it can formally consolidate. (Russian River and Bodega Bay FPDs both charge special taxes.)<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> LAFCO Request for Information, 2002. Interview with MRFPD Chief Stephen Baxman, 21 July 2004.

<sup>122</sup> MRFPD Final Budget FY 04-05.

<sup>123</sup> Interviews with MRFPD Chief Stephen Baxman, 21 July 2004 and 12 Oct. 2004.

<sup>124</sup> Interview with MRFPD Chief Stephen Baxman, 21 July 2004.

## INFRASTRUCTURE, FACILITIES, AND SERVICES

The District's ISO ratings are 4 and 8, depending on distance from a fire hydrant. Its call volume is between 500 and 530 calls for service annually.<sup>125</sup>

MRFPD's equipment includes three rescue vehicles, two brush trucks, and four pumpers. The District has three stations, located in Monte Rio, Duncans Mills, and Jenner. Two of these stations are 50 years old. Although the District believes they should be rebuilt, it lacks the necessary construction funds.<sup>126</sup>

## FIRE PROTECTION DEMAND AND CAPACITY

The District does not anticipate any major growth or changes in its service area boundaries. Sonoma County PRMD growth projections indicate that the population of the entire Russian River area (which includes Monte Rio's eastern portion) will grow from 16,462 in 2000 to 18,960 in 2020, an average increase of 0.76 percent annually.<sup>127</sup> Projections for the Sonoma Coast Planning Area, encompassing the length of the County's coast and extending as much as 15 miles inland, anticipate an increase of 3,283 between 2000 and 2020, or annual growth of nearly 2 percent.<sup>128</sup> Difficulty in finding daytime staff among its volunteers (many of whom work outside of Monte Rio) and aging facilities will increasingly affect the District's ability to meet current and future service demands. Its ability to reconstruct its stations to help serve new development will depend in part upon the passage of the planned 2005 bond measure.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Interview with MRFPD Chief Stephen Baxman, 12 Oct. 2004.

<sup>126</sup> LAFCO Request for Information, 2002.

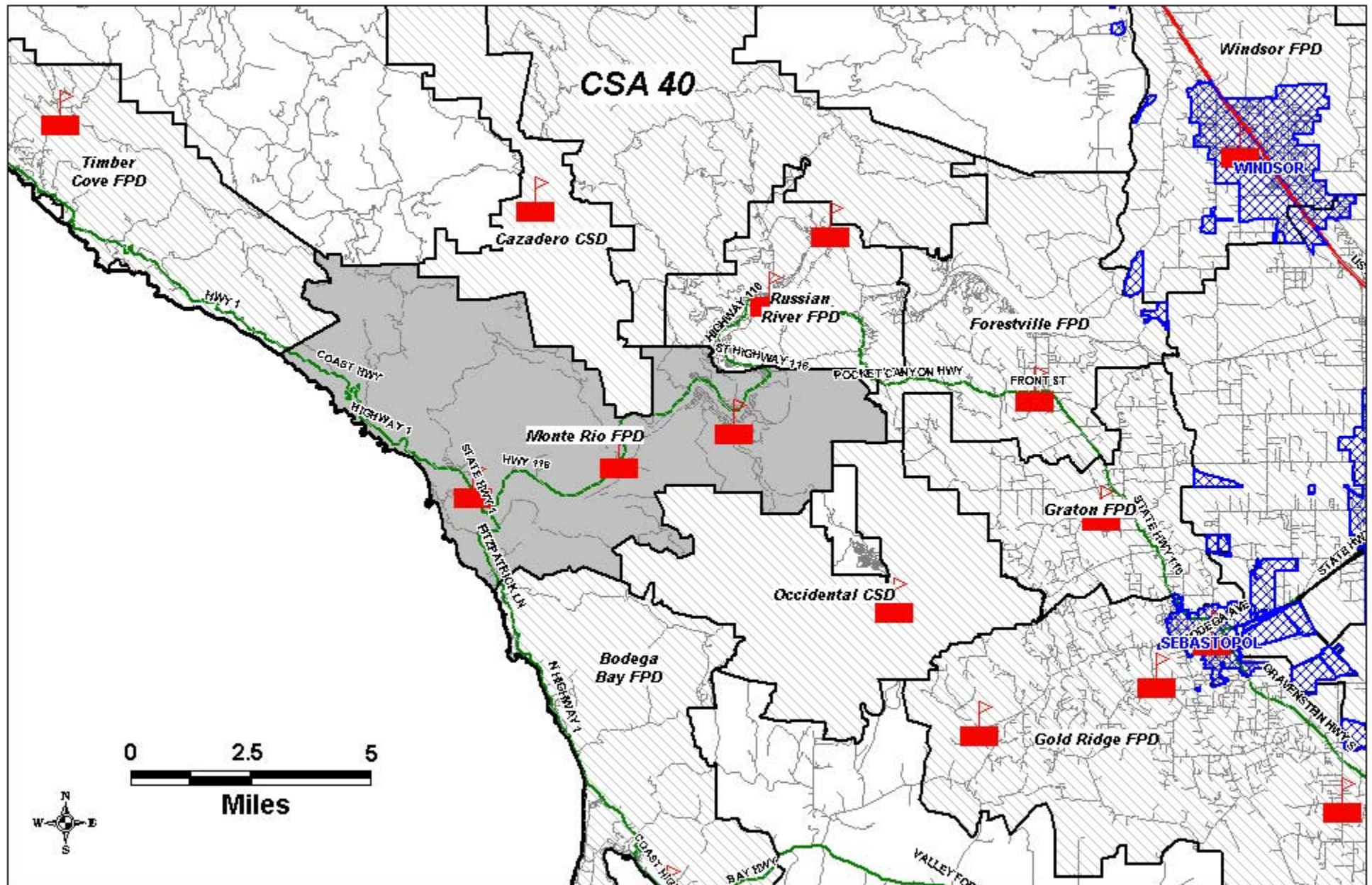
<sup>127</sup> Sonoma County General Plan 2020, Overview Draft. <<http://www.sonoma-county.org/prmd/gp2020/draft1/index.htm>> Accessed 2 Nov. 2004.

<sup>128</sup> Sonoma County General Plan 2020, Overview Draft. <<http://www.sonoma-county.org/prmd/gp2020/draft1/index.htm>> Accessed 2 Nov. 2004.

<sup>129</sup> Interview with MRFPD Chief Stephen Baxman, 21 July 2004.



**Figure 11:  
Monte Rio Fire Protection District**



## RANCHO ADOBE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

The Rancho Adobe Fire Protection District (RAFPD) provides services to 26,000 people in an area of 80 square miles that is located just east of the cities of Rohnert Park and Petaluma (see **Figure 12**). Its service area encompasses the unincorporated community of Penngrove and the City of Cotati.<sup>130</sup>

The District faces staffing shortages but lacks the funds to hire additional full-time permanent firefighters. The termination of the District's contract with the County may also affect staffing issues.

### GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

RAFPD was formed in 1993 through the merger of the Cotati Fire Protection District and the Penngrove Fire Protection District. It employs 17 permanent staff members (3 battalion chiefs and 14 paid firefighters) and contracts with the Sonoma County Department of Emergency Services for a part-time chief and deputy chief, and full-time administrative services. The District's Board of Directors negotiated an early termination of this contract and RAFPD will no longer have an agreement with the County effective December 31, 2005.<sup>131</sup> After this date, the District will directly employ its own part-time chief and administrative staff. Under its settlement with the County, the District is required to pay for the services of an administrative assistant for a full year, although it will not have access to County administrative support after the termination date.<sup>132</sup>

In February 2005, the District Board voted to reduce the 24-hour staffing (i.e., staff on a 56-hour week, which consists of three platoons working ten 24-hour shifts per month per platoon) that was previously provided at the Penngrove Station; forty hours' worth of coverage was transferred to the District's Liberty Station. Having determined that 24-hour staffing is still needed at Penngrove, the District has developed a temporary arrangement whereby management staff is used to staff engines at that station. This arrangement will take effect in May 2005 and is expected to last through November 2005, when the District hopes to pass a tax measure that will allow for additional hiring.<sup>133</sup> Without this type of additional funding source, the District may be forced to close stations or redistribute personnel.<sup>134</sup>

The District also has approximately 40 volunteers. Its seven-member Board of Directors meets the third Wednesday of every month. Meetings are open to the public.

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<sup>130</sup> LAFCO Request for Information, 2002.

<sup>131</sup> Personal communication from Director of Sonoma County Emergency Services Vern Losh, 27 July 2005.

<sup>132</sup> Interview with RAFPD Deputy Chief Jack Rosevear, 9 Aug. 2005.

<sup>133</sup> Interview with RAFPD Deputy Chief Jack Rosevear, 4 April 2005.

<sup>134</sup> Interview with RAFPD Deputy Chief Jack Rosevear, 9 Aug. 2005.

Information regarding District services is published in the local paper and posted at the fire station and on the District's website.<sup>135</sup>

Almost 80 percent of District revenues come from property taxes. A special parcel tax, calculated at the rate of \$10 per unit of risk, generates additional funds.<sup>136</sup> Other sources of revenue include rental and interest income and cost recovery for some services. The District receives no revenues from Sonoma State University, which falls within its service area and requires emergency responses several times a week.<sup>137</sup> As of 2003, RAFPD was carrying long-term debts of approximately \$332,000 on its most recent engine purchase and \$118,000 on compensated absence liability (to cover the costs of leave due to illness or injury), both to be paid off through the District's general fund. Its FY 04-05 general reserves amounted to \$850,000, or about 36 percent of operating expenditures, with additional equipment reserves of \$369,000 and designations of about \$76,000. Overall, reserves amount to 55 percent of the District's operating budget, which is \$2.7 million for FY 04-05.<sup>138</sup> As of August 2005, District staff report a \$100,000 deficit (including the administrative staff costs required under RAFPD's early termination settlement with the County).<sup>139</sup>

RAFPD has automatic aid agreements with most of its neighboring fire districts. Its chief and deputy chief are provided by the County, in return for which Rancho Adobe battalion chiefs help provide emergency response coverage for all-volunteer districts in the area. The chief officers provided by the County are currently working in excess of the 20 hours per week paid for through their contract, saving the District tens of thousands of dollars in overtime costs.<sup>140</sup> During the fire season months, CDF provides automatic aid for emergency incidents in the west portions of the District and to State Responsibility Area (SRA) fires. CDF will provide fire response to anywhere in the District at the District's request.<sup>141</sup>

## INFRASTRUCTURE, FACILITIES, AND SERVICES

RAFPD's ISO rating within 1,000 feet of a fire hydrant is 4; without a fire hydrant, the rating ranges from an 8 within 5 miles of the station to a 9 in areas beyond that radius.<sup>142</sup> It responds to approximately 1,900 calls annually.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> LAFCO Request for Information, 2002. Interview with RAFPD Captain Dwayne Harris, 21 July 2004.

<sup>136</sup> A single-family residence is assigned four units of risk.

<sup>137</sup> Interview with RAFPD Deputy Chief Jack Rosevear, 7 Feb. 2005.

<sup>138</sup> LAFCO Request for Information, 2002. Rancho Adobe Fire Protection District Final Budget Hearing August 21 and September 18, 2002. Interview with RAFPD Administrative Assistant Melissa Kositzin, 21 July 2004. RAFPD Final Budget FY 2004-2005.

<sup>139</sup> Interview with RAFPD Deputy Chief Jack Rosevear, 9 Aug. 2005.

<sup>140</sup> Interview with RAFPD Deputy Chief Jack Rosevear, 7 Feb. 2005.

<sup>141</sup> Interview with RAFPD Captain Dwayne Harris, 21 July 2004. Communication from Sonoma County Deputy Chief Jack Rosevear, 28 Dec. 2005.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Interview with Tim Aboudara, RAFPD, 5 Oct. 2004.

The District has eleven vehicles and three stations, located in the vicinity of Cotati, Penngrove, and Petaluma. The District has an apparatus replacement schedule intended to keep equipment up-to-date. However, it has been unable to follow this schedule in recent years and has deferred the purchase of around \$400,000 in new equipment, including a pickup truck and two water tenders. The District has not been able to put money into its apparatus replacement fund for three consecutive years. The staffing changes approved in February 2005 may also contribute to problems with apparatus maintenance, as staff shifts have left the District's mechanic with less time for equipment repairs.<sup>144</sup>

## FIRE PROTECTION DEMAND AND CAPACITY

Sonoma County PRMD projects that the population of rural Petaluma (i.e., the unincorporated area outside the City USA) will grow by an average of 0.76 percent annually (a total increase of 1,054) between 2000 and 2020.<sup>145</sup> Growth in rural Rohnert Park-Cotati is predicted to be somewhat higher, with the population increasing at an average rate of 1.2 percent per year, from 4,059 in 2000 to 5,040 in 2020.<sup>146</sup> Planned annexations by the City of Rohnert Park on the east side of the District, from Sonoma State University to East Railroad Avenue (an area comprising hundreds of acres), could lead to a loss of revenue for RAFPD. In the event of an annexation, the District would probably continue to have automatic aid responsibilities in this area.<sup>147</sup>

The long-term growth of the City of Cotati may also affect demand within the District. Cotati's General Plan projects average annual population increase of 1.5 percent between 2000 and 2010, with an overall trend of slowing growth.<sup>148</sup> According to the District, however, the City of Cotati is considering permits for several new high-density subdivisions, which could increase the population which the District serves by 2,000 to 3,000.<sup>149</sup>

Revenues are not expected to be sufficient to increase services that will be necessary to support growth anticipated over the next five years. The District has instituted a number of cost-cutting measures, including its initial merger of the Cotati and Penngrove Districts and its decision to hire a part-time chief through the County. However, in 2002, District voters rejected Measure Z, which would have created a new special tax of \$30 per unit to pay for additional fire protection services in RAFPD.

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<sup>144</sup> Interview with RAFPD Deputy Chief Jack Rosevear, 7 Feb. 2005.

<sup>145</sup> Sonoma County General Plan 2020, Overview Draft. <<http://www.sonoma-county.org/prmd/gp2020/draft1/index.htm>> Accessed 2 Nov. 2004.

<sup>146</sup> Sonoma County General Plan 2020, Overview Draft. <<http://www.sonoma-county.org/prmd/gp2020/draft1/index.htm>> Accessed 2 Nov. 2004.

<sup>147</sup> Interview with RAFPD Deputy Chief Jack Rosevear, 7 Feb. 2005.

<sup>148</sup> City of Cotati 1998 General Plan Update, 11.

<sup>149</sup> Interview with RAFPD Captain Dwayne Harris, 21 July 2004.

As a result of funding shortages, RAFPD's small staff has had difficulty maintaining services, particularly when injuries further deplete the number of available firefighters. The District reports turnover in half its paid staff in recent years due to disability retirement and uncompetitive salaries; Rancho Adobe is among the lowest-paying fire protection agencies in the County.<sup>150</sup> The District is considering placing another parcel tax increase on the ballot in late 2005 or 2006; such an increase will be necessary to cover ongoing costs and potentially restore some of the recently cut back station coverage, particularly at the Liberty station.<sup>151</sup> The District is also working with Sonoma State University to develop revenue sources to cover the cost of providing services at the University.<sup>152</sup> At this time there are no new meetings scheduled with Sonoma State. However, the District's Board has voted to cancel its staffing arrangement with the County effective December 31, 2005, and current staff anticipate that the Sonoma State issue may be on the new chief's agenda for discussion and resolution.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> LAFCO Request for Information, 2002. Interview with RAFPD Captain Dwayne Harris, 21 July 2004. Interview with RAFPD Deputy Chief Jack Rosevear, 7 Feb. 2005.

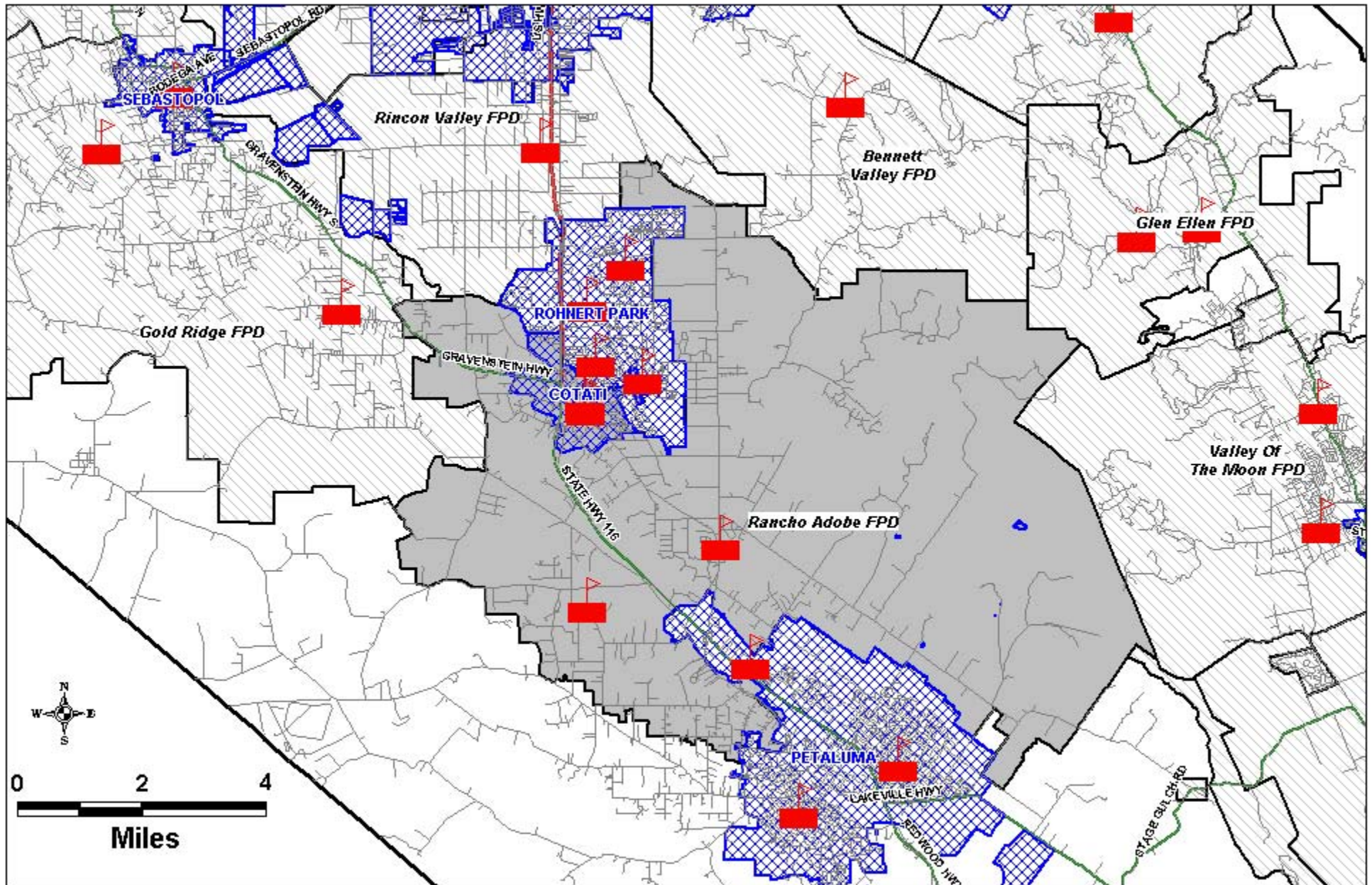
<sup>151</sup> Tobias Young, "Rancho Adobe fire district cuts hours, jobs," The Press Democrat, 21 Jan. 2005. Interview with RAFPD Deputy Chief Jack Rosevear, 7 Feb. 2005.

<sup>152</sup> Interview with RAFPD Deputy Chief Jack Rosevear, 7 Feb. 2005.

<sup>153</sup> Personal communication from Director of Sonoma County Emergency Services Vern Losh, 27 July 2005.



**Figure 12:  
Rancho Adobe Fire Protection District**



## RINCON VALLEY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

Rincon Valley Fire Protection District (RVFPD) covers an area of 125 square miles, adjacent to the southwestern, western, northern, and northeastern borders of the City of Santa Rosa, as shown in **Figure 13**. A portion of the District's service area falls within the Town of Windsor, where RVFPD provides service to an area of under one square mile that includes the Oak Creek Subdivision, the Oak Park Subdivision, the Shiloh Retail Center, Shiloh Business Park, and Standard Structures. (Fire protection in the remainder of the Town of Windsor is provided by the Windsor Fire Protection District.) The District provides services to 30,000 residents.

Space and funding limitations may prevent the District from making needed facilities improvements. There is a possibility that RVFPD will share one of its four facilities with the City of Santa Rosa at some point in the future.

## GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

RVFPD was formed in 1948. It has since expanded its service area, in part through a 1993 merger with Bellevue Fire Protection District. It has also taken over numerous areas formerly served by CSA 40, allowing for improved fire protection services without the creation of new districts. The District provides fire protection services as well as emergency medical services and hazardous material response. It currently employs 22 full-time employees: 4 administrative staff and 18 firefighters. While the number of volunteer and part-time staff is variable, the District typically has around 30 volunteer/part-time firefighters. RVFPD is governed by a seven-member Board of Directors, which meets the second Monday of each month. Meetings are open to the public.<sup>154</sup>

RVFPD's revenue comes primarily from property taxes and a special tax of \$36 per single-unit residential parcel and \$12 per additional residential unit.<sup>155</sup> Other revenue sources include interest income, fees for service, state funding, and mitigation fee funds used to cover a portion of equipment purchases. The District currently has no debt. Total reserve funds available to the District at the end of FY 03-04 were in excess of \$1.5 million or over 34 percent of the FY 04-05 operating budget of \$4.4 million.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> LAFCO Request for Information, 2002. Interview with RVFPD Administrative Assistant Charlene Virts, 22 July 2004. Communication from RVFPD Chief Doug Williams, 7 Jan. 2005.

<sup>155</sup> Interview with RVFPD Chief Doug Williams, 27 Sep. 2004. Taxes for commercial buildings are calculated based on size.

<sup>156</sup> Interview with RVFPD Administrative Assistant Charlene Virts, 22 July 2004. RVFPD Final Budget FY 04-05. Communication from RVFPD Chief Doug Williams, 7 Jan. 2005.

The District participates in automatic aid agreements with surrounding jurisdictions, including the City of Santa Rosa and Windsor Fire Protection District. It shares some training and battalion chief duties with Windsor Fire Protection District.<sup>157</sup>

## INFRASTRUCTURE, FACILITIES, AND SERVICES

RVFPD has ISO ratings of 4 and 8b, depending on proximity to public water.<sup>158</sup> It responds to approximately 3,500 calls for service every year, of which around 10 to 15 percent are fire-related.<sup>159</sup>

The District maintains four fire stations, two of which are staffed full-time and two of which are all-volunteer. The staffed stations and the Middle Rincon Road volunteer station are each equipped with two engines, a water tender, and a utility vehicle. The volunteer-staffed station on Calistoga Road contains only one engine and no other equipment.<sup>160</sup> The smallest of these stations, a volunteer-staffed facility on Calistoga Road, was built in the early 1990s; the District does not anticipate that it will require upgrading in the near future. Of the remaining three stations, the one on Lark Center Drive is less than forty years old, while the station on Todd Road was constructed a little over forty years ago.<sup>161</sup> The Middle Rincon Road station dates to the late 1940s or early 1950s.<sup>162</sup> Each of these stations was originally designed to accommodate a one-person staff. Despite periodic renovations, the District has had difficulty adapting these facilities to a state-recommended three-person staff minimum. The Larkfield station (on Lark Center Drive) is located on a very small lot, making it difficult to add the needed parking and training areas without purchasing additional land, for which the District lacks the necessary funds. There is a new squad at this station.<sup>163</sup> The main Middle Rincon Road station is surrounded by the City of Santa Rosa; RVFPD has had informal discussions with the City of Santa Rosa regarding the possibility of making this a joint station.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Interview with RVFPD Administrative Assistant Charlene Virts, 22 July 2004. Interview with Windsor Fire Protection District Chief Ron Collier, 22 July 2004.

<sup>158</sup> LAFCO Request for Information, 2002. Interview with RVFPD Administrative Assistant Charlene Virts, 22 July 2004.

<sup>159</sup> Interview with RVFPD Chief Doug Williams, 27 Sep. 2004.

<sup>160</sup> Communication from RVFPD Chief Doug Williams, 7 Jan. 2005.

<sup>161</sup> Communication from RVFPD Chief Doug Williams, 7 Jan. 2005.

<sup>162</sup> Interview with RVFPD Chief Doug Williams, 18 Jan. 2005.

<sup>163</sup> Communication from RVFPD Chief Doug Williams, 23 May 2005.

<sup>164</sup> Interview with RVFPD Administrative Assistant Charlene Virts, 22 July 2004. Interview with RVFPD Chief Doug Williams, 27 Sep 2004. Interview with Santa Rosa Fire Dept. Deputy Chief Bart Lewis, 8 Nov. 2004.

## FIRE PROTECTION DEMAND AND CAPACITY

According to the projections of the Sonoma County PRMD, the population of “rural Santa Rosa” (the unincorporated region outside the Santa Rosa Urban Service Area) will grow from 24,899 to 28,100 between 2000 and 2020, an annual increase of around 0.6 percent.<sup>165</sup> The City of Santa Rosa annexes individual District parcels on an ongoing basis, reducing RVFPD’s service area and revenues.<sup>166</sup> An Indian casino and resort hotel are currently proposed within the District’s service area. This project may affect demand for RVFPD fire protection services, though specific arrangements between the District and the casino have not yet been determined.<sup>167</sup>

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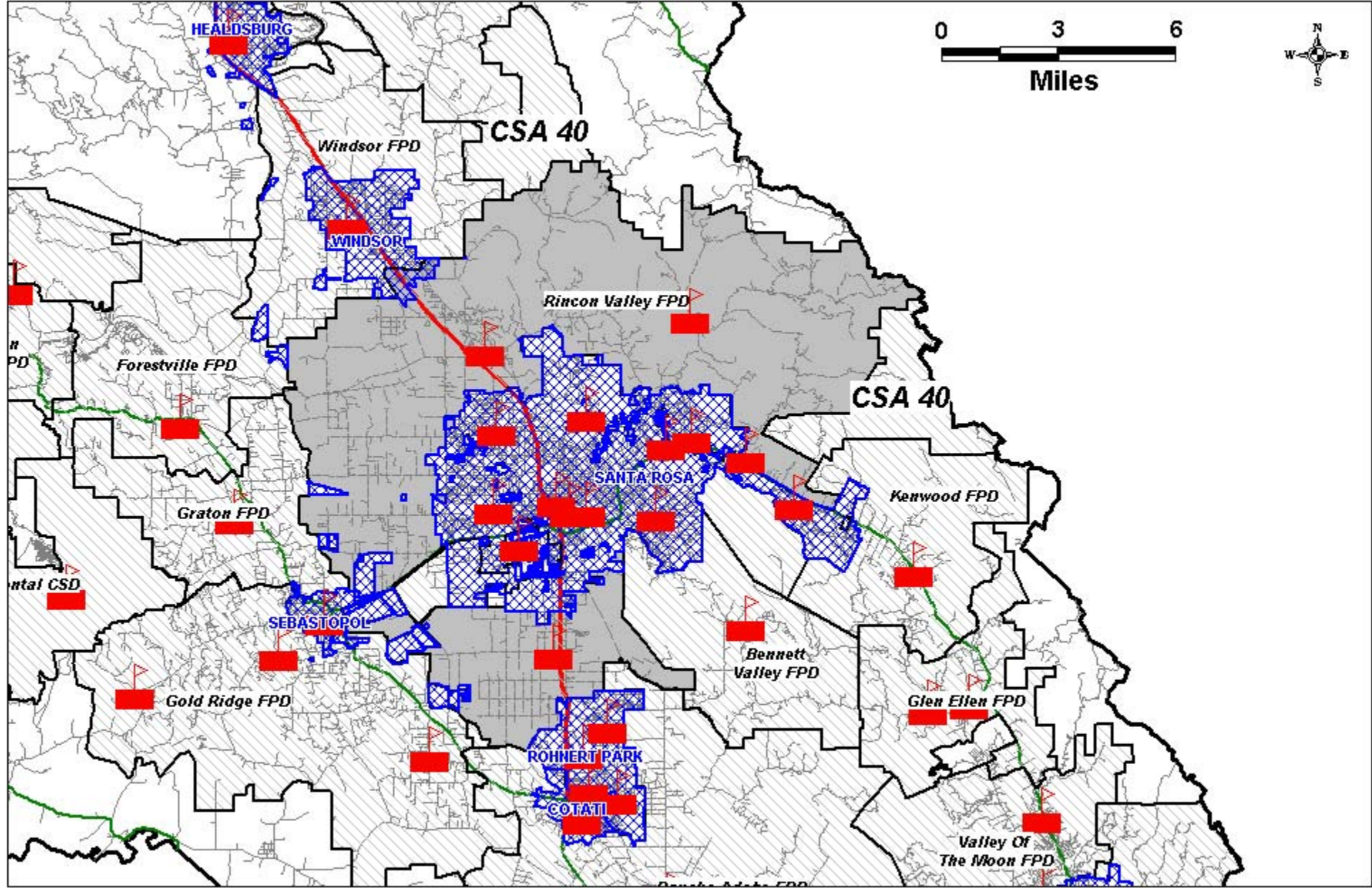
<sup>165</sup> Sonoma County General Plan 2020, Overview Draft. <<http://www.sonoma-county.org/prmd/gp2020/draft1/index.htm>> Accessed 2 Nov. 2004.

<sup>166</sup> Interviews with RVFPD Administrative Assistant Charlene Virts, 22 July 2004 and 4 Nov. 2004.

<sup>167</sup> Interview with RVFPD Chief Doug Williams, 11 July 2005.



Figure 13:  
Rincon Valley Fire Protection District



## ROSELAND FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

Roseland Fire Protection District (RFPD) covers 2.78 square miles; it consists of an unincorporated area in the southwest corner of the City of Santa Rosa, shown in **Figure 14**. It serves an estimated population of 5,200 people.

All District services are contracted to the City of Santa Rosa Fire Department.

### GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

RFPD itself does not have its own staff; since 1983, all fire protection services for the Roseland FPD have been provided by the City of Santa Rosa.<sup>168</sup> The District is governed by an independent three-member Board of Directors, which holds public meetings the second Monday of each month.<sup>169</sup>

The District receives its own property taxes, the majority of which are paid to the City of Santa Rosa in exchange for services. A small portion goes to pay the Roseland Fire District's part-time clerk and its three board members, to cover insurance costs, and to pay for the maintenance of the Roseland fire station.<sup>170</sup> Total expenditures budgeted for FY 04-05 are approximately \$585,000; of this total, \$491,000 will pay for contract services.<sup>171</sup> The amount paid to the City of Santa Rosa for these services has decreased over the years as the City has annexed areas formerly in the District, resulting in a shrinking property tax base. RFPD now pays less than one half of the cost of staffing and operating the engine company located at the Roseland Fire Station. (This engine company responds to calls for service both within and outside District boundaries.)<sup>172</sup> The District has designated reserve funds in the amount of \$39,100, almost 7 percent of operating expenditures. It does not have general or undesignated reserves.<sup>173</sup>

### INFRASTRUCTURE, FACILITIES, AND SERVICES

The District shares the City of Santa Rosa's ISO ratings, which are 3 with access to a hydrant and 9 without access. Many areas of RFPD fall into the latter category.<sup>174</sup> The Santa Rosa Fire Department responded to 441 calls for service within RFPD between

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<sup>168</sup> Interview with Jackie Reese, Santa Rosa Fire Dept., 22 July 2004.

<sup>169</sup> LAFCO Request for Information, 2002.

<sup>170</sup> Interview with Jackie Reese, Santa Rosa Fire Dept., 22 July 2004.

<sup>171</sup> Roseland FPD Budget, FY 04-05.

<sup>172</sup> Communication from Santa Rosa Fire Dept. Chief Bruce Varner, 10 Jan. 2005.

<sup>173</sup> Interview with Jackie Reese, Santa Rosa Fire Dept., 22 July 2004. Roseland FPD Budget, FY 04-05.

<sup>174</sup> Interview with Santa Rosa Fire Dept. Deputy Chief Bart Lewis, 29 Sept. 2004.

January and September 2004.<sup>175</sup> The Santa Rosa engine company stationed in Roseland responded to a total of 1,862 calls for service during this period. Other Santa Rosa Fire Department resources also respond to calls in the District on a regular basis.<sup>176</sup>

While the District owns its fire station, all other equipment is provided by the City of Santa Rosa.<sup>177</sup>

## FIRE PROTECTION DEMAND AND CAPACITY

Call volume in the Roseland FPD has decreased significantly in recent years – from 926 calls in 1995 to 457 in 2002 – due to the reduction in the District’s area resulting from annexations by the City of Santa Rosa.<sup>178</sup> However, the challenges faced by the Santa Rosa Fire Department as a whole may affect District services. According to the findings of the 2003-2004 Sonoma County Grand Jury, Santa Rosa fire service, including service provided to the Roseland FPD, is not meeting current demand. A recently passed sales tax measure mandates that the City of Santa Rosa expand its facilities, equipment inventory, and staff levels; these improvements will help the City of Santa Rosa to meet demand, both in its own service area and in the Roseland Fire Protection District. This measure and its effect on fire protection services in and around Santa Rosa are discussed further in the “Cities” chapter of this report.

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<sup>175</sup> Roseland Incident Summary by Incident Type, 1/1/2004 to 8/31/2004.

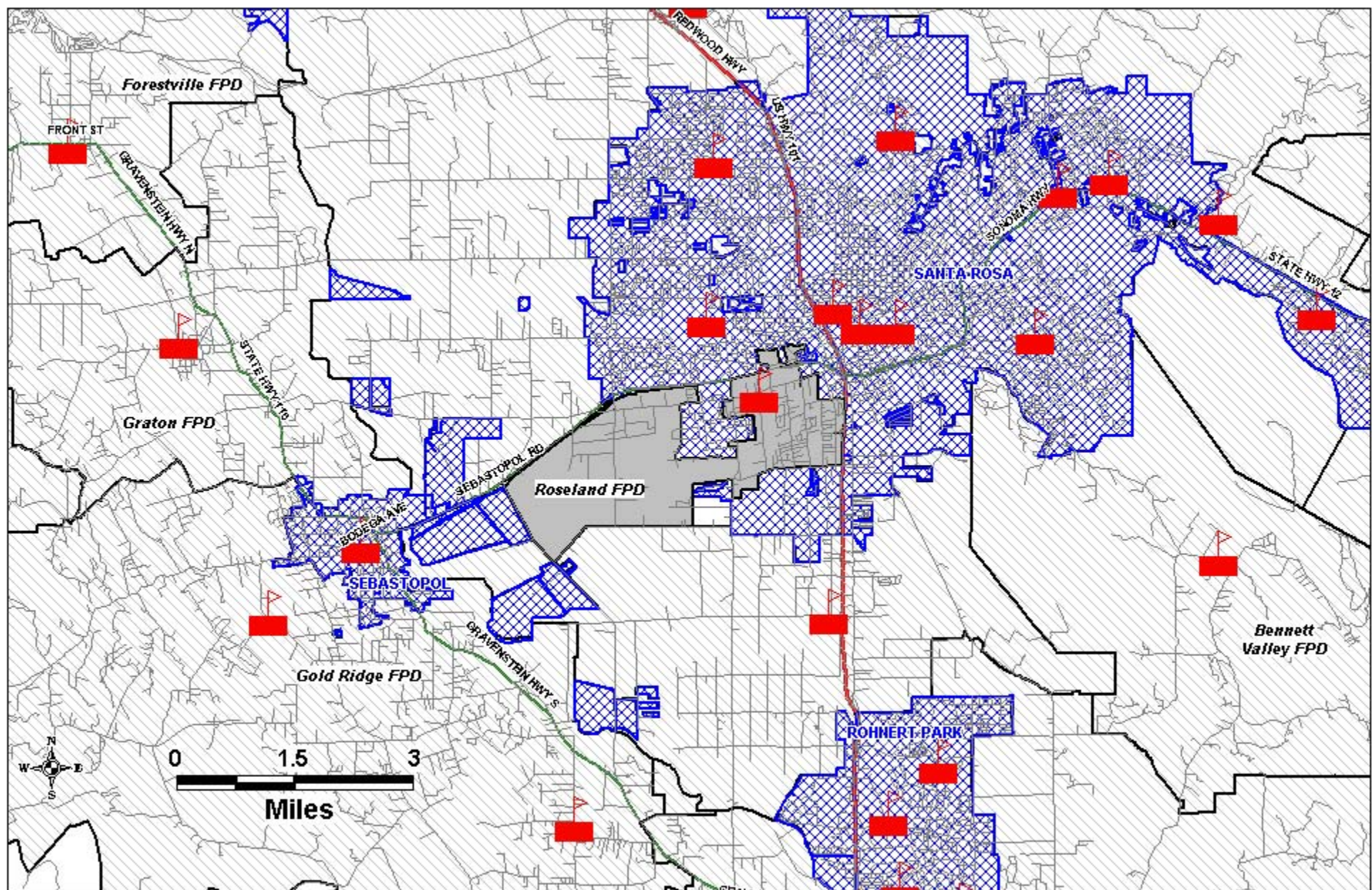
<sup>176</sup> Communication from Santa Rosa Fire Dept. Chief Bruce Varner, 10 Jan. 2005.

<sup>177</sup> Interview with Jackie Reese, Santa Rosa Fire Dept., 22 July 2004.

<sup>178</sup> Communication from Santa Rosa Fire Dept. Chief Bruce Varner, 10 Jan. 2005.



**Figure 14:  
Roseland Fire Protection District**





## RUSSIAN RIVER FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

The Russian River Fire Protection District (RRFPD) serves an area of 18 square miles, located in western Sonoma County between the Monte Rio and Forestville FPDs (see **Figure 15**). It serves a population that ranges from 5,000 in winter to 10,000 in summer. Until the late 1990s, it was known as Guerneville Fire Protection District. The name change came in anticipation of a consolidation with Forestville and Monte Rio (under the name Russian River FPD) and remained even after the consolidation effort fell through.<sup>179</sup>

The District faces staffing shortages that may compromise its level of service as demand increases.

## GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

RRFPD was formed in 1924. The District employs nine firefighters (including three paramedics) and one administrator. As of January 2005, RRFPD contracts with Bodega Bay FPD for a shared fire chief; in March 2005, RRFPD and BBFPD also agreed to share the chief's executive assistant for a minimum of six months. It has ten volunteer firefighters. The District is governed by a five-member Board of Directors, which meets the third Tuesday of every month at the main fire station. Meetings are open to the public.<sup>180</sup>

RRFPD currently has a total of \$293,000 in debt on capital improvements. It maintains \$105,000 in general reserves, an amount equal to just over 5 percent of its operating budget, with additional designated reserves in the following categories: \$51,000 for compensated absences, \$56,000 for construction loans, and \$143,000 for equipment. Its operating budget totals \$2.1 million.<sup>181</sup>

Revenues come from a combination of property taxes (approximately 38 percent of total revenues), fees for services, and a special tax.<sup>182</sup> The special tax has not been adjusted in 25 years and is set at a maximum of \$40 per unit. The District feels that this amount is too low under current circumstances, in particular the creation of a local redevelopment agency that has reduced the District's annual revenues by at least \$100,000 a year, relative to expected revenues. In order to compensate for this loss and cover increasing costs, the District plans to propose a measure to significantly increase the special tax. This proposal is not likely to appear on the ballot before late 2005 at the earliest.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Interview with RRFPD Chief Leo Leon, 12 Oct. 2004.

<sup>180</sup> Interview with Monte Rio FPD Chief Stephen Baxman (former Acting Chief of RRFPD), 27 July 2004.

<sup>181</sup> RRFPD Final Budget FY 04-05.

<sup>182</sup> Interview with Monte Rio FPD Chief Stephen Baxman (former Acting Chief of RRFPD), 27 July 2004.

<sup>183</sup> Personal communication from RRFPD Chief Sean Grinnell, 4 April 2005.

The District has automatic aid agreements with the neighboring districts of Forestville and Monte Rio, as well as a summertime mutual aid agreement with CDF. It currently rents a part of its Rio Nido station facility to the local post office.<sup>184</sup> This station also serves as a polling and community center.<sup>185</sup>

The District currently contracts with Bodega Bay FPD for its chief. In addition, an assistant to the chief is shared between the two districts, which are exploring additional opportunities for cooperation. In January 2005, the boards of directors of RRFPD, Bodega Bay FPD, and Monte Rio FPD voted to pursue possibilities relating to the consolidation of their districts. The districts continue to meet regarding the question of consolidation, but no further formal action has been taken at this time.

## INFRASTRUCTURE, FACILITIES, AND SERVICES

RRFPD's ISO rating is 4 with access to public water and 8 without access.<sup>186</sup> It responded to around 1,600 calls for service in 2003, with an average response time of five to five and a half minutes.<sup>187</sup>

The District maintains three buildings. Of these, the main station and an adjacent facility are located in Guerneville. A maintenance and storage facility that also serves as a polling center, community center, and post office annex is located in Rio Nido. According to the District, all three facilities need extensive remodeling. Currently, the District is focusing on the Rio Nido structure, with a proposal for a \$330,000, three-phase renovation plan. The first phase was approved in 2004 and received \$180,000 in funding from the Russian River Redevelopment Agency.<sup>188</sup>

RRFPD's equipment includes three ambulances, five other vehicles, and a boat.<sup>189</sup> The fire engines are relatively up-to-date, with the next scheduled replacement set for around 2010. According to the District, two of the three ambulances are generating extremely high maintenance costs and need to be replaced. The District Chief is looking for grants and alternative sources of funding to purchase at least one replacement.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Interview with Monte Rio FPD Chief Stephen Baxman (former Acting Chief of RRFPD), 27 July 2004.

<sup>185</sup> Interview with RRFPD Chief Leo Leon, 12 Oct. 2004.

<sup>186</sup> Interview with Monte Rio FPD Chief Stephen Baxman (former Acting Chief of RRFPD), 27 July 2004.

<sup>187</sup> Interview with RRFPD Chief Leo Leon, 12 Oct. 2004.

<sup>188</sup> Interview with RRFPD Chief Leo Leon, 12 Oct. 2004.

<sup>189</sup> LAFCO Request for Information, 2002.

<sup>190</sup> Interview with RRFPD Chief Leo Leon, 12 Oct. 2004.

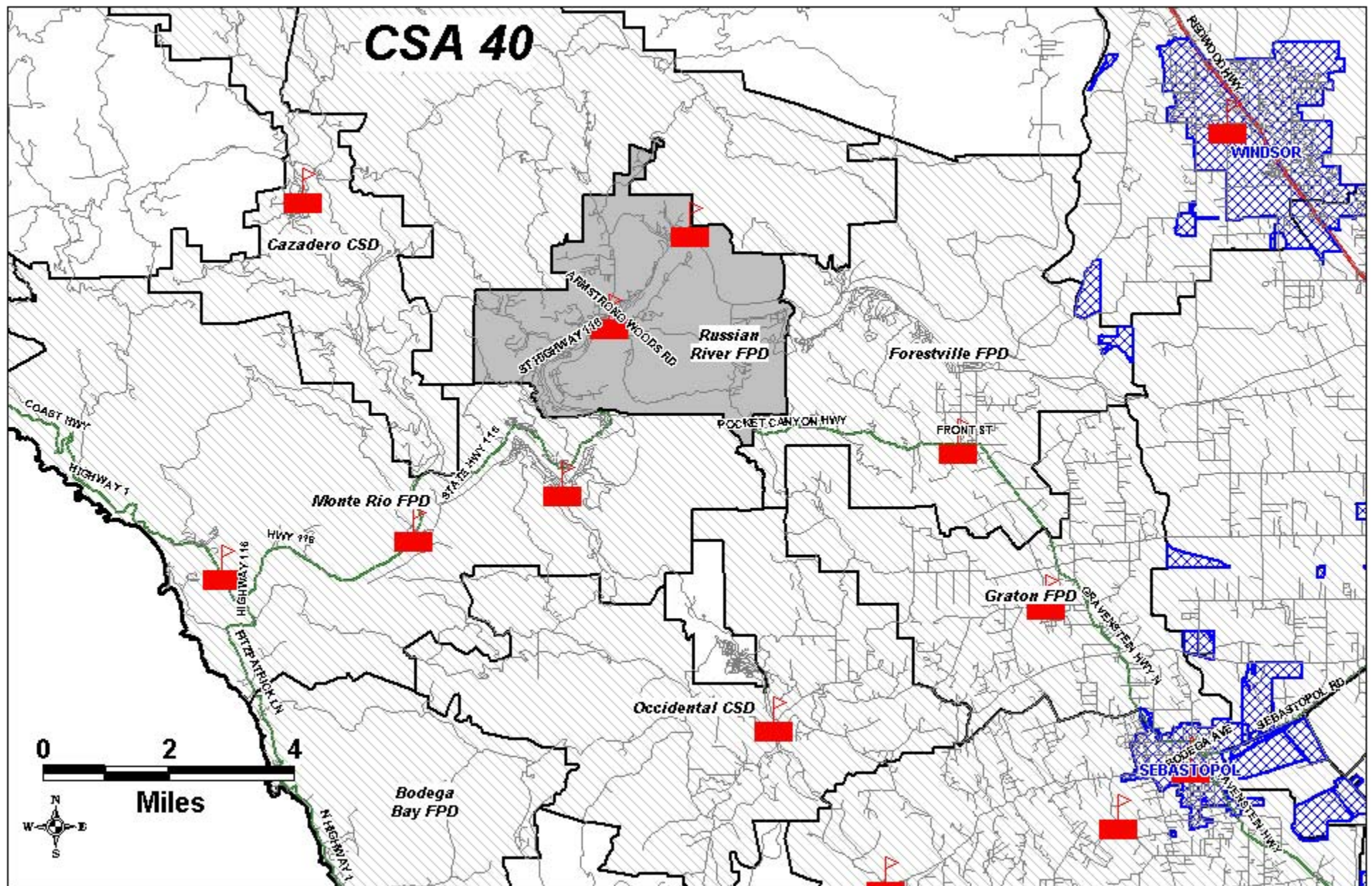
## FIRE PROTECTION DEMAND AND CAPACITY

Sonoma County PRMD projects that the population of the entire Russian River area will grow from 16,462 in 2000 to 18,960 in 2020, an average annual increase of 0.76 percent.<sup>191</sup> Similar to other districts that rely on volunteers, RRFPD faces challenges related to volunteer retention and daytime staffing. Although no major growth or expansion is anticipated within the District, these personnel issues may affect RRFPD's ability to meet future demand. The availability of sufficient funding for facilities and equipment maintenance may depend on the District's ability to increase its special tax or find new funding sources.

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<sup>191</sup> Sonoma County General Plan 2020, Overview Draft. <<http://www.sonoma-county.org/prmd/gp2020/draft1/index.htm>> Accessed 2 Nov. 2004.

**Figure 15:  
Russian River Fire Protection District**



## **SHELL VISTA FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT**

The Schell Vista Fire Protection District (SVFPD) covers an area of about 75 square miles in the southeastern corner of Sonoma County, adjacent to the City of Sonoma on the west and the County line on the east (see **Figure 16**). It provides services to approximately 5,000 people.<sup>192</sup>

The District maintains adequate reserves and believes that its staff and equipment are sufficient to meet projected demand.

### **GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS**

SVFPD was formed in 1955 and is empowered to provide fire protection and emergency response services. It is entirely volunteer-staffed by a chief, assistant chief, captain, two lieutenants, and 35 firefighters. The District is governed by a three-member Board of Directors, which holds public meetings the first Wednesday of each month.<sup>193</sup>

SVFPD has \$250,000 in debt on its three-year-old fire station. This debt will be paid out of operating funds. District reserves total about \$342,000, or 44 percent of the current operating budget of approximately \$783,000. The majority of SVFPD's revenue comes from property taxes, which account for around 91 percent of total revenues. The District also has a contract to provide service to adjacent areas of Napa County at the rate of \$55 per parcel. Additional funding comes from contracts for fire control service, both with the County and with private entities such as Sears Point Raceway. Other revenue sources include state grants for training and special equipment, which are not included in the operating budget.<sup>194</sup>

The District also receives funds from a Mello-Roos special tax (passed to pay for construction of the new station, completed in 2001). This tax is assessed at a maximum rate of \$44 per single-family unit; actual taxes have decreased as additional parcels are added to the District, resulting in lower per-parcel taxes each year. This funding goes directly to service the Mello-Roos Bonds and is not included in the operating budget.<sup>195</sup>

SVFPD participates in mutual aid agreements with neighboring districts and CDF. It does not have any other arrangements for shared staff or facilities.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Interview with Fred Unsworth, SVFPD Board of Directors, 27 July 2004.

<sup>193</sup> LAFCO Request for Information, 2002. Interview with Fred Unsworth, SVFPD Board of Directors, 27 July 2004.

<sup>194</sup> Interview with SVFPD Clerk Jeanne Williams, 26 Oct. 2004. Communication from SVFPD Clerk Jeanne Williams, 6 Jan. 2005.

<sup>195</sup> Multifamily properties pay corresponding multiples of \$44: \$88 for a duplex, \$132 for a triplex, etc.

<sup>196</sup> Interview with Fred Unsworth, SVFPD Board of Directors, 27 July 2004.



## INFRASTRUCTURE, FACILITIES, AND SERVICES

The District responds to between 400 and 500 calls for service each year.<sup>197</sup> It has an ISO rating of 5 within 1,000 feet of a fire hydrant and 8 outside of that range.<sup>198</sup>

SVFPD has two stations, one of which was built in 2001 and expanded last year. One of these stations is equipped with three vehicles, the other with six. The District states that it has sufficient funds to replace and upgrade equipment as needed.<sup>199</sup>

## FIRE PROTECTION DEMAND AND CAPACITY

According to Sonoma County PRMD predictions, population growth in the rural Sonoma Valley area (the unincorporated area outside the City of Sonoma USA) will average 0.71 percent annually between 2000 and 2020, as the population goes from 30,125 to 34,400.<sup>200</sup> How much this growth will affect SVFPD is unclear. The District has seen some growth in warehousing space on its outskirts, but this expansion has not increased call volume significantly. Gradual annexation by the City of Sonoma has led to small reductions in the District's service area. Overall, however, SVFPD does not anticipate major changes in the demand for fire protection services over the next five years. Revenue, facilities, and staff are adequate to meet projected demand.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> Interview with Fred Unsworth, SVFPD Board of Directors, 6 Oct. 2004.

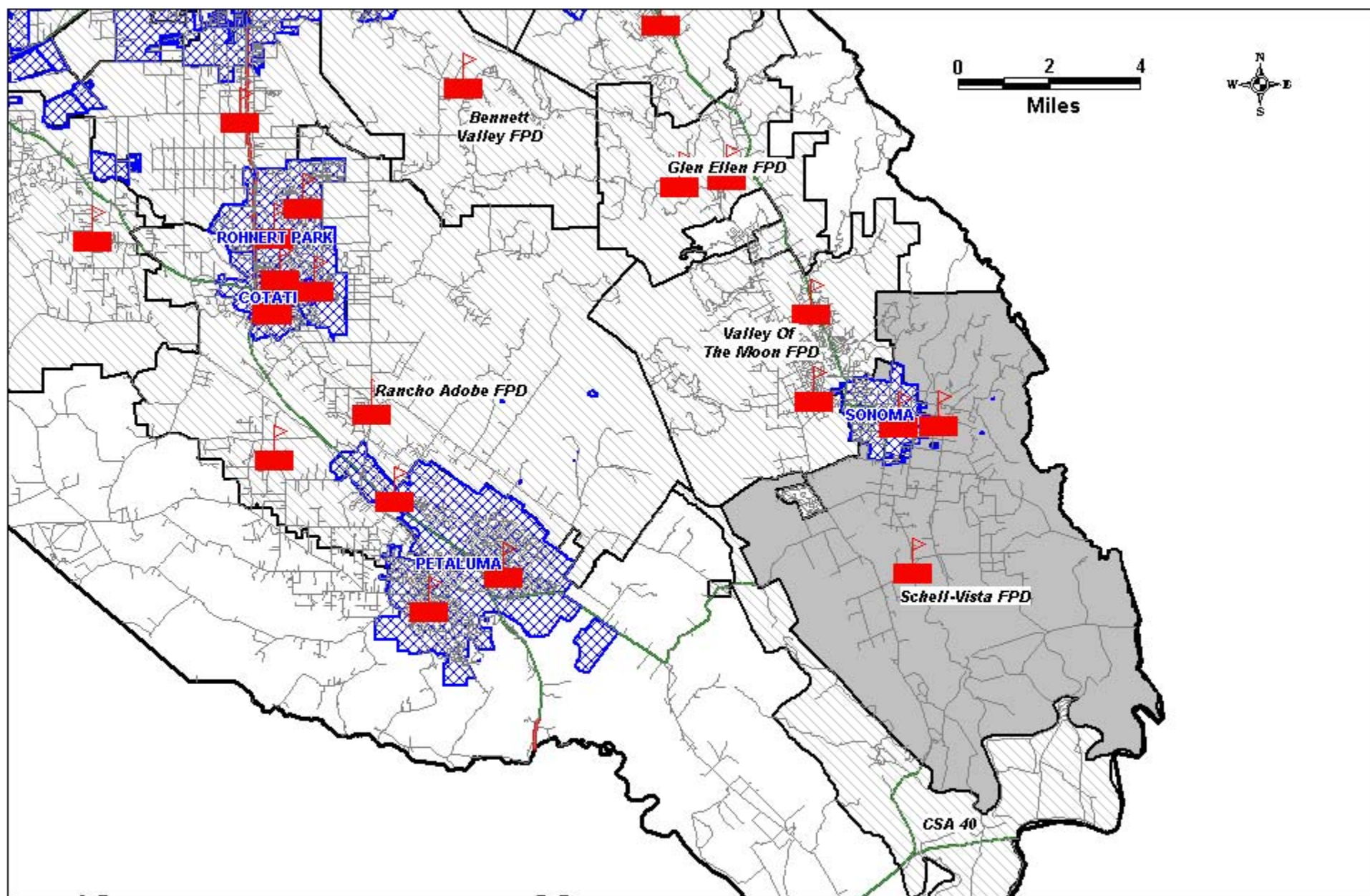
<sup>198</sup> Interview with SVFPD Clerk Jeanne Williams, 18 Nov. 2004.

<sup>199</sup> Interview with Fred Unsworth, SVFPD Board of Directors, 27 July 2004.

<sup>200</sup> Sonoma County General Plan 2020, Overview Draft. <<http://www.sonoma-county.org/prmd/gp2020/draft1/index.htm>> Accessed 2 Nov. 2004.

<sup>201</sup> Interview with Fred Unsworth, SVFPD Board of Directors, 27 July 2004.

**Figure 16:  
Schell Vista Fire Protection District**



## TIMBER COVE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

The Timber Cove Fire Protection District (TCFPD) provides services to approximately 500 residents in an area of 48 square miles, shown in **Figure 17**. The District is located along the coast in western Sonoma County.

While the District faces challenges relating to staff shortages and the purchase of special equipment, its reserves and relatively new equipment inventory appear adequate to meet growth in the near future.

## GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

TCFPD was formed in 1996. It is empowered to provide fire protection, emergency medical services, and non-transport rescue. TCFPD has no paid personnel; it relies on 24 volunteer firefighters and is governed by a three-member Board of Directors. It also contracts with the Sonoma County Department of Emergency Services for administrative services.<sup>202</sup> The Board meets the third Tuesday of every month. Meetings are open to the public. Information is also made available through a newsletter published by the District.<sup>203</sup>

The District's main revenue sources are property taxes and flat benefit assessment fees. Property taxes comprise around 72 percent of total revenues. In FY 04-05, the sale of an old engine and other miscellaneous funding (including approximately \$30,000 carried over from the previous fiscal year) brought the total operating budget to \$144,800.<sup>204</sup> The special tax is assessed at a rate of \$15 per unit of risk.<sup>205</sup> TCFPD currently has two major sources of debt: a 15-year, \$300,000 loan taken out to pay for construction of the District fire station in 1996, and a \$60,000 loan taken out to pay for the 2004 purchase of a new water tender. It maintains reserves in the amount of \$30,000 to \$40,000, or around 20 to 25 percent of its operating budget.<sup>206</sup>

The District has automatic aid arrangements with neighboring fire districts, community service districts, and volunteer fire companies, including Monte Rio FPD, Cazadero CSD, Sea Ranch VFC, Fort Ross VFC, and Annapolis VFC.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> Sonoma County Department of Emergency Services. Administration Division. <<http://www.sonoma-county.org/des/administ.htm>>

<sup>203</sup> LAFCO Request for Information, 2003. Interview with TCFPD Chief Michael Singer, 4 Aug. 2004.

<sup>204</sup> TCFPD Final Budget FY 04-05.

<sup>205</sup> A single-family residence is assigned five units of risk.

<sup>206</sup> Interview with TCFPD Chief Michael Singer, 4 Aug. 2004.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

## INFRASTRUCTURE, FACILITIES, AND SERVICES

The District has an ISO rating of 8b. Its call volume has ranged from 64 to 95 calls annually over the past six years.<sup>208</sup>

Its equipment and facilities comprise seven vehicles, miscellaneous rescue tools and apparatus, and a firehouse, located in Cazadero. The District needs a Type III Wildland engine and has unsuccessfully made three attempts to apply for FEMA grant money in order to purchase one. TCFPD has also applied for FEMA funding to pay for personal protection gear. Funding for these purchases is not available in the District's regular budget.<sup>209</sup>

## FIRE PROTECTION DEMAND AND CAPACITY

Sonoma County PRMD projections for the Sonoma Coast Planning Area (encompassing the length of the County's coast and extending as much as 15 miles inland) anticipate an increase of 3,283 between 2000 and 2020, or annual growth of nearly 2 percent.<sup>210</sup> TCFPD faces the staffing problems common to volunteer districts, and it has had difficulty finding adequate funding for special equipment. However, the District has relatively new equipment and makes an effort to maintain reserves to fund necessary replacements. TCFPD does not anticipate any changes in its boundaries or level of service over the next five years.<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> LAFCO Request for Information, 2003. Interviews with TCFPD Chief Michael Singer, 4 Aug. 2004 and 27 Sep. 2004.

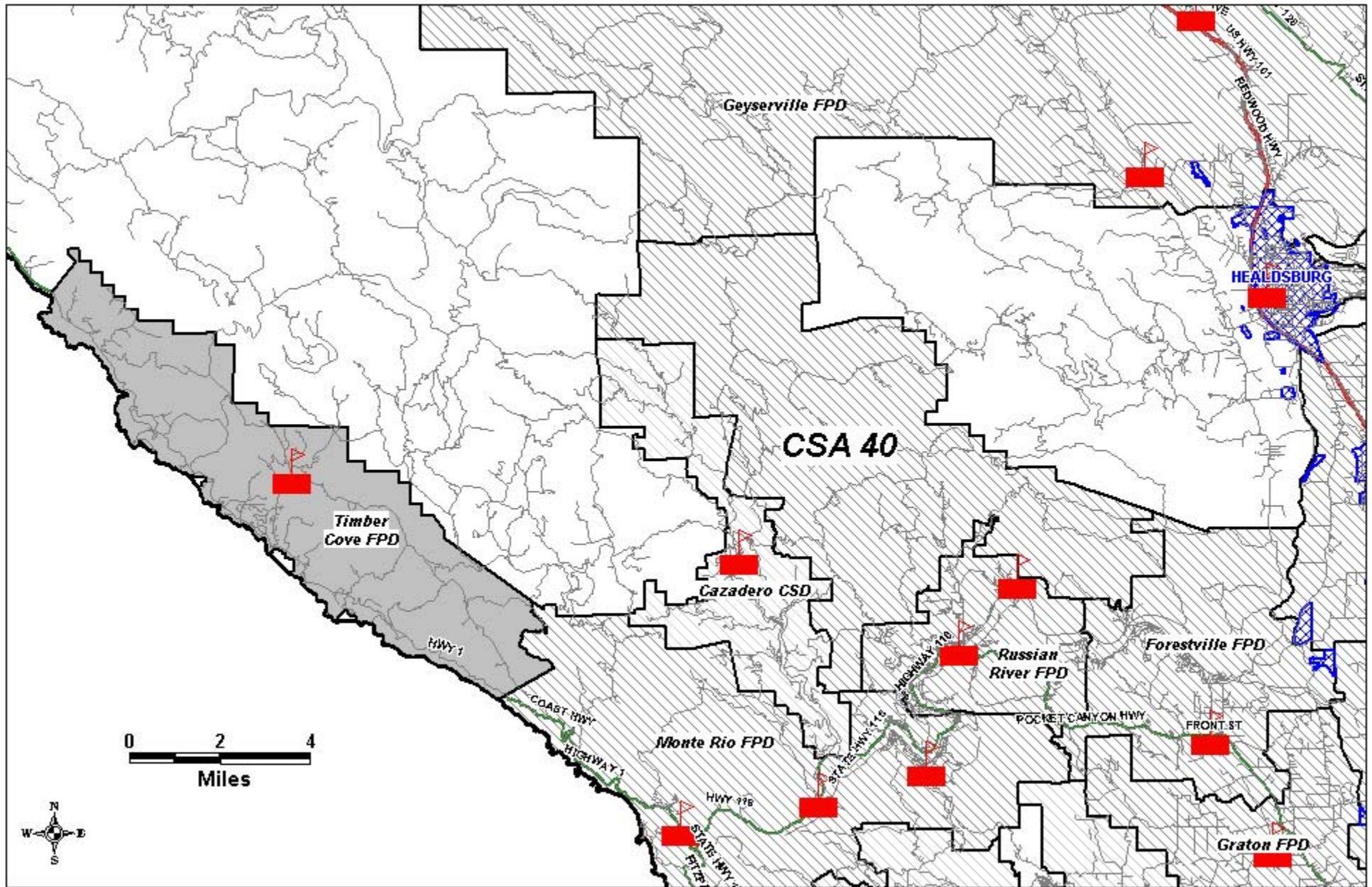
<sup>209</sup> Timber Cove FPD Fixed Assets, 1-24-02. Interview with TCFPD Chief Michael Singer, 4 Aug. 2004.

<sup>210</sup> Sonoma County General Plan 2020, Overview Draft. <<http://www.sonoma-county.org/prmd/gp2020/draft1/index.htm>> Accessed 2 Nov. 2004.

<sup>211</sup> Interview with TCFPD Chief Michael Singer, 4 Aug. 2004.



**Figure 17:  
Timber Cove Fire Protection District**





## VALLEY OF THE MOON FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

The Valley of the Moon Fire Protection District (VMFPD) covers an area of 28.5 square miles in southern Sonoma County, to the immediate northwest of the City of Sonoma (see **Figure 18**). It provides services to approximately 20,000 residents.

While the District does not anticipate any major growth within its service area, its low level of general reserves (under 5 percent) may make it financially vulnerable.

### GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

VMFPD was formed in 1926. It provides services that include fire suppression and prevention, emergency rescue, and emergency medical treatment. Its staff consists of 15 paid employees and 26 volunteer firefighters. It is governed by a five-member Board of Directors, which holds public meetings the second Tuesday of each month at the West Agua Caliente Road fire station.<sup>212</sup>

VMFPD has \$300,000 in debt on a recent engine purchase, to be paid back out of operating revenues on an annual basis. In FY 04-05 it established designated funds of \$195,383 for compensated absences (to pay for sick and vacation leave), \$818,056 for equipment replacement and capital lease equipment, and \$21,354 for general reserves. All designations can be utilized for dry period funding (between July and December). These funds are not restricted and may be used for purposes outside of their designated use.<sup>213</sup> General reserves amount to around 1 percent of the District's FY 04-05 \$2.7 million operating budget; overall reserves amount to around 38 percent. Funding for the District comes from property taxes and a special tax approved in November 2000, with some additional funds from state programs. The special tax is calculated at \$10 per unit of risk.<sup>214</sup>

VMFPD participates in automatic aid agreements with Sonoma County, under which it provides coverage for nearby CSA 40 Volunteer Fire Companies, and with the Glen Ellen Fire Protection District.

In January 2002, the VMFPD and City of Sonoma authorized execution of a joint powers agreement (JPA) for common management, administration and operational services, under the name of the Sonoma Valley Fire Rescue Authority. The two agencies are investigating a number of options relative to future sustainability and governance, including the potential for the JPA to become the official employer for both District and

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<sup>212</sup> LAFCO Request for Information, 2002. Interview with VMFPD Chief John F. Keane, 27 July 2004.

<sup>213</sup> Communication from VMFPD Chief John Keane, 29 Dec. 2004. Interview with VMFPD Chief John Keane, 14 Jan. 2005.

<sup>214</sup> Interviews with VMFPD Chief John F. Keane, 27 July 2004 and 27 Sep. 2004. Communication from VMFPD Chief John Keane, 29 Dec. 2004. VMFPD Final Object Account Detail FY 04-05. A single-family residence is assigned four units of risk.

Sonoma Fire Department personnel.<sup>215</sup> According to Sonoma Fire Department staff, under the new arrangement, existing equipment would remain the property of each agency; all new purchases would be made jointly and would belong to the JPA. Both agencies have experienced a number of advantages associated with the Sonoma Valley Fire Rescue Authority, including enhanced emergency and daily operations, standardized training programs, and District initiation of advanced life support (ALS) equipped engine companies. With the intent to leverage existing assets of the combined organizations to an increased level of efficiency, the District has entered into a separate contract with the City of Sonoma, independent of the JPA, for certain professional and technical services in the areas of finance, treasury, administration, and clerical functions.<sup>216</sup>

## INFRASTRUCTURE, FACILITIES, AND SERVICES

VMFPD's has an ISO rating of 3 in areas with public water access and within five miles of a fire station and a rating of 8 for properties that do not meet these criteria.<sup>217</sup> It responded to 1,647 calls for service last year.<sup>218</sup>

The District maintains three stations, two staffed with paid personnel and one strictly volunteer. Equipment includes four engines, one water tender, three command vehicles, and one utility vehicle. The District also houses and responds on statewide mutual aid with a State-owned Office of Emergency Services (OES) engine. Most of this equipment is stored at the most central of the District's three stations (Station 2 on Center Street); the Prospect Road station is all-volunteer and equipped with a single engine. Station 2 dates from the 1960s and is in need of renovation. VMFPD is exploring possible funding sources for this project, as well as dormitory and cohabitation improvements to the Agua Caliente Road station, through redevelopment funds and loans.<sup>219</sup>

## FIRE PROTECTION DEMAND AND CAPACITY

According to Sonoma County PRMD projections, population growth in the rural Sonoma Valley area (the unincorporated area outside the City of Sonoma USA) will average 0.71 percent annually between 2000 and 2020, as the population goes from 30,125 to 34,400.<sup>220</sup> The District does not anticipate that it will absorb a significant

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<sup>215</sup> Interview with VMFPD Chief John F. Keane, 27 July 2004. Communication from VMFPD Chief John Keane, 27 Dec. 2004.

<sup>216</sup> Interview with Sonoma Fire Dept. Assistant Chief Steve Marler, 6 Oct. 2004. Communication from VMFPD Chief John Keane, 27 Dec. 2004.

<sup>217</sup> LAFCO Request for Information, 2002. Interview with VMFPD Chief John F. Keane, 27 July 2004.

<sup>218</sup> Interview with VMFPD Chief John F. Keane, 30 Sep. 2004.

<sup>219</sup> Interview with VMFPD Chief John F. Keane, 27 July 2004. Communication from VMFPD Chief John Keane, 27 Dec. 2004.

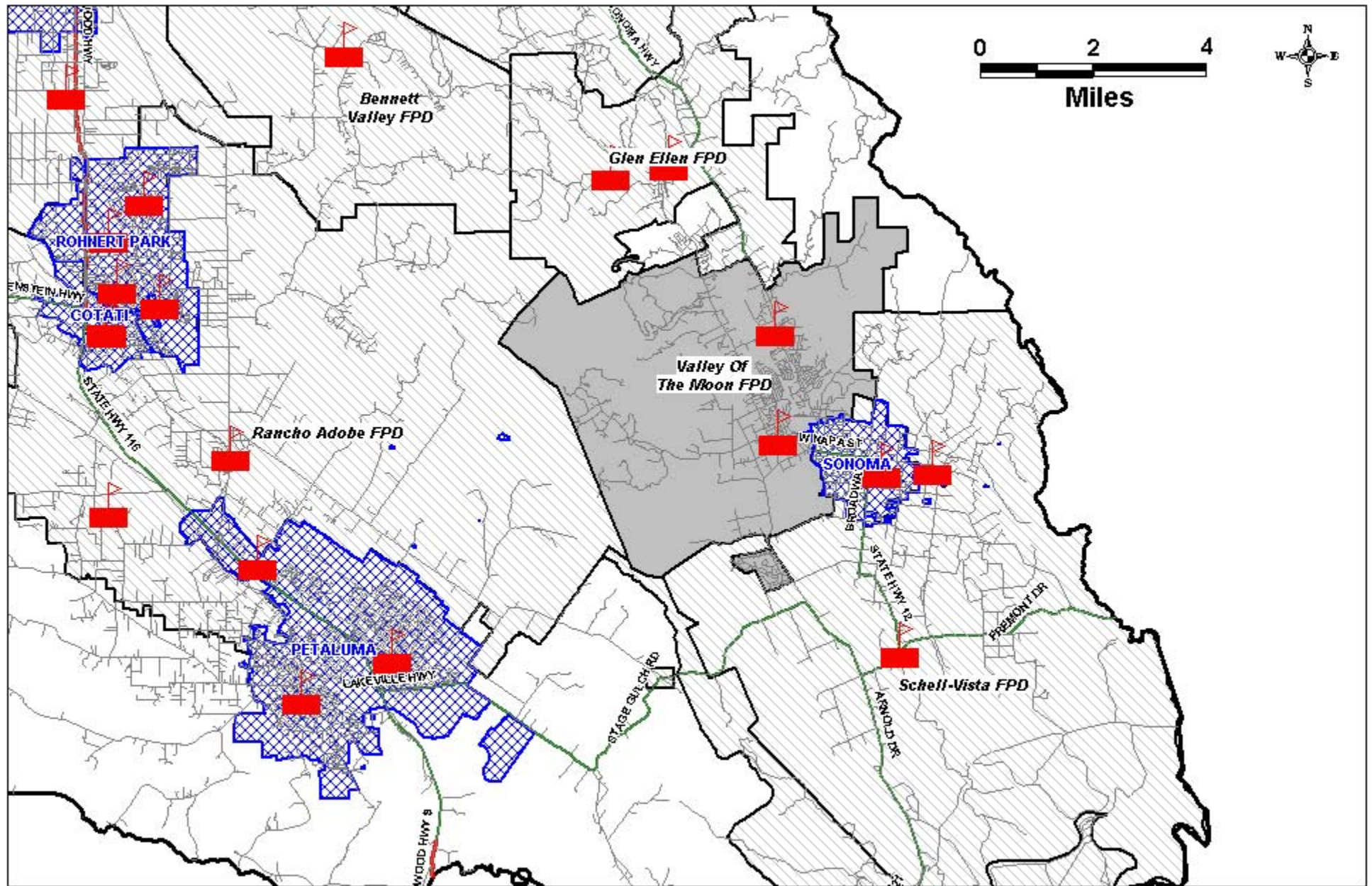
<sup>220</sup> Sonoma County General Plan 2020, Overview Draft. <<http://www.sonoma-county.org/prmd/gp2020/draft1/index.htm>> Accessed 2 Nov. 2004.

proportion of this growth. However, revenue losses due to ERAF (the state-mandated Educational Revenue Augmentation Fund) and local redevelopment fund allocations have placed new financial pressures on the District. Modifications of VMFPD's JPA with the City of Sonoma, such as the use of the Sonoma Valley Fire Rescue Authority JPA as the District's official employer, could further increase operational efficiencies and help cover the costs of future demand for services.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> Interview with VMFPD Chief John F. Keane, 27 July 2004.

**Figure 18:**  
**Valley of the Moon Fire Protection District**



## WINDSOR FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

The Windsor Fire Protection District (WFPD) provides service to 30,000 people in an area of 30 square miles centered on the Town of Windsor, shown in **Figure 19**. Approximately 24 square miles of the District lies outside the Town's boundaries.<sup>222</sup> Parts of the Town of Windsor are also served by the Rincon Valley Fire Protection District.

Due to insufficient funding, the District has had difficulty adapting its equipment and staff to the demands of rapid growth.

## GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

WFPD was formed in 1986. It is empowered to provide fire protection, rescue, emergency medical services, hazardous material response, and other services relating to the protection of lives and property. Its staff includes three full-time captains and three full-time firefighters, with one captain and one firefighter on duty each day. In addition, the District has 30 volunteers and 3 resident sleepers (unpaid firefighters who stay at the station and have assigned shifts). It is governed by a five-member elected Board of Directors, which holds public meetings the third Wednesday of each month. Additional information is made available to the public on the WFPD website and in the local press.<sup>223</sup>

The District is not currently carrying any debt. Its current operating budget is just under \$1.5 million. Its reserves include approximately \$670,000 in the general fund, or about 42 percent of the District's operating budget, as well as \$323,000 in the new station fund, \$375,000 in an equipment fund, and \$785,000 in reserves funded by mitigation fees. Mitigation fees must be used to cover capital costs and require that 10 percent of project funds come from an alternative source; the new station fund is intended to ensure that these alternative funds are available. However, both the new station fund and the equipment fund are designated for tracking purposes only, and may be dedicated to uses other than facilities and equipment, as necessary.<sup>224</sup> Altogether, these reserves are equal to 136 percent of the District's operating budget. Mitigation fees are collected through the Town of Windsor and are charged to developers based on how much demand for services new building is expected to generate. This fee revenue can be used exclusively for fixed assets. WFPD does not budget specifically for capital costs but instead relies on surplus funding carried over from year to year. As operations costs increase, the District may find it increasingly difficult to maintain adequate capital reserves.<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> Interview with WFPD Chief Ron Collier, 28 Sept. 2004.

<sup>223</sup> LAFCO Request for Information, 2002. Interview with WFPD Chief Ron Collier, 22 July 2004.

<sup>224</sup> Interview with WFPD Chief Ron Collier, 14 Jan. 2005.

<sup>225</sup> Interview with WFPD Chief Ron Collier, 28 Sept. 2004. WFPD Final Budget FY 04-05.



Around 50 percent of WFPD's funding is generated by property taxes. The District's remaining revenues come primarily from a special tax of \$45 per unit of risk.<sup>226</sup> The District already failed in its first attempt to increase this special tax, which was originally passed at the time of the District's formation; a measure on the November 2004 ballot attempted to raise the assessment to \$112 per unit of risk, or \$168 per single-family dwelling; this measure failed to get the two-thirds approval necessary to pass.<sup>227</sup>

The District has automatic aid agreements with Geyserville, Healdsburg, and Forestville. It works very closely with Rincon Valley FPD, sharing training, battalion chief duties, and emergency staff coverage.<sup>228</sup>

## INFRASTRUCTURE, FACILITIES, AND SERVICES

WFPD's ISO rating is 3 with access to water and 8 without. Areas with hydrants (i.e., Class 3 areas) are generally located in the Town of Windsor, which comprises approximately 20 percent of the District's total area. WFPD's average response time is four minutes within the Town. It responds to around 1,800 calls for service each year.<sup>229</sup>

Its equipment includes four fire engines, one pumper/tender engine, one light rescue vehicle, and four other vehicles. WFPD maintains two fire stations, only one of which is staffed. The unstaffed station was built in 1967, primarily for use as a garage. However, this station's location has grown increasingly important. The District is divided by a freeway and railroad tracks, with calls for service split evenly between its two sectors; in order to provide adequate response to both these sectors, the District needs to have equipment and staff distributed throughout its service area. The District had hoped to use its November 2004 special tax increase to pay for additional employees to staff its second station; given the failure of the special tax measure, funding to do so may not be available. In 1999, the District initiated plans to replace its unstaffed station, including arrangements for a property trade with the Town of Windsor. However, the project stalled due to lack of funds.<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> Windsor Fire Protection District Website. < <http://www.windsorfire.net/challenge.htm> > 13 July 2004. Interviews with WFPD Chief Ron Collier, 22 July 2004 and 28 Sept. 2004. One and a half units of risk are assigned to any single-family dwelling; one half unit is assigned to vacant land.

<sup>227</sup> Interviews with WFPD Chief Ron Collier, 22 July 2004 and 28 Sept. 2004. Election results updated 3 Nov. 2004.

<sup>228</sup> Interview with WFPD Chief Ron Collier, 22 July 2004.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> LAFCO Request for Information, 2002. Interviews with WFPD Chief Ron Collier, 22 July 2004 and 28 Sept. 2004.

## FIRE PROTECTION DEMAND AND CAPACITY

Windsor's population has expanded rapidly in recent years; between 1990 and 2003, the Town's population increased by over 100 percent, going from 12,000 to 25,000, while calls for WFPD services went from 1.4 to 4.4 per day.<sup>231</sup> The District has found itself unprepared to meet this increase in demand for fire protection services, particularly in terms of staffing. Two new staff positions were added in 1996, but none have been added since that time. According to the District, current staff levels are not adequate to meet demand.<sup>232</sup>

Growth is expected to slow in the near future. Sonoma County PRMD projects an average annual growth rate of around 1.7 percent (in the Town of Windsor and its USA) between 2000 and 2020, as the population increases from 22,744 to 30,300.<sup>233</sup> Projections for the unincorporated area outside the Windsor and Healdsburg USAs anticipate an increase of 7,556 during the same period, or annual growth of 0.88 percent.<sup>234</sup> (The District also encompasses portions of "rural Santa Rosa," the unincorporated area outside the Santa Rosa USA, where PRMD projects annual growth of 0.64 percent.<sup>235</sup>)

While these projected increases are small relative to past growth, the District is still dealing with the effects of the rapid growth that occurred during the 1990s. In addition, new challenges are presented by the specific type of growth currently occurring in Windsor. The town has a 486-acre redevelopment area, in which the most common style of new building is a three-story structure with commercial space on the bottom floor and residential on top. WFPD does not have the equipment or staff to respond to a fire in this type of structure; it has no aerial ladders, and it often lacks the four firefighters required to enter a burning structure under the "two in, two out" state policy.<sup>236</sup>

In recent years, the District's budget has been unable to accommodate these new demands for expanded staff and equipment. WFPD's special tax rate of \$68 per household has not changed since it was first passed in 1986 despite increases in operational expenses. The District reports that tax revenue from the Windsor Redevelopment Area, formed in 1984, is often extremely low, since all taxes on new assessed value (i.e., value acquired since the formation of the RDA) go to the redevelopment agency. According to the District, this results in a situation where the Fire District may receive almost no taxes on a property that requires full fire

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<sup>231</sup> Interview with WFPD Chief Ron Collier, 22 July 2004. Windsor Fire Protection District Website. <<http://www.windsorfire.net/challenge.htm>> 13 July 2004.

<sup>232</sup> Interviews with WFPD Chief Ron Collier, 22 July 2004 and 28 Sept. 2004.

<sup>233</sup> Sonoma County General Plan 2020, Overview Draft. <<http://www.sonoma-county.org/prmd/gp2020/draft1/index.htm>> Accessed 2 Nov. 2004.

<sup>234</sup> Sonoma County General Plan 2020, Overview Draft. <<http://www.sonoma-county.org/prmd/gp2020/draft1/index.htm>> Accessed 2 Nov. 2004.

<sup>235</sup> Sonoma County General Plan 2020, Overview Draft. <<http://www.sonoma-county.org/prmd/gp2020/draft1/index.htm>> Accessed 2 Nov. 2004.

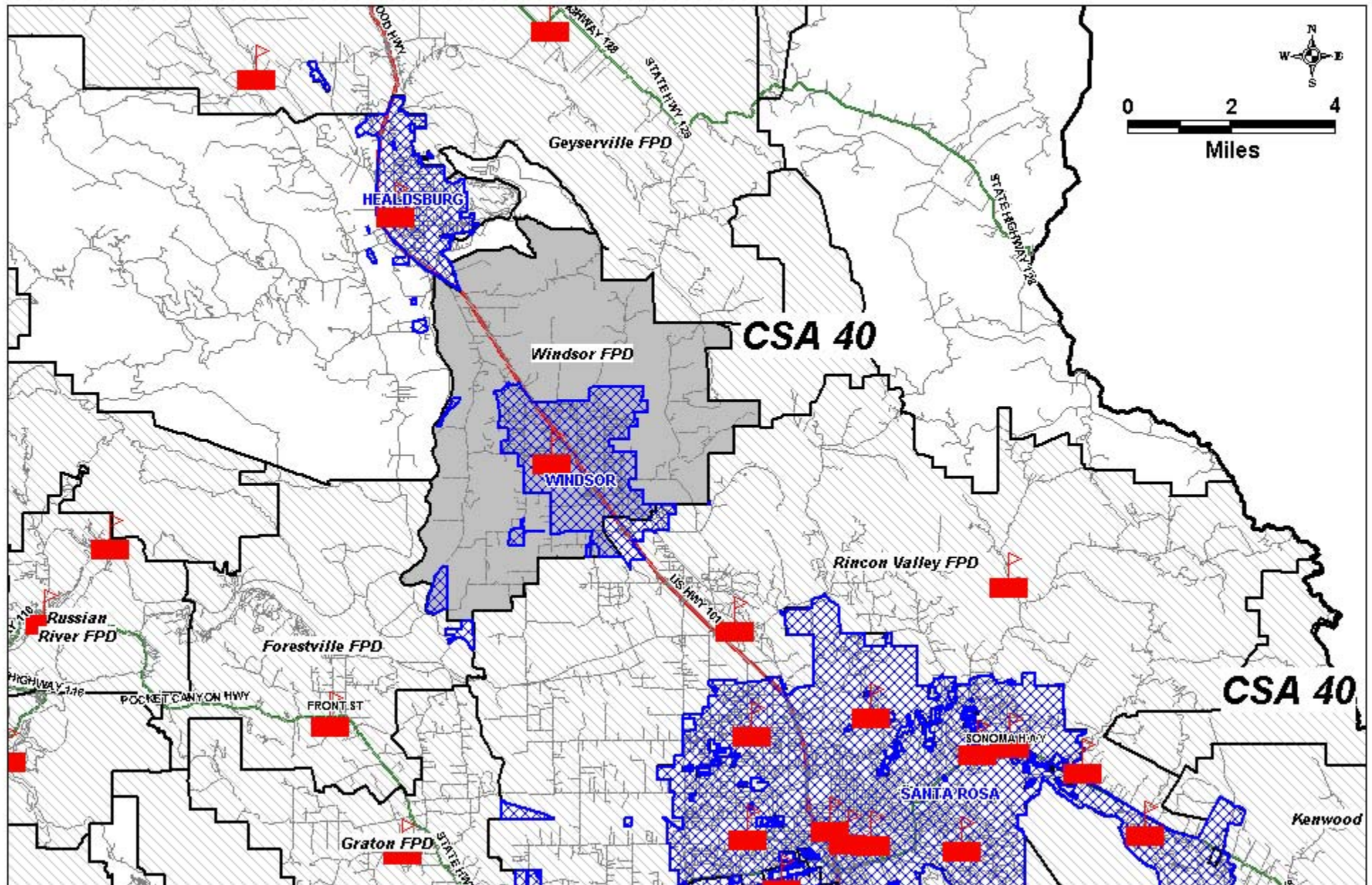
<sup>236</sup> Interview with WFPD Chief Ron Collier, 22 July 2004.

protection services. The November 2004 defeat of an attempted special tax increase suggests that the District may have difficulty securing funding to meet current and future demand.<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> LAFCO Request for Information. Interview with WFPD Chief Ron Collier, 22 July 2004.

**Figure 19:  
Windsor Fire Protection District**





## CAZADERO COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT

The Cazadero Community Services District (CCSD) was formed in 1964. It is empowered to provide fire protection, police protection, street lighting, and recreation services. Its service area encompasses 17.6 square miles and 1,500 residents in western Sonoma County (see **Figure 20**).<sup>238</sup>

Given that CCSD has relatively new equipment and maintains adequate reserves, it appears that the District will be able to meet demand in the near future.

### GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

CCSD was formed in 1964. It is empowered to provide fire protection, street lighting, and recreation services and is governed by a five-member Board of Directors, which meets the second Monday of each month at the main fire station. Its staff comprises 20 volunteer firefighters, including an unpaid chief, as well as a paid janitor and a paid manager who is responsible for the administration of all the District's services.<sup>239</sup>

The expenditure budget for the entire District is approximately \$130,000, 85 percent of which covers fire protection services. The District is paying off \$180,000 in debt on a recent engine purchase. It maintains reserves of around \$200,000. All funds come from a percentage of property tax; the District does not levy any special taxes.<sup>240</sup>

The District participates in REDCOM, through which it provides reciprocal support to adjacent jurisdictions such as Russian River and Monte Rio Fire Protection Districts and Occidental Community Services District. CDF responds to calls within State Responsibility Areas of the District.<sup>241</sup>

### INFRASTRUCTURE, FACILITIES, AND SERVICES

CCSD has an ISO rating of 8. It responds to around 110 calls per year.<sup>242</sup>

The Cazadero CSD has two fire stations, one located downtown and the other located at the southern end of the District. These stations were built in 1969 and 1975, respectively, and are described by the District as adequate to meet demand. CCSD's equipment includes five engines and a rescue truck. Two thirty-year-old engines were replaced in 2003 – 2004, bringing the equipment inventory up to date.<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>238</sup> LAFCO Request for Information, 2002.

<sup>239</sup> Interview with District Manager Phil Mohrhardt, 6 Oct. 2004.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid.



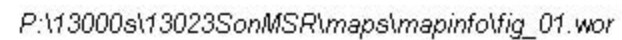
## FIRE PROTECTION DEMAND AND CAPACITY

The District falls primarily within the Sonoma Coast Planning Area, where PRMD projects a population increase of 3,283 between 2000 and 2020, or annual growth of nearly 2 percent.<sup>244</sup> The District does not anticipate major growth within its service area. Given that CCSD has relatively new equipment and maintains adequate reserves, it appears that the District will be able to meet demand in the near future.

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<sup>244</sup> Sonoma County General Plan 2020, Overview Draft. <<http://www.sonoma-county.org/prmd/gp2020/draft1/index.htm>> Accessed 2 Nov. 2004.

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## OCCIDENTAL COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT

The Occidental Community Services District (OCSD) serves an area of 25 square miles centered on the unincorporated town of Occidental, west of Sebastopol (see **Figure 21**). It has an estimated population of around 5,000 residents.<sup>245</sup>

OCSD faces the staffing problems common to many volunteer districts. It may become necessary to add paid staff positions in the future; some portion of new personnel costs could be covered by an increase in the District's special tax, which is currently set below its maximum voter-approved rate.

### GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

Occidental CSD was formed in the mid-1960s to provide fire, water, and landscaping and lighting services. Its fire protection staff consists of 24 volunteers, including an unpaid chief. An administrative clerk is shared by the entire District; the fire division pays a third of this clerk's salary.<sup>246</sup> OCSD is governed by a five-member Board of Directors, which meets the second Tuesday of each month. Meetings are open to the public, with agendas posted at the firehouse and the local hardware store.<sup>247</sup>

District revenues come from a combination of property taxes and a parcel tax that is calculated based on units of risk.<sup>248</sup> This tax has a voter-approved maximum of \$20 per unit; it is currently set at \$12 per unit. The District's FY 03-04 operating budget for fire protection services was approximately \$189,000, with general reserves of \$38,000, equal to around 20 percent of operating expenditures.<sup>249</sup>

The District participates in automatic aid through Sonoma County REDCOM and has interdistrict aid agreements with neighboring jurisdictions, including Graton FPD, Gold Ridge FPD, Bodega Bay FPD, and Monte Rio FPD.<sup>250</sup> Within five years, it is anticipated that Occidental and Camp Meeker will form a JPA or new Community Services District to provide consolidated water service. According to the District, however, the fire branch would not be affected by such an agreement; there has been no formal discussion of consolidating fire protection services.<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> Interview with OCSD Engineer John Gonnella, 22 Oct. 2004.

<sup>246</sup> Interview with OCSD Chief Ron Lunardi, 9 Nov. 2004.

<sup>247</sup> Interview with OCSD Engineer John Gonnella, 22 Oct. 2004.

<sup>248</sup> There are four units of risk assigned to a single-family dwelling.

<sup>249</sup> Occidental Community Services District Final Budget, FY 2003/2004.

<sup>250</sup> Interview with OCSD Engineer John Gonnella, 22 Oct. 2004.

<sup>251</sup> Interview with OCSD Chief Ron Lunardi, 9 Nov. 2004.

## INFRASTRUCTURE, FACILITIES, AND SERVICES

OCSD's fire division has ISO ratings of 6 with access to public water and 8 without access. The division anticipates that its town ISO rating could improve as a result of a water infrastructure project that would install a new hydrant system in downtown Occidental over the next one to two years. The District responded to 231 calls for service in 2003.<sup>252</sup>

The District has one station, located in the town of Occidental. This station is scheduled for renovation in spring 2005; remodeling plans include improvements to the existing building and the addition of new meeting rooms and offices for other branches of the CSD. OCSD's fire protection equipment includes two engines, a water tender, two brush trucks, and a rescue unit. Among the District's recent purchases are a water tender, bought in 1998, and a new engine, bought in 2004. According to the District, this equipment is adequate to meet current demand; a 20-year capital replacement plan ensures that equipment is kept up to date.<sup>253</sup>

## FIRE PROTECTION DEMAND AND CAPACITY

The District falls primarily within the Sonoma Coast Planning Area, where PRMD projects a population increase of 3,283 between 2000 and 2020, or annual growth of nearly 2 percent.<sup>254</sup> However, county zoning restrictions have limited growth within the District's boundaries to around 10 to 15 new houses per year. While such restrictions prevent major increases in the demand for service, they also limit the revenues generated for the District. This effect is mitigated by the area's high turnover in home sales, which means that home values are frequently reassessed, resulting in increased property tax revenues. While these revenues have allowed the OCSD to keep its special tax below the allowable maximum, if home sales slow in the future, the District could experience a significant reduction in revenue growth. The District also faces the daytime staffing challenges encountered by many volunteer fire protection agencies. If the District's call volume increases, it may become necessary to hire paid personnel.<sup>255</sup> Raising its special tax may allow the District to cover some cost increases.

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<sup>252</sup> Interview with OCSD Chief Ron Lunardi, 9 Nov. 2004.

<sup>253</sup> Interview with OCSD Engineer John Gonnella, 22 Oct. 2004. Interview with OCSD Chief Ron Lunardi, 9 Nov. 2004.

<sup>254</sup> Sonoma County General Plan 2020, Overview Draft. <<http://www.sonoma-county.org/prmd/gp2020/draft1/index.htm>> Accessed 2 Nov. 2004.

<sup>255</sup> Interview with OCSD Chief Ron Lunardi, 9 Nov. 2004.



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## V. CITY FIRE DEPARTMENTS

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### HEALDSBURG

The Healdsburg Fire Department provides fire protection services to the City of Healdsburg's 11,600 residents, in an area of 3.68 square miles, shown in **Figure 22**.

Recent growth and annexations have increased the Department's staffing and facilities needs. New fire prevention efforts and the November 2004 passage of a measure that permits the City Council to dedicate 2 percent of the Transient Occupancy tax toward public safety may help the Department meet the demands of growth.

### GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

The Healdsburg Fire Department is responsible for fire suppression, fire prevention, emergency medical services, hazardous materials response, disaster planning and preparedness, and public safety education. Its paid staff includes a chief, three fire captains, three fire engineers, and a part-time clerical assistant. The position of fire marshal is vacant as of April 2005. The Department is also supported by 35 volunteers.<sup>256</sup>

The Department's budget for FY 04-05 was \$1.35 million, with funding coming primarily from the City's General Fund.<sup>257</sup> Other funding sources include two contracts with the County under which the Healdsburg Fire Department provides protection for unincorporated areas in CSA 40. These contracts, known as "Soyotome" and "Fitch Mountain," generate around \$80,000 and \$28,000 per year, respectively.<sup>258</sup> The Fire Department also receives some funding from the City's Water, Sewer, Electric, and Meeting Center Enterprise funds.<sup>259</sup> A portion of the Transient Occupancy Tax increase passed in November 2004 can be dedicated to fire protection services with City Council approval.

The Fire Department participates in the protection of a mutual threat zone along its northern and eastern borders.<sup>260</sup> The Department shares responsibility for this zone with the Geyserville Fire Protection District, CSA 40 and CDF during fire season.<sup>261</sup> It also shares emergency medical response duties with a private ambulance company.<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>256</sup> Interview with Healdsburg Fire Dept. Chief Randy Collins, 5 Oct. 2004.

<sup>257</sup> City of Healdsburg Operating Budget FY 2004/2005, 91.

<sup>258</sup> Interview with Healdsburg Fire Dept. Chief Randy Collins, 5 Oct. 2004.

<sup>259</sup> City of Healdsburg Operating Budget FY 2004/2005, 91.

<sup>260</sup> A "mutual threat zone" is defined as an area between two or more jurisdictions into which those agencies respond on initial attack. (National Wildfire Coordinating Group, *NWCG Glossary of Wildland Fire Terminology*, <<http://www.nwcg.gov/teams/pmo/products/wfglossary/m.htm>>)

<sup>261</sup> Communication from Healdsburg Fire Dept. Chief Randy Collins, 22 April 2005.

<sup>262</sup> Healdsburg Draft General Plan Update Background Report, 2002.

<[http://www.ci.healdsburg.ca.us/dept\\_planning/index.html](http://www.ci.healdsburg.ca.us/dept_planning/index.html)>. Interview with Healdsburg Fire Dept. Chief Randy Collins, 5 Oct. 2004.

## INFRASTRUCTURE, FACILITIES, AND SERVICES

The Healdsburg Fire Department responded to 1,423 calls for service in 2004. It maintains an ISO rating of 4.<sup>263</sup>

Department equipment includes five engines, a ladder truck, a rescue trailer, and a multi-casualty incident vehicle. A replacement schedule aims to replace each piece of equipment every 20 years. The Department's current inventory is fairly new, with the oldest piece of equipment dating to 1988 and the newest to 2001. Funding for equipment purchases generally comes from a capital replacement fund designated as part of the annual budget. The multi-casualty incident vehicle was purchased using an Indian Benefit Gaming Grant, which the Department won based on its proximity to the River Rock Casino.<sup>264</sup> The Department also participated in, and received a share of confined space and rescue equipment as part of a County Domestic Preparedness Grant and hopes to secure FEMA funding to cover additional special equipment costs.<sup>265</sup>

The Department is currently reevaluating its replacement schedule. It is also working toward lowering its base fire flow of 3,500 gallons per minute (GPM), as established by ISO. This base represents ISO's estimate of the amount of water that a department requires to put out a fire. It is determined by factors such as the construction type, use, and surroundings of the City's largest buildings. In order to meet its base fire flow standard, the Department must maintain the equipment described above; decreasing its base fire flow would allow the Department to reduce its inventory of fire engines and refocus its resources on the wildland fire threat. Programs intended to further this goal include a fire sprinkler loan program through which the City makes loans to ISO-identified high-risk buildings to retrofit their sprinkler systems. Such retrofitting can result in re-rating by ISO and a lower base fire flow.<sup>266</sup>

The Healdsburg Fire Station, at the intersection of Healdsburg Avenue and Grant Street, was constructed in 1992. The 2002 Draft General Plan Update predicted that development and annexation in the northern part of the City's Urban Services Area, currently served by Geyserville Fire Protection District, would necessitate construction of a northern substation. Flammable vegetation and narrow streets may put these areas at particular fire risk. However, funding for the construction of a new station is not available at this time.<sup>267</sup>

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<sup>263</sup> Interview with Healdsburg Fire Dept. Chief Randy Collins, 5 Oct. 2004. Communication from Healdsburg Fire Dept. Chief Randy Collins, 12 Jan. 2005.

<sup>264</sup> Interview with Healdsburg Fire Dept. Chief Randy Collins, 5 Oct. 2004.

<sup>265</sup> Communication from Healdsburg Fire Dept. Chief Randy Collins, 22 April 2005.

<sup>266</sup> Interviews with Healdsburg Fire Dept. Chief Randy Collins, 5 Oct. 2004 and 13 Jan. 2005.

<sup>267</sup> Healdsburg Draft General Plan Update Background Report, 2002.

<[http://www.ci.healdsburg.ca.us/dept\\_planning/index.html](http://www.ci.healdsburg.ca.us/dept_planning/index.html)>. Interview with Healdsburg Fire Dept. Chief Randy Collins, 5 Oct. 2004.

## DEMAND AND CAPACITY

The Healdsburg Fire Department's level of staffing has not increased since the early 1970s, in spite of significant population growth. Call volume in 2002 had already exceeded levels predicted for 2015 by a 1989 Facility Option Report. Staffing levels have not increased since the 1970s, despite significant population growth. According to the Healdsburg Draft General Plan Update, the 2000 population of 10,722 is expected to increase to 12,894 at buildout; assuming 20-year buildout, this represents annual growth of just over 1 percent. (The City's planning department does not project a specific buildout date.) In addition, much of the new growth in Healdsburg is occurring in areas more than 1.5 miles from the existing fire station (the distance recommended by ISO). Further annexation and growth will contribute to these problems.

The Department's future goals include expanding the use of volunteers, including providing subsidized housing.<sup>268</sup> The Department also hopes to explore ways to restore the Fire Marshal's position (currently unfunded) and add a full-time Training Officer's position to better fulfill increasing training requirements.<sup>269</sup> Measure Q, which will permit the City Council to increase Healdsburg's Transient Occupancy Tax and put the proceeds toward public safety, passed in November 2004 and may contribute to the Department's ability to meet growing costs.<sup>270</sup>

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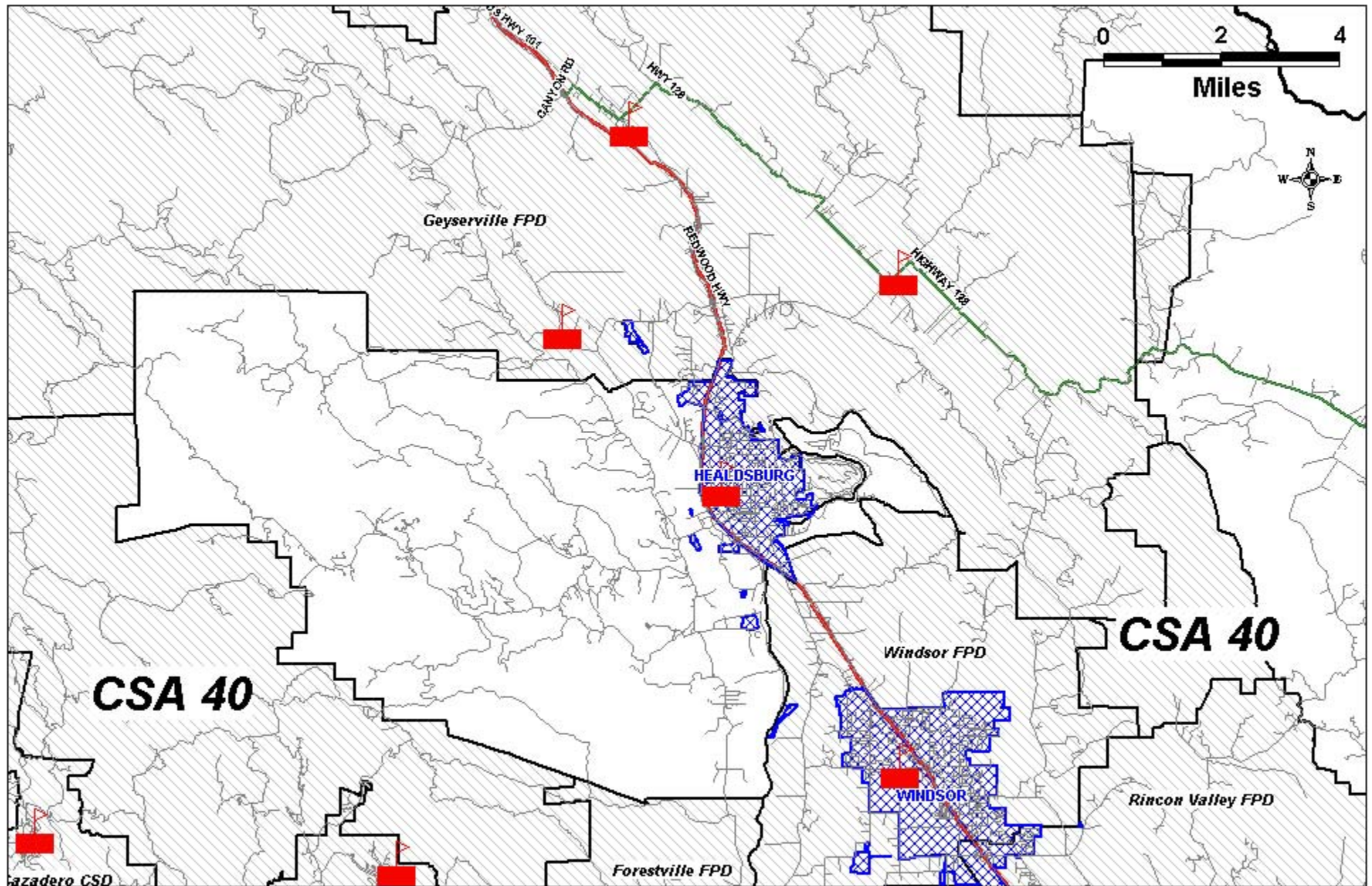
<sup>268</sup> Healdsburg Draft General Plan Update Background Report, 2002.

<[http://www.ci.healdsburg.ca.us/dept\\_planning/index.html](http://www.ci.healdsburg.ca.us/dept_planning/index.html)>. Communication from Healdsburg Fire Dept. Chief Randy Collins, 12 Jan. 2005.

<sup>269</sup> City of Healdsburg Operating Budget FY 2004/2005, 89.

<sup>270</sup> Interview with Healdsburg Fire Dept. Chief Randy Collins, 5 Oct. 2004.

**Figure 22:  
City of Healdsburg**





## PETALUMA

The Petaluma Fire Department provides services to the City of Petaluma and an additional portion of southern Sonoma County, shown in **Figure 23**. Together, these areas cover 160 square miles with a population of approximately 70,000 people.

The Department has faced significant increases in population and call volume in recent years; however, creating additional staff positions and planning for new facilities have prepared the Department to meet current and future demand.

## GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

The Petaluma Fire Department is responsible for providing fire, rescue, and emergency medical services, as well as safety-related public education. It has 57 employees, of whom 51 are divided among 3 platoons that work 24-hour rotating shifts. Minimum staffing for each shift is 15.<sup>271</sup>

Total operating expenditures budgeted for FY 04-05 were \$8.89 million, with over 50 percent going toward salaries and benefits. The Department's ambulance service operates as an enterprise fund and pays for 9.8 firefighters and a dispatcher. Ambulance service fees were increased in May 2004.<sup>272</sup> The City's total General Fund reserves amount to \$3.4 million.<sup>273</sup>

In FY 02-03, the Department established automatic aid agreements with the Rancho Adobe Fire Protection District and with three volunteer fire companies organized under County Services Area #40 – San Antonio VFC, Wildemar VFC, and Lakeville VFC.<sup>274</sup>

## INFRASTRUCTURE, FACILITIES, AND SERVICES

Petaluma Fire Department's overall ISO rating is 3 (on a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being the best), which places it in the top 20 percent of the over 1,500 California cities reviewed by ISO.<sup>275</sup> The Department has a target response time of five minutes (including one minute in "turn-out time," i.e., the time required for firefighters to put on appropriate gear), which is achieved 90 percent of the time. It responded to 4,761 calls in 2003.<sup>276</sup>

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<sup>271</sup> Interview with Petaluma Fire Dept. Chief Chris Albertson, 30 Sept. 2004.

<sup>272</sup> City of Petaluma, Adopted Budget FY 2004/2005, OP-90. Interview with Petaluma Fire Dept. Chief Chris Albertson, 1 Oct. 2004. Ambulance fees for Petaluma residents are currently set at \$500 for Basic Life Support, \$150 for Non-transport Basic Life Support, and \$14.50 per mile of transport. (City of Petaluma Website, Fire Department, EMS, <<http://cityofpetaluma.net/fire/ems.html>>.)

<sup>273</sup> City of Petaluma, Adopted Budget FY 2004/2005, S-4.

<sup>274</sup> City of Petaluma, Adopted Budget FY 2003/2004, OP-75.

<sup>275</sup> City of Petaluma, Adopted Budget FY 2003 – 2004, OP-84. Petaluma General Plan 2025, Health and Safety Report, <<http://cityofpetaluma.net/genplan/pdf/13healthsafety10-11rs.pdf>>.

<sup>276</sup> Interview with Petaluma Fire Dept. Chief Chris Albertson, 1 Oct. 2004.



The Department staffs three paramedic engines, one ladder truck, and two advanced life-support ambulances. It took delivery of a new ambulance in April 2003, and will acquire a new engine in December 2004. It also hopes to replace its 22-year-old Brush Rig in the near future; however, an attempt to fund this purchase through a FEMA grant was not successful.<sup>277</sup>

The Department has a fire prevention office and three stations (one of which serves as a training facility). In late 2004, the Petaluma City Council accepted a gift of property at 307 Petaluma Boulevard. This property will be used for the construction of a new fire station and headquarters to replace the current main station, which is 66 years old. The Department anticipates breaking ground by 2006 or 2007.<sup>278</sup>

The Department's other two stations are both in need of renovation. Like the existing main station, Station 2 (at McDowell and Corona) and Station 3 (on South McDowell) both lack facilities for staff of both genders. Station 2 also requires expansion in order to accommodate an ambulance. All three stations are being reviewed for facility updating and modernizations. Development impact fees might be used to pay for the necessary modifications, which the Department estimates will cost around half a million dollars for each station.<sup>279</sup>

While there has been some discussion of building a fourth station to serve expanding areas of the City, the Department's chief feels that Petaluma's urban growth boundary (UGB) places limits on growth such that this addition is unnecessary. The chief suggests that adding staff positions and building the new station to accommodate an extra crew would be a more effective means of improving services.<sup>280</sup>

The Department's objectives for FY 04-05 placed special emphasis on meeting targeted budget amounts by reducing overtime expenditures by \$500,000. In order to reach this goal, the Department plans to aggressively recruit new firefighters and monitor scheduled and unscheduled personnel leaves, training, and special projects.<sup>281</sup>

## DEMAND AND CAPACITY

ABAG projects that Petaluma's population will increase at an annual rate of approximately 0.8 percent, going from 54,549 in 2000 to 63,200 in 2020.<sup>282</sup> Calls for service, however, have outpaced population growth in recent years. The Department responded to 4,761 calls for service in 2003. This represents an increase of 88 percent since 1994. According to the Department, Petaluma's population increased by

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<sup>277</sup> City of Petaluma Website, Fire Department, <<http://cityofpetaluma.net/fire/index.html>>. City of Petaluma, Adopted Budget FY 2003 – 2004, OP-75. Interview with Petaluma Fire Dept. Chief Chris Albertson, 1 Oct. 2004.

<sup>278</sup> Interview with Petaluma Fire Dept. Chief Chris Albertson, 1 Oct. 2004.

<sup>279</sup> Interview with Petaluma Fire Dept. Chief Chris Albertson, 1 Oct. 2004.

<sup>280</sup> Interview with Petaluma Fire Dept. Chief Chris Albertson, 1 Oct. 2004.

<sup>281</sup> City of Petaluma, Adopted Budget FY 2004/2005, OP-90.

<sup>282</sup> ABAG Projections, 2003.

approximately 20 percent during the same period; the Fire Chief attributes the discrepancy to residents' increasing tendency to call 9-1-1 in non-emergency situations. In addition, costs have increased in recent years due to rising salaries and benefits.<sup>283</sup> However, the Department has maintained a high ISO rating, and recently added three new positions in order to decrease overtime and meet increased demand.<sup>284</sup>

In 2004, the Petaluma Fire Department completed a Standards of Coverage Study in order to evaluate whether Department facilities, apparatus, and staff are distributed for maximum efficiency. The study found that the Department's stations were well-located. The Health and Safety Report completed by the City in preparation for the revision of its General Plan notes that residents outside the Fire Department's target response time radius may be encouraged to use fire-resistant building materials and landscaping techniques in order to mitigate for slow response.<sup>285</sup>

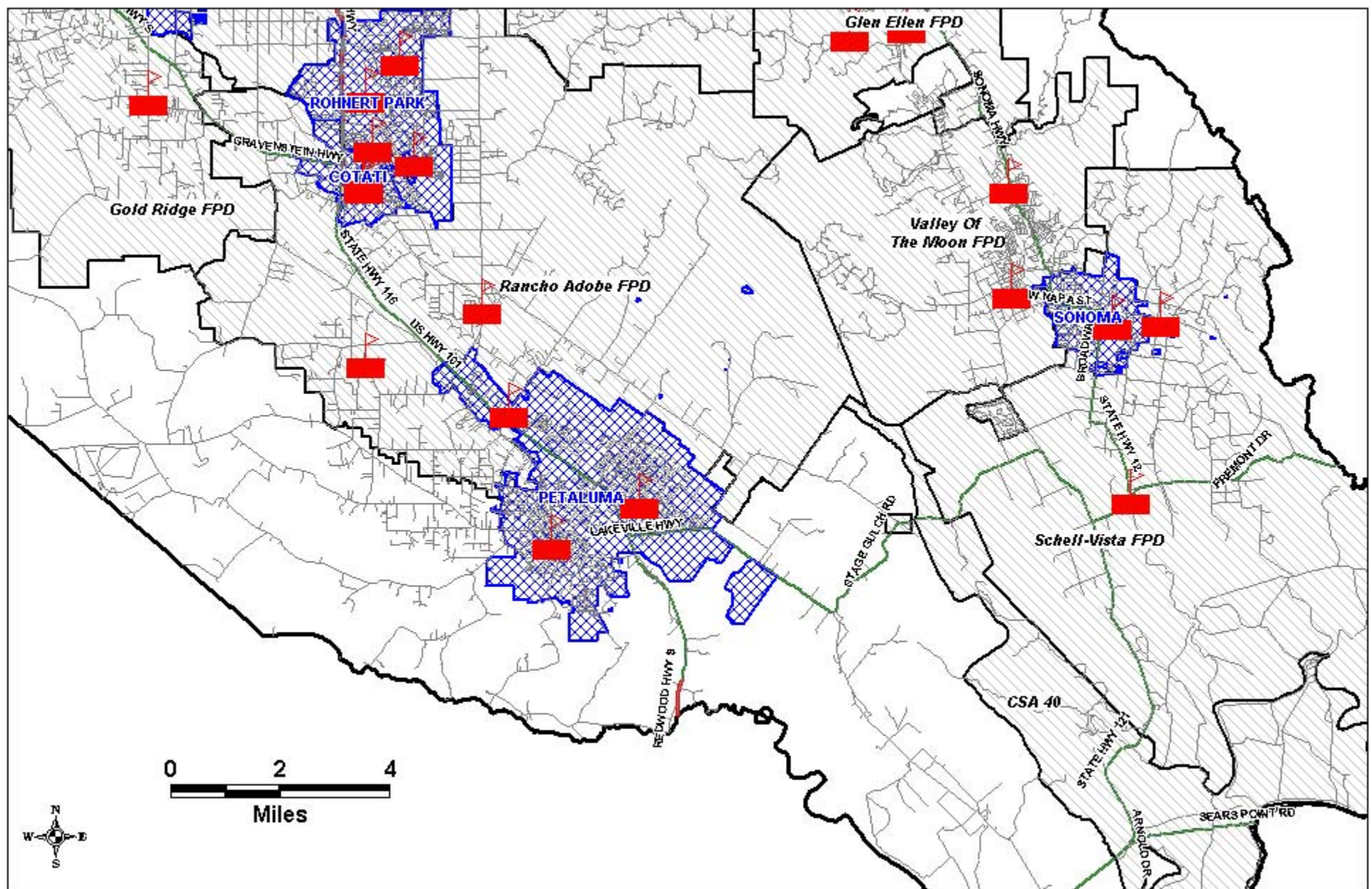
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<sup>283</sup> City of Petaluma, Adopted Budget FY 2003/2004, OP-75.

<sup>284</sup> Interview with Petaluma Fire Dept. Chief Chris Albertson, 1 Oct. 2004.

<sup>285</sup> Petaluma General Plan 2025, Health and Safety Report,  
<<http://cityofpetaluma.net/genplan/pdf/13healthsafety10-11rs.pdf>>.

**Figure 23:  
City of Petaluma**



## ROHNERT PARK

The Fire Services division of the City's Department of Public Safety provides fire protection in Rohnert Park. The agency serves an area of 7 square miles, shown in **Figure 24**, with a population of approximately 42,000.

Department resources appear adequate to meet the current need for fire protection services. However, a number of major development projects are expected to significantly increase future demand for facilities and services. The City's Public Facilities Financing Plan addresses the continued provision of necessary services in expansion areas.

## GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

Rohnert Park has approximately 74 Public Safety Officers trained in police and fire duties with additional training in BLS (Basic Life Support) and the use of defibrillators. Some officers are EMTs and two are paramedics. The City also has six volunteer firefighters trained for only fire suppression. Sixteen officers are assigned primarily to the fire services division, including a lieutenant, 2 Sergeants, 12 Public Safety Officers, and 1 Community Services Officer. Administrative support is shared by the entire Public Safety Agency.<sup>286</sup>

In addition to providing fire suppression and medical services, personnel assigned to the fire division are responsible for performing required fire prevention services. These services include plan review and approval, site inspections, and public education.<sup>287</sup>

Total Public Safety Department expenditures budgeted for FY 04-05 were \$15.6 million. Excluding items relating exclusively to police protection and animal control results in a total of \$13.8 million; however, this still includes figures for salaries and facilities maintenance that include both fire and police costs.<sup>288</sup> The City of Rohnert Park has a fire assessment tax of about \$24 per single-family residence, subject to annual increase based on the Consumer Price Index. This tax currently generates \$430,000 per year and pays for 4 out of 16 authorized fire division positions.<sup>289</sup>

Total General Fund reserves are estimated at \$2.8 million (10 percent of net General Fund expenditures) as of June 2004.<sup>290</sup>

The Department has automatic aid agreements with Rancho Adobe and Rincon Valley Fire Protection Districts.<sup>291</sup>

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<sup>286</sup> Rohnert Park web site, <<http://www.ci.rohnert-park.ca.us/publicsafety/contact.cfm>>

<sup>287</sup> Personal communication from Lt. Dave Frazer, 3 May 2005.

<sup>288</sup> City of Rohnert Park, Approved Budget FY 2004/2005, 17.

<sup>289</sup> Personal communication from Lt. Dave Frazer, 3 May 2005.

<sup>290</sup> City of Rohnert Park, Approved Budget FY 2004/2005, 12.

<sup>291</sup> Interview with Rohnert Park Community Services Officer George Brannen, 1 Oct. 2004.



## INFRASTRUCTURE, FACILITIES, AND SERVICES

The Fire division of the Department of Public Safety has an ISO rating of 4 and an average response time of three minutes to the scene. It responds to approximately 2,200 calls per year, primarily medical emergencies.<sup>292</sup>

Rohnert Park Fire Department supports four fire stations, two of which are staffed full-time. Station One, at 500 City Hall Drive, serves as department headquarters. Personnel in this building, who are normally assigned to other responsibilities, staff a fire engine when an emergency occurs. Station Two, at 5200 Country Club Drive, is a fully-staffed station, as is Station Four, at 1316 Maurice Avenue. Station Three (435 Southwest Boulevard) is an “on-call” unstaffed station that responds with off-duty personnel and members of the City’s volunteer contingent.<sup>293</sup>

The Station Three facility was the City’s first public safety headquarters and is more than 35 years old. Because it does not meet current earthquake standards, it will never be staffed. At this time, there are not plans to upgrade or replace this facility.<sup>294</sup>

Station Four, at 1316 Maurice Avenue, houses a single Type I engine and crew. The station was initially built and donated by Condiotti Enterprises when they built the majority of the houses in that part of the community. The structure is a converted single-family residence. Given the residential style of the structure and the small size of the lot it is built on, expansion to house additional apparatus and personnel is not likely to be cost-effective.<sup>295</sup>

The Department’s equipment includes a breathing air compressor unit, five fire engines, and one truck, which are distributed among its four stations. A replacement engine is currently being built for the Department; engines are rotated approximately every 20 years.<sup>296</sup> According to Department staff, Department equipment is generally adequate but often does not incorporate the latest technology. The Department has applied for government grants that will allow it to upgrade its breathing apparatus and other equipment.<sup>297</sup>

Currently, all of the City’s fire stations and suppression equipment are located on the east side of U.S. 101. Only two routes offer access to the west side of the City, and heavy traffic flow during peak commute hours and weekends significantly increases response time to that area. Commercial and residential projects planned for the west side of Rohnert Park are expected to contribute to the demand for services. To meet this increased need for fire protection service, fire division staff has determined that an

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<sup>292</sup> Ibid.

<sup>293</sup> Rohnert Park web site, accessed 8/19/04.

<sup>294</sup> Personal communication from Lt. Dave Frazer, 3 May 2005.

<sup>295</sup> Personal communication from Lt. Dave Frazer, 3 May 2005.

<sup>296</sup> Interview with Rohnert Park Community Services Officer George Brannen, 1 Oct. 2004.

<sup>297</sup> Interview with Rohnert Park Community Services Officer George Brannen, 9 Nov. 2004.



additional staffed Public Safety fire station and training facility, equipped with a ladder truck, must be built on the west side of the City. Efforts to identify an acceptable parcel of land for this facility are ongoing.<sup>298</sup>

## DEMAND AND CAPACITY

According to the Rohnert Park General Plan, the City's population is expected to increase at an average annual rate of 1 percent between 1999 and 2020, with an increase of 9,400 bringing total population to 50,400 at buildout.<sup>299</sup>

A number of planned and ongoing development projects are expected to significantly increase future demand for services in the Rohnert Park area. Among these projects is an Indian casino and resort hotel proposed in the unincorporated area along the City's western border, outside Rohnert Park's Sphere of Influence and within the Rincon Valley Fire Protection District. An MOU with the tribe has been signed by Rohnert Park to mitigate fiscal impacts to the City, including impacts on fire and law enforcement services within the city limits of Rohnert Park. The City has not engaged in any discussions regarding the provision of city services to the tribe.<sup>300</sup> All mitigation funds are contingent on the casino's actually being built; an EIR is currently being completed for the project.<sup>301</sup>

Other development on the City's west side includes the Northwest Specific Plan area, with up to 900 housing units and 40 to 50 acres of commercial land; the Stadium Master Plan area, with 168 housing units and commercial acreage; and the Wilfred/Dowdell Specific Plan Area, with up to 300,000 square feet of commercial space.<sup>302</sup> An additional staffed Public Safety fire station and training facility is proposed for this area (west of U.S. 101). Public Safety has previously identified the need for a fire station on the west side of U.S. 101 due to development over the past five years. The addition of this station is necessary to offer the community adequate and timely fire protection. Presently, fire engines are unable to meet the three-minute response time from either of the City's fully-staffed stations due to traffic congestion.<sup>303</sup> Mitigation funds resulting from the casino MOU will be used to pay for construction, equipment, and staffing of the new facility.<sup>304</sup> The developers of new projects will also be asked to pay Public Safety impact fees.<sup>305</sup>

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<sup>298</sup> Personal communication from Lt. Dave Frazer, 3 May 2005.

<sup>299</sup> City of Rohnert Park General Plan, Land Use Element, 2-26, <<http://www.rpcity.org/cityhall/generalplan.cfm>>

<sup>300</sup> Interim City Manager Steve Donley, Letter to Carole Cooper, 5 July 2005.

<sup>301</sup> Personal communication from Lt. Dave Frazer, 16 May 2005.

<sup>302</sup> Interim City Manager Steve Donley, Letter to Carole Cooper, 5 July 2005.

<sup>303</sup> Personal communication from Lt. Dave Frazer, 16 May 2005.

<sup>304</sup> Personal communication from Lt. Dave Frazer, 3 May 2005.

<sup>305</sup> Personal communication from Lt. Dave Frazer, 16 May 2005.

Sonoma State University is located on the City's eastern border. Fire protection is provided to the University by the Rancho Adobe Fire Protection District; under an automatic aid agreement with the District, the Rohnert Park Department of Public Safety provides services to the University when requested. Demand for City services may be significantly affected by development associated with the University. Currently, Sonoma State is building a 1,400-seat concert hall and music complex (with additional lawn seating for 7,000). In addition, the University Specific Plan calls for the construction of up to 1,610 housing units and a maximum of 250,000 square feet of commercial space. The phasing of residential units in the University District is governed by the City's Growth Management Ordinance and the City has yet to determine the allocation of housing unit developments within the Specific Plans. The property to be developed is in the City's SOI and will be annexed before development begins. The Department of Public Safety will provide both police and fire protection. Construction is slated to begin in 2006.<sup>306</sup>

In addition to the development planned in the University Specific Plan, the Northeast Specific Plan Area (to the north of the University District) has proposed up to 1,063 units, while the Southeast Specific Plan Area (south of Canon Manor) proposes 499 units.<sup>307</sup> Department of Public Safety staff has identified the need for an additional fire station to provide service to the growing community on the City's east side. However, no plans have been made for a fire station or additional personnel in this area.<sup>308</sup>

Codding Enterprises has purchased the 200-acre former Agilent facility located on the City's southern border and is planning a mixed-use development of business, residences, live-work units, and retail. A number of multi-story, mixed-use in-fill projects are also underway in Rohnert Park.

The City's General Plan requires that new development "pay its own way" and that the City uphold or improve current levels of services as development takes place. In response to this requirement, the City prepared a Public Facilities Financing Plan (PFFP) that includes a chapter on the "Funding Strategy for Maintenance and Services." This chapter speaks to the continued provision of necessary services, including police and fire, in the expansion areas of the City, and recommends the use of a Maintenance Annuity Fund (MAF) of \$7,400 per new residential unit to accomplish this.<sup>309</sup>

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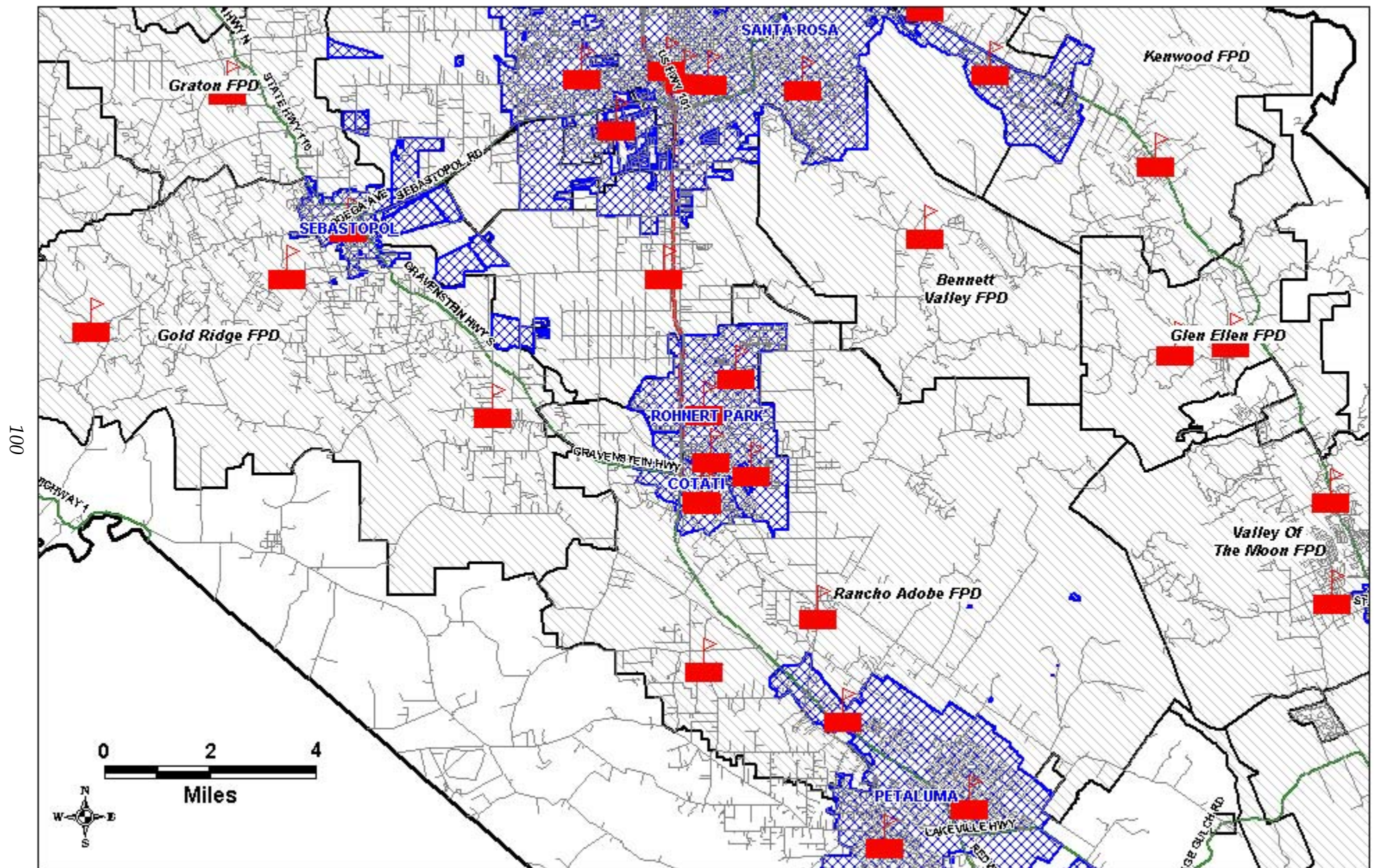
<sup>306</sup> Personal communication from Lt. Dave Frazer, 3 May 2005.

<sup>307</sup> Interim City Manager Steve Donley, Letter to Carole Cooper, 5 July 2005.

<sup>308</sup> Personal communication from Lt. Dave Frazer, 3 May 2005.

<sup>309</sup> Interim City Manager Steve Donley, Letter to Carole Cooper, 5 July 2005.

**Figure 24:**  
**City of Rohnert Park**





## SANTA ROSA

The Santa Rosa Fire Department serves the City of Santa Rosa, which has a population of 152,900 in an area of 45 square miles (see **Figure 25**). It also provides service under contract to Roseland Fire Protection District, which covers a total of 2.78 square miles in unincorporated islands throughout southwest Santa Rosa and has a population of 5,200 people.

Inadequate facilities, aging equipment, and insufficient funding have made it difficult for the Department to maintain a high level of service in recent years. These challenges were reflected in the findings of the 2004 Sonoma County Grand Jury. Development impact fees and a new sales tax, a portion of which will be dedicated to fire protection, will help fund necessary improvements, allowing the Department to better meet current and future demand.

### GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

The Santa Rosa Fire Department responds to medical emergencies, physical entrapments, fires, and releases of hazardous materials. It has three divisions, each with its own staff: Administration (five staff members, including the Chief), Operations (128 firefighters, including a Deputy Fire Chief, Battalion Chiefs, and Fire Captains), and the Fire Prevention Bureau (a Fire Marshal, five Fire Inspectors, a Fire Protection Engineer, and a Hazardous Materials Program Manager).<sup>310</sup>

In FY 04-05, \$21.0 million in expenditures were budgeted for the Fire Department as part of the City's General Fund. This included almost \$600,000 for the Capital Improvement Program, which will contribute to fire station construction and improvements in the City's Southwest and Kawana Springs areas. The Fire Department also receives fees for service that cover the costs of specific programs such as hazardous materials inspection and training facility maintenance.<sup>311</sup> The City's Administrative Services Department projects that General Fund reserves will be \$22.0 million as of June 2005.<sup>312</sup>

The Department cooperates with a number of other fire protection agencies. Santa Rosa's Fire Training Center is used by many local groups, including the California Specialized Training Institute, the State Fire Marshal's Office, CDF, various Sonoma County fire agencies, Engineering Contractors Associates (ECA), and Santa Rosa Junior College. In exchange for the use of the Training Center and Training Tower, the Santa Rosa Fire Department receives tuition for certified programs at the Specialized Training Institute, contractual fees, and other benefits. It also has automatic aid agreements with Rincon Valley, Kenwood, and Bennett Valley Fire Protection Districts and with CDF.

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<sup>310</sup> City of Santa Rosa Website, Fire Department, <<http://ci.santa-rosa.ca.us/default.aspx?PageId=1113>>

<sup>311</sup> Interview with Santa Rosa Fire Dept. Deputy Chief Bart Lewis, 6 Oct. 2004. City of Santa Rosa Budget, 2004/2005, 62.

<sup>312</sup> Communication from Santa Rosa Fire Dept. Chief Bruce Varner, 11 Jan. 2005. (Information provided by Bill Mushallo, Financial Planning Manager for the City of Santa Rosa, 10 Jan. 2005.)

Rincon Valley FPD, CDF, and the Santa Rosa Fire Department participate in a three-way mutual threat zone agreement under which all three agencies respond to fires in the wildland/ urban interface in and around the City of Santa Rosa.<sup>313</sup> This agreement is being revised to formally include Kenwood and Bennett Valley Fire Protection Districts.<sup>314</sup>

The Department contracts to provide all staff, services, and equipment for Roseland Fire Protection District (RFPD).<sup>315</sup>

## INFRASTRUCTURE, FACILITIES, AND SERVICES

The Santa Rosa Fire Department responded to 16,970 calls in 2003, a 4 percent increase over the previous year and 66 percent increase over the last ten years.<sup>316</sup> It maintains eight fire stations, the newest of which was constructed in 1982.<sup>317</sup> These stations are located throughout Santa Rosa and Roseland Fire Protection District and all are staffed 24 hours per day. The Department staffs nine engines, each with a captain, an engineer, and a firefighter, and two additional ladder trucks, each with a captain, two engineers, and a firefighter. The Santa Rosa Fire Department is also assigned a state-owned fire engine by the Governor's Office of Emergency Services. This engine serves as a reserve engine for the Department. In exchange, the Department staffs the engine and sends it, when called upon, to major emergencies throughout the state.<sup>318</sup> Other equipment includes a hazardous materials unit, a technical rescue unit, two four-wheel-drive brush fire units, a water tender, two reserve engines, and one reserve truck.<sup>319</sup>

An apparatus replacement program began in FY 01-02 with the replacement of a fire engine, a ladder truck, a water tender, and a hazardous material response vehicle.<sup>320</sup> This program has since been discontinued due to budget cuts. In 2003, the Department sold two reserve engines after cannibalizing them for equipment to update front-line engines. According to the Department, the remaining two reserve engines are being overused. In addition, two deteriorating front-line engines should be downgraded to reserve engines and replaced. Prior to November 2004, this situation was approaching a critical point; the Department was scheduled to eliminate a staffed engine, a staffed ladder truck, and nine firefighter positions if new funding sources did not become available.<sup>321</sup> However, the recent passage of Measure O (discussed below) will significantly increase funding, allowing the Department to maintain current services and

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<sup>313</sup> A "mutual threat zone" is defined as an area between two or more jurisdictions into which those agencies respond on initial attack. (National Wildfire Coordinating Group, *NWCG Glossary of Wildland Fire Terminology*, <<http://www.nwcg.gov/teams/pmo/products/wfglossary/m.htm>>).

<sup>314</sup> Interview with Santa Rosa Fire Dept. Deputy Chief Bart Lewis, 6 Oct. 2004.

<sup>315</sup> LAFCO Request for Information, 2002.

<sup>316</sup> City of Santa Rosa Budget, FY 2004/2005, 57.

<sup>317</sup> Sonoma County Grand Jury, "Santa Rosa Fire Station Deployment," 20 Feb. 2004, 3.

<sup>318</sup> Communication from Santa Rosa Fire Dept. Chief Bruce Varner, 11 Jan. 2005.

<sup>319</sup> City of Santa Rosa Website, Fire Department, <<http://ci.santa-rosa.ca.us/default.aspx?PageId=1113>>.

Interview with Deputy Fire Chief Bart Lewis, 6 Oct. 2004.

<sup>320</sup> City of Santa Rosa Operations and Maintenance Budget, 2002-2003, 49.

<sup>321</sup> Interview with Santa Rosa Fire Dept. Deputy Chief Bart Lewis, 6 Oct. 2004.



expand its current equipment inventory and staff levels. Expenditures established in the Measure's implementation plan include the purchase of two fire engines and a wildland engine, as well as the addition of 3 firefighters, who will increase staffing of Engine #6 from 3 to 4 employees per shift.<sup>322</sup>

The Department's facilities have not kept pace with the City's growth in recent years. In March 2002, a consultant hired by the City presented the Santa Rosa Fire Station Location and Deployment Study Final Report to the City Council. The study recommended the relocation of fire stations 5, 6, and 8 and the construction of new stations in three locations: the vicinity of Mendocino Avenue and Steele Lane, the vicinity of Northpoint Parkway and King Fisher Way in Southwest Santa Rosa, and the vicinity of Kawana Springs Road and Franz Kafka Avenue in Southeast Santa Rosa. 2004 Sonoma County Grand Jury findings confirmed these recommendations, identifying an immediate need to relocate station 8 (the Roseland station) and to build a station on Northpoint Parkway. Population growth and long response times in Southwest Santa Rosa have made these locations especially vulnerable and in need of new facilities. The Grand Jury recommended that the City include funding for these projects in FY 04-05 and establish a timetable for the other improvements suggested in the 2002 study.<sup>323</sup>

Measure O revenues will be used to help cover the costs of recommended station relocations and construction. The Measure O Implementation Summary includes funding for the construction of fire stations in the Southwest Area, the Mendocino/ Jr. College Area, the Fountaingrove Area (Station #5), and the Southeast Area. These improvements will occur over the next several years and will address most of the Grand Jury's recommendations.<sup>324</sup>

## DEMAND AND CAPACITY

According to the findings of the 2003-2004 Sonoma County Grand Jury, Santa Rosa fire protection service is not meeting current demand. Between 1982 and 2002, the annual number of emergency calls to the Santa Rosa Fire Department increased by over 246 percent, from 4,709 to 16,301. The most recent call volume statistic is 16,970 calls per year.<sup>325</sup> The southwestern area of the City has experienced particularly rapid growth, with a population increase of 62 percent between 1992 and 2002, while the City of Santa Rosa grew, overall, by only 21 percent. Average response times for all eight Santa Rosa fire stations (including Roseland) have increased as follows over in recent years<sup>326</sup>:

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<sup>322</sup> Communication from Santa Rosa Fire Dept. Chief Bruce Varner, 11 Jan. 2005.

<sup>323</sup> Sonoma County Grand Jury, "Santa Rosa Fire Station Deployment," 20 Feb. 2004, 4.

<sup>324</sup> Interview with Santa Rosa Fire Dept. Deputy Chief Bart Lewis, 8 Nov. 2004. Communication from Santa Rosa Fire Dept. Chief Bruce Varner, 11 Jan. 2005.

<sup>325</sup> Interview with Santa Rosa Fire Dept. Deputy Chief Bart Lewis, 6 Oct. 2004.

<sup>326</sup> Interview with Santa Rosa Fire Dept. Deputy Chief Bart Lewis, 6 Oct. 2004. City of Santa Rosa Response to Grand Jury, "Santa Rosa Fire Station Deployment," 3 May 2004, 2.

<b>Response Time (Max)</b>	<b>Target Percentage</b>	<b>1997 Actual</b>	<b>2002 Actual</b>	<b>2004 Actual</b>
<b>4 Minutes</b>	80%	33%	32%	30%
<b>5 Minutes</b>	90%	60%	62%	59%
<b>6 Minutes</b>	100%	83%	86%	83%

Response times for Station 8, which serves the Roseland FPD, are shown in the following table (2004 data not available)<sup>327</sup>:

<b>Response Time (Max)</b>	<b>Target Percentage</b>	<b>1997 Actual</b>	<b>2002 Actual</b>
<b>4 Minutes</b>	80%	29%	27%
<b>5 Minutes</b>	90%	53%	54%
<b>6 Minutes</b>	100%	74%	83%

The City of Santa Rosa's General Plan projects that the City's population will reach 195,300 by 2020, an average annual increase of 0.9 percent. In order to meet both current demand and any new demand generated by this growth, the City will need to address the facilities issues raised in the 2004 Grand Jury report.<sup>328</sup>

In November 2004, Measure O, a ballot measure that established a ¼ cent dedicated sales tax with 40 percent of the proceeds allocated to the Fire Department, passed with over 70 percent voter approval. This sales tax increase will allow the Department to not only maintain its current level of service but also place three new stations into operation in the next four years and relocate one existing station into temporary quarters. Planning for these projects has been underway since the beginning of November 2004.<sup>329</sup> Additionally, the passage of State Proposition 1A, which prohibits the state from further reducing local governments' sales and property tax revenues, may result in increases to local public safety funding.<sup>330</sup>

Development impact fees may also help fund important facilities improvements. The City of Santa Rosa is currently working with a consultant to prepare an update of the City's Capital Facilities Fee.<sup>331</sup> Revenue from the Southwest Area Development Impact Fee (SWADIF) has already been used for improvements to transportation infrastructure, which can reduce traffic congestion and improve fire response times. The City's 2004-2005 Capital Improvement Program budget designates impact fees for the design of the recommended Southwest and Southeast fire stations, with additional funding to be

<sup>327</sup> City of Santa Rosa Response to Grand Jury, "Santa Rosa Fire Station Deployment," 3 May 2004, 2.

<sup>328</sup> Sonoma County Grand Jury, "Santa Rosa Fire Station Deployment," 20 Feb. 2004, 3.

<sup>329</sup> Communication from Santa Rosa Fire Dept. Chief Bruce Varner, 11 Jan. 2005.

<sup>330</sup> Interview with Santa Rosa Fire Dept. Deputy Chief Bart Lewis, 6 Oct. 2004.

<sup>331</sup> Update to City of Santa Rosa's May 3, 2004, Response to the 2003-2004 Grand Jury Report, 24 Sept. 2004, 1.

requested for future construction phases.<sup>332</sup> It should be noted that development impact fees can be used only for infrastructure and do not address the issue of ongoing maintenance and personnel costs.<sup>333</sup>

For the last several years, the Department has sought alternative revenue sources and has been successful in securing several federal grants for equipment and training programs.<sup>334</sup>

Programs currently in place, such as professional development courses and the Department's cooperative arrangements with various local fire agencies, may also create opportunities for improved service in the face of increasing demand.<sup>335</sup>

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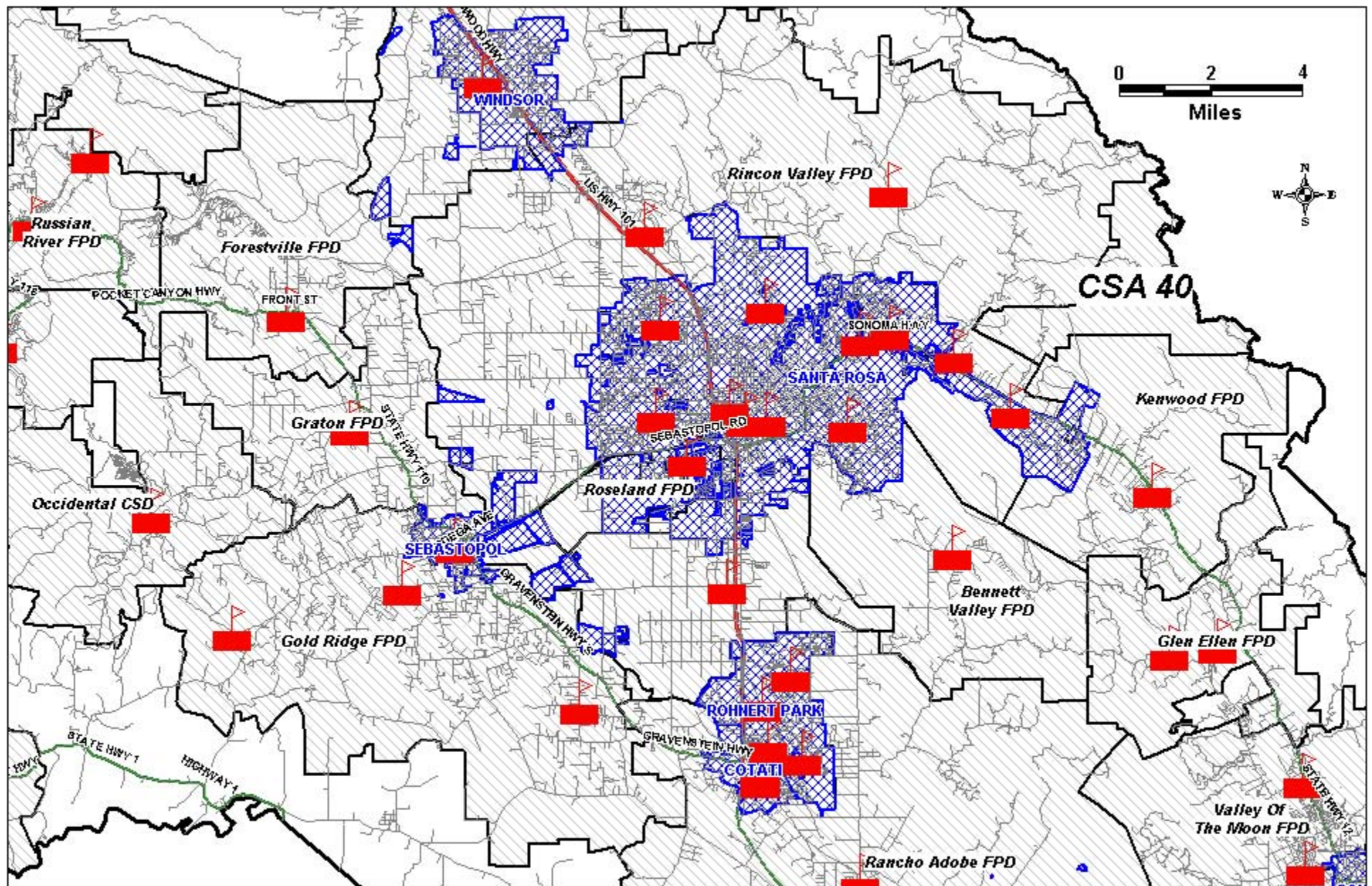
<sup>332</sup> Update to City of Santa Rosa's May 3, 2004, Response to the 2003-2004 Grand Jury Report, 24 Sept. 2004, 2.

<sup>333</sup> Interview with Santa Rosa Fire Dept. Deputy Chief Bart Lewis, 6 Oct. 2004. City of Santa Rosa Response to Grand Jury, "Santa Rosa Fire Station Deployment," 3 May 2004, 4.

<sup>334</sup> Communication from Santa Rosa Fire Dept. Chief Bruce Varner, 11 Jan. 2005.

<sup>335</sup> City of Santa Rosa Response to Grand Jury, "Santa Rosa Fire Station Deployment," 3 May 2004, 4.

**Figure 25:  
City of Santa Rosa**



## SEBASTOPOL

The City of Sebastopol's Fire Department provides fire protection to the City's 7,800 residents in an area of 2 square miles, shown in **Figure 26**.

While the Department's facilities, equipment, and staff are adequate to meet current demand, anticipated growth and aging among the existing population may create a future need for increased full-time staff.

### GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

Sebastopol employs a full-time Fire Chief and a full-time Technician (shared with the Building and Safety Department) and has 33 volunteer firefighters. The City's fire station is located on Bodega Avenue in Sebastopol.

Total Department operating expenditures requested for FY 04-05 were approximately \$445,000.<sup>336</sup> The City's total estimated General Fund reserves are \$51,000.<sup>337</sup>

In addition to General Fund revenues, the Fire Department receives one-time annexation fees that go into the capital improvement fund. A ¼ cent sales tax passed in November 2002 and again in November 2004 has been designated by the City Council for citywide capital improvements. Revenues generated by this sales tax are being used to pay off debt on a ladder truck purchased in November 2003; according to the Department, it is likely that proceeds from the tax will continue to cover purchases of fire-related capital equipment in the future.<sup>338</sup> The Department also maintains a separate Volunteer Account, separate from its City budget allocation, which is supported by fundraising and donations.<sup>339</sup>

The City participates in REDCOM and has automatic aid agreements with the neighboring Gold Ridge, Rincon Valley, and Graton Fire Protection Districts. The Department's volunteer firefighters occasionally participate in drills with other districts and departments.<sup>340</sup>

### INFRASTRUCTURE, FACILITIES, AND SERVICES

The Department's response time is 4 to 6 minutes. Its ISO rating is 4 and it responds to approximately 900 calls per year.<sup>341</sup>

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<sup>336</sup> City of Sebastopol Annual Budget, Fiscal Year 2004/2005, 34.

<sup>337</sup> City of Sebastopol Annual Budget, Fiscal Year 2004/2005, 9.

<sup>338</sup> Interview with Sebastopol Fire Dept. Chief John Zanzi, 10 Nov. 2004.

<sup>339</sup> Interview with Sebastopol Fire Dept. Technician Patti DeLucchi, 29 Sept. 2004.

<sup>340</sup> Interview with Sebastopol Fire Dept. Technician Patti DeLucchi, 29 Sept. 2004. Interview with Sebastopol Fire Dept. Chief John Zanzi, 10 Nov. 2004.

<sup>341</sup> Interview with Sebastopol Fire Dept. Technician Patti DeLucchi, 29 Sept. 2004.



The City has one fire station, located on Bodega Avenue. Its equipment includes three engines and one ladder truck, purchased in November 2003. According to the Department, this equipment is more than adequate to meet current and anticipated demand.<sup>342</sup>

## DEMAND AND CAPACITY

ABAG projects that the population of Sebastopol will increase from 7,774 to 8,900 between 2000 and 2020, at an annual growth rate of 0.7 percent.<sup>343</sup> The City's 1989 General Plan projects a population increase of 299 between 2000 and 2005, an annual increase of 0.75 percent; the City has not made projections beyond 2005.<sup>344</sup> A proposed subdivision could add 140 homes and new commercial space to the Department's service area. This proposal is currently being debated; its outcome will have a significant effect on the Department's future needs.<sup>345</sup>

The City's fire station and equipment are anticipated to be adequate to meet the demands of future growth, though staffing of the department will need to increase as the number of calls for service grows. According to the General Plan, which was last updated in 1998, "although the Fire Department has worked well with a largely volunteer force, future growth, the aging population and increasing area traffic may require additional full-time employees."<sup>346</sup> The Department confirms that the addition of at least one full-time position may become necessary in the next five years. There is no funding currently available to pay for new staff.<sup>347</sup>

The Department has introduced a number of cost saving measures in recent years, including a countywide purchasing agreement to lower pager costs, major maintenance projects to reduce ongoing maintenance expenditures, and a reduction of utilities costs due to the replacement of HVAC equipment and the implementation of solar energy savings programs.<sup>348</sup> These savings may help offset the rising costs of labor.

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<sup>342</sup> Interview with Sebastopol Fire Dept. Chief John Zanzi, 10 Nov. 2004.

<sup>343</sup> ABAG Projections, 2003.

<sup>344</sup> Sebastopol General Plan, p. I-2. The City's projections for 1990 through 2005 were overall lower than ABAG projections for the same period, but anticipated a higher rate of growth than ABAG estimates.

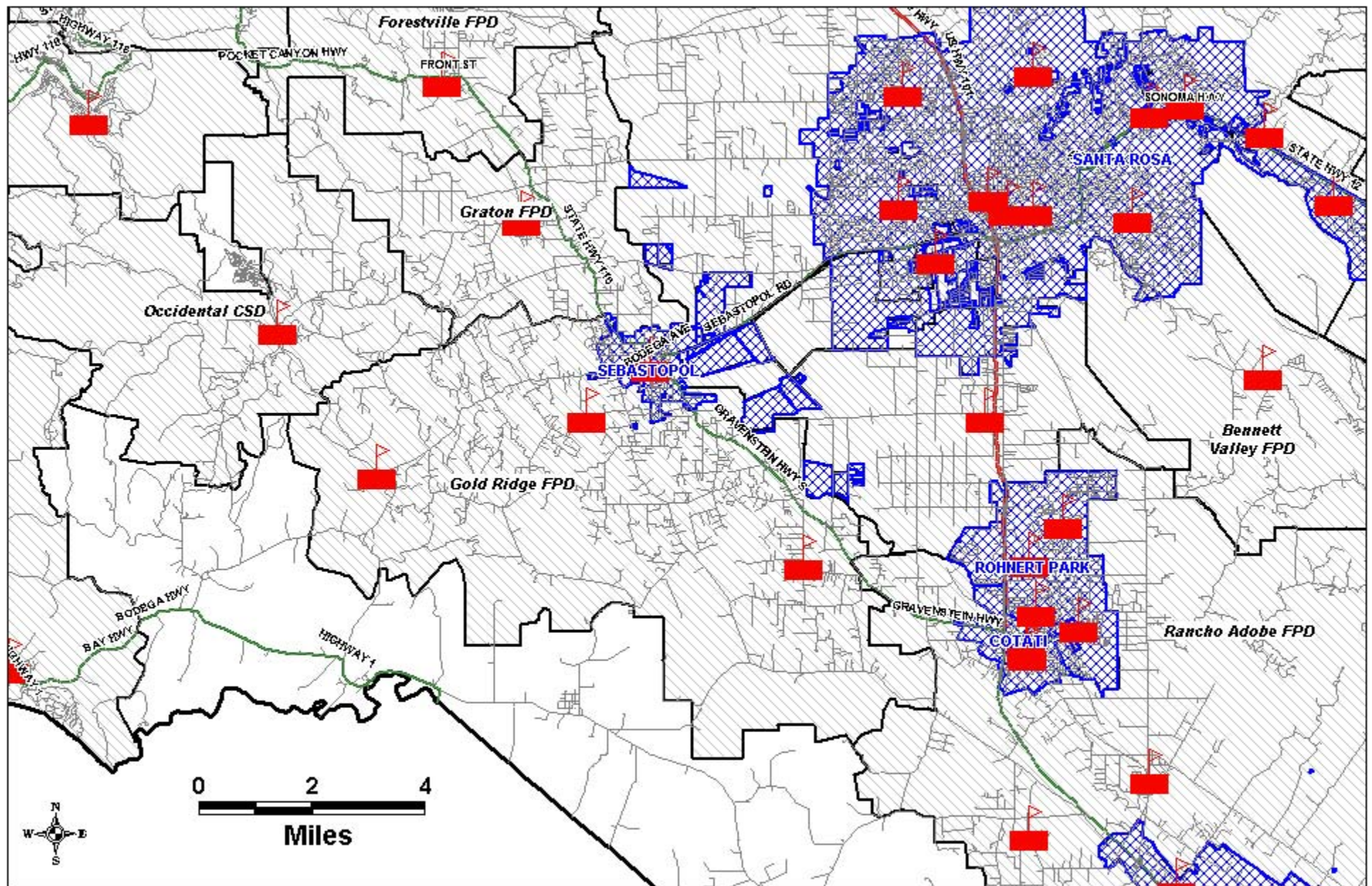
<sup>345</sup> Interview with Sebastopol Fire Dept. Technician Patti DeLucchi, 29 Sept. 2004.

<sup>346</sup> Sebastopol General Plan, p. VII-15.

<sup>347</sup> Interview with Sebastopol Fire Dept. Chief John Zanzi, 10 Nov. 2004.

<sup>348</sup> City of Sebastopol Annual Budget, Fiscal Year 2003–2004, 31. Interview with Sebastopol Fire Dept. Chief John Zanzi, 10 Nov. 2004.

**Figure 26:  
City of Sebastopol**



## SONOMA

The City of Sonoma Fire Department provides fire protection and pre-hospital medical services to Sonoma's population of 9,284 in an area of 2.2 square miles (see **Figure 27**).

Future high-density, multistory development may require the Department to purchase special equipment not currently included in its budget; impact fees are being discussed as a possible funding source for such purchases. The Department is exploring the possibility of expanding the scope of its JPA with Valley of the Moon FPD.

## GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

The Fire Department employs 21 people, including a Fire Chief, two Assistant Chiefs, three Captains, eight Firefighter/ Paramedics, one Firefighter/ Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), three Paramedics, and three EMTs. The Department employs between 45 and 60 part-time paramedics and EMTs (depending on seasonal demand) and has 20 volunteer firefighters.<sup>349</sup>

The Department's operating budget is approximately \$1.9 million, primarily from the City's General Fund.<sup>350</sup> The Department's Prehospital Medical Services division, known as Sonoma Valley FireMed, operates as an enterprise fund with some assistance from the City's General Fund. FireMed supports its operations through fees for service and "ambulance memberships" that waive unpaid service fee balances in exchange for a flat annual membership fee.<sup>351</sup> The City of Sonoma maintains overall general reserves of approximately \$17 million.<sup>352</sup>

According to the Background Report prepared for the City's upcoming General Plan update, "Since 2001, the Fire Department has been operating under a Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) with the Valley of the Moon Fire Protection District, which provides fire protection for a large area of Sonoma Valley...The JPA allows the two agencies to function as a single entity. Training, call responses, and other operations are fully coordinated. This blending has allowed for a number of efficiencies, such as the sharing of command staff and other administrative personnel, while extending the capabilities of the two organizations. In recognition of this unified structure, the Fire Department and the District now operate as the 'Sonoma Valley Fire and Rescue Authority.'"<sup>353</sup> The two agencies are investigating a number of options relative to future sustainability and governance, including the potential for the JPA to become the employer for both Sonoma Fire Department and Valley of the Moon FPD personnel.<sup>354</sup> Under the possible

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<sup>349</sup> City of Sonoma Website, <<http://www.sonomacity.org/Departments/fire.shtml>>. 29 Sept. 2004.

<sup>350</sup> Interview with Sonoma Fire Dept. Assistant Chief Steve Marler, 6 Oct. 2004.

<sup>351</sup> City of Sonoma Website, <<http://www.sonomacity.org/Departments/fire.shtml>>. 29 Sept. 2004.

<sup>352</sup> Interview with City of Sonoma Finance Officer Carol Giovanatto, 16 Nov. 2004.

<sup>353</sup> City of Sonoma. Background Report, 2005 – 2020 General Plan Update, 35. Interview with Sonoma Fire Dept. Assistant Chief Steve Marler, 1 Nov. 2004.

<sup>354</sup> Interview with Sonoma Fire Dept. Assistant Chief Steve Marler, 6 Oct. 2004. Communication from VMFPD Chief John Keane, 27 Dec. 2004.



arrangement, existing equipment would remain the property of the City and District, but all new purchases would be the property of the JPA.<sup>355</sup>

The Department's FireMed division participates in joint marketing with Sonoma Valley Hospital.<sup>356</sup>

## INFRASTRUCTURE, FACILITIES, AND SERVICES

The Department responded to just under 1,300 calls in 2003 and has an ISO rating of 4. Its response time is generally four minutes or less from the time the station receives a call.<sup>357</sup>

The Department has one station, built two years ago and located near the center of the City of Sonoma. Through its JPA with Valley of the Moon FPD, the Sonoma Fire Department also provides and receives support to/ from the District's three stations. The Department's equipment inventory includes two engines, an aerial ladder, two paramedic ambulances, and five reserve ambulances used by FireMed.<sup>358</sup>

## DEMAND AND CAPACITY

ABAG projects that the City of Sonoma's population will increase from 9,754 in 2000 to 13,000 in 2020, growing at an average annual rate of 0.8 percent.<sup>359</sup> Limitations on residential building permits within the City restrict the amount of growth that is likely to occur. However, the General Plan's increasing emphasis on high-density development may create demand for new types of fire protection service. Buildings of more than three stories, for example, will require a taller aerial ladder than the one the Department currently owns. The Department's existing aerial ladder is only halfway through its lifespan; as a result, the capital funds required to pay for a replacement have not yet accumulated. The Department has considered impact fees as a potential source of revenues to cover such new costs, though no such fees are currently in place.<sup>360</sup>

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<sup>355</sup> Interview with Sonoma Fire Dept. Assistant Chief Steve Marler, 6 Oct. 2004. Communication from VMFPD Chief John Keane, 27 Dec. 2004.

<sup>356</sup> Interview with Sonoma Fire Dept. Assistant Chief Steve Marler, 1 Nov. 2004.

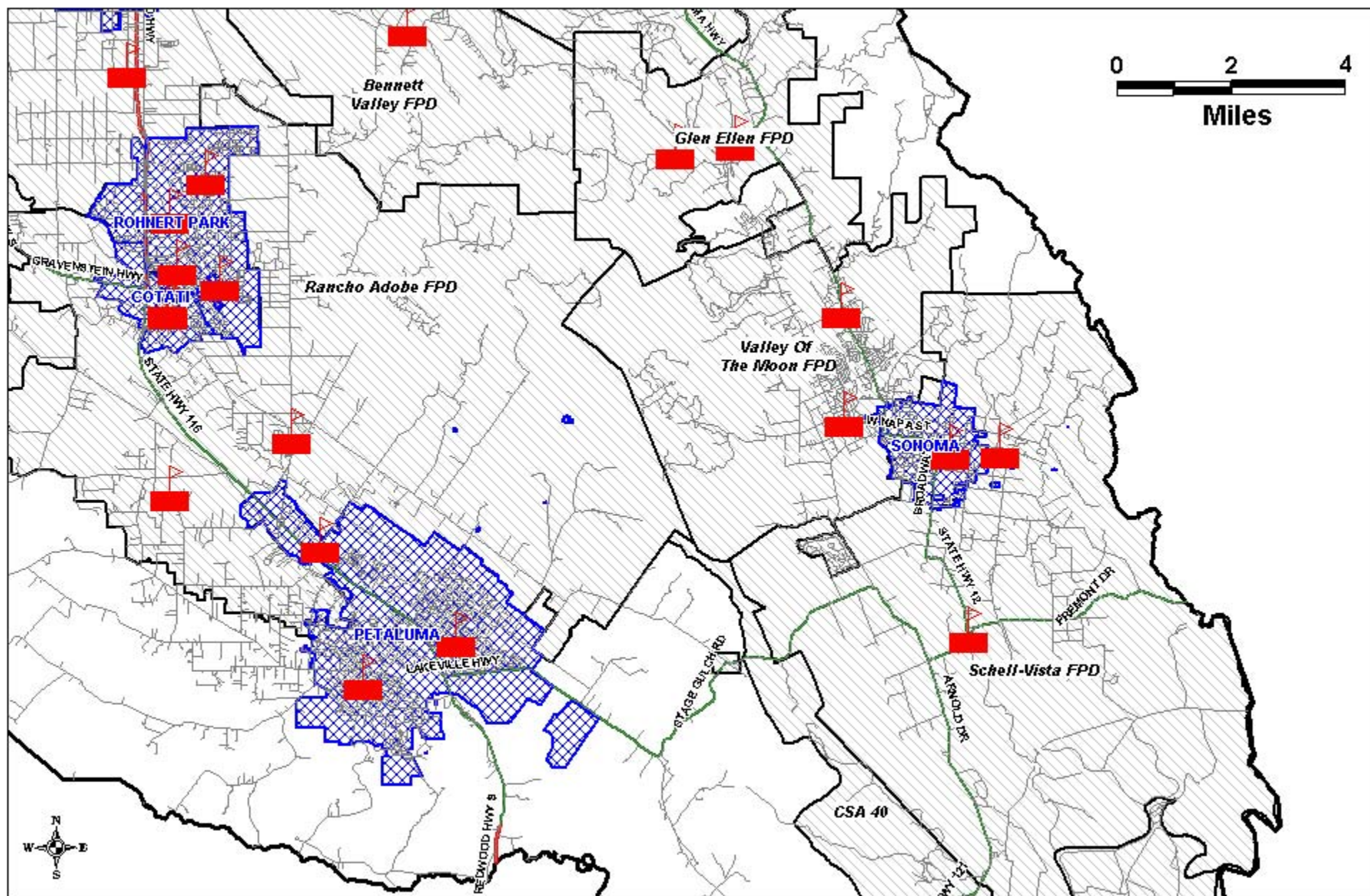
<sup>357</sup> Interview with Sonoma Fire Dept. Assistant Chief Steve Marler, 6 Oct. 2004.

<sup>358</sup> Interview with Sonoma Fire Dept. Assistant Chief Steve Marler, 6 Oct. 2004.

<sup>359</sup> ABAG Projections, 2003. These are the projections used by the City in its latest General Plan updates.

<sup>360</sup> Interview with Sonoma Fire Dept. Assistant Chief Steve Marler, 6 Oct. 2004.

**Figure 27:  
City of Sonoma**





## VI. DETERMINATIONS

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### EXPLANATION OF DETERMINATIONS

The Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000 requires LAFCOs to make nine written determinations for municipal service providers. The following factors<sup>361</sup> provide examples of how Sonoma LAFCO will fulfill the determination requirement.

#### **Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies**

This determination refers to the adequacy of existing and planned public facilities in relation to how public services are, and will be, provided to citizens. Infrastructure can be evaluated in terms of capacity, condition, availability and quality.

#### **Growth and Population Projections**

Efficient provision of public services is linked to the ability of service providers to plan for future need. For example, a water purveyor must be prepared to supply water for existing *and* future levels of demand and also be able to determine *where* future demand will occur. Municipal service reviews will give LAFCO, affected agencies, and the public the means to examine both the existing and future need for public services and will evaluate whether projections for future growth and population patterns are integrated into an agency's planning function.

#### **Financing Constraints and Opportunities**

LAFCO must weigh a community's public service needs against the resources available to fund the services. Service reviews may also suggest innovations for contending with financing constraints, which may be of considerable value to numerous agencies.

#### **Cost Avoidance Opportunities**

The municipal service review will explore cost avoidance opportunities including, but not limited to: (1) eliminating duplicative services; (2) reducing high administration to operation cost ratios; (3) replacing outdated or deteriorating infrastructure and equipment; (4) reducing inventories of underutilized equipment, buildings, or facilities; (5) redrawing overlapping or inefficient service boundaries; (6) replacing inefficient purchasing or budgeting practices; (7) implementing economies of scale; and (8) increasing profitable outsourcing.

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<sup>361</sup> Excerpted from North County Inland Municipal Service Review and Sphere of Influence Update Study, San Diego LAFCO, September 2003.

### **Opportunities for Rate Restructuring**

When applicable, the municipal service review will review varying agency rates, fees, taxes, charges, etc., within an agency and region, to examine opportunities for rate restructuring without impairing the quality of service.

### **Opportunities for Shared Facilities**

Public service costs may be reduced and service efficiencies increased, if service providers develop strategies for sharing resources. Sharing facilities and excess system capacity decreases duplicative efforts, may lower costs, and minimizes unnecessary resource consumption. Options for plans for future shared facilities and services will also be considered.

### **Government Structure Options**

The MSR provides a tool to comprehensively study existing and future public service conditions and to evaluate organizational options for accommodating growth, preventing urban sprawl, and ensuring that critical services are efficiently and cost-effectively provided. LAFCO may examine efficiencies that could be gained through (1) functional reorganizations within existing agencies, (2) amending or updating SOIs, (3) annexations or detachments from cities or special districts, (4) formation of new special districts, (5) special district dissolutions, (6) mergers of special districts with cities, (7) establishment of subsidiary districts, or (8) any additional reorganization options found in Government Code § 56000 et. seq.

### **Evaluation of Management Efficiencies**

Management efficiency refers to the effectiveness of internal and external characteristics of agencies to provide efficient, quality public services. Efficiently managed agencies consistently implement plans to improve service delivery, reduce waste, eliminate duplications of effort, contain costs, maintain qualified employees, build and maintain adequate contingency reserves, and encourage and maintain open dialogues with the public and other public and private agencies. The service review will evaluate management efficiency by analyzing agency functions, operations, and practices—as well as the agency's ability to meet current and future service demands.

### **Local Accountability and Governance**

Local accountability and governance refers to public agency decision making and operational and management processes that (1) include an accessible and accountable elected or appointed decision making body and agency staff; (2) encourage and value public participation; (3) disclose budgets, programs, and plans; (4) solicit public input when considering rate changes and work and infrastructure plans; and (5) evaluate outcomes of plans, programs, and operations, and disclose results to the public.

## **DISTRICTS**

### **BENNETT VALLEY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT**

#### **Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies**

BVFPD's infrastructure and equipment are adequate to meet current demand and projected growth.

#### **Growth and Population Projections**

No major growth or expansion is anticipated in the District. Sonoma County projections for the unincorporated area around Santa Rosa anticipate annual growth of 0.6 percent.

#### **Financing Constraints and Opportunities**

BVFPD's reserves are equal to 48 percent of its \$741,000 expenditure budget (FY 04-05). It owes a total of approximately \$265,000 in debt.

#### **Cost Avoidance Opportunities**

BVFPD's MOU with Gold Ridge Fire Protection District allows it to eliminate some personnel costs.

#### **Opportunities for Rate Restructuring**

In November 2002, the District passed a special tax with a maximum rate of \$180 per unit. This tax is currently set at \$150 per unit but will be adjusted as necessary in the future.

#### **Opportunities for Shared Facilities**

In addition to participating in Sonoma County's REDCOM computer-dispatch program, BVFPD has individual automatic aid agreements with all of its neighboring districts. Under a Memorandum of Understanding, Gold Ridge Fire Protection District provides BVFPD with coverage by a part-time fire chief, three battalion chiefs, and an administrative clerk. No opportunities for sharing physical facilities have been identified.

#### **Government Structure Options**

No changes in BVFPD's governance are pending or proposed.

#### **Evaluation of Management Efficiencies**

The special assessment tax in place since 2002 has allowed BVFPD to add three part-time staff and a sleeper program in order to increase efficiency and improve response.

### **Local Accountability and Governance**

BVFPD has a five-member Board of Directors, which holds public meetings the second Tuesday of each month at the Bennett Valley Fire Station. Information regarding fire protection services is also published in the newsletter of the local homeowners' association.



## BODEGA BAY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

### **Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies**

BBFPD replaced one engine and one ambulance in the last three years. The District's remaining equipment is aging, but funds are not available to pay for replacements.

### **Growth and Population Projections**

Sonoma County PRMD projections for the Sonoma Coast Planning Area (encompassing the length of the County's coast and extending up to 15 miles inland) anticipate an increase of 3,283 between 2000 and 2020, or annual growth of nearly 2 percent. However, no major growth or expansion is anticipated in the District.

### **Financing Constraints and Opportunities**

The District does not have reserves. It is carrying approximately \$1.6 million in debt on its recently built fire station.

### **Cost Avoidance Opportunities**

Possible cooperative arrangements, such as sharing staff with Russian River Fire Protection District or working with Forestville, Monte Rio, and Russian River FPDs to provide fire prevention services, could reduce costs for BBFPD. However, these agreements are still in the early planning stages and are not likely to occur in the immediate future.

### **Opportunities for Rate Restructuring**

The District's special tax was increased to \$130 per unit of risk (\$520 per single-family residence) in 2003. No further opportunities for rate restructuring have been identified.

### **Opportunities for Shared Facilities**

BBFPD has mutual aid agreements with surrounding districts and volunteer fire companies. As of January 2005, it shares its chief with Russian River FPD. The District is currently investigating other opportunities for cooperation, such as potential consolidation with Russian River and Monte Rio FPDs.

### **Government Structure Options**

The District has discussed possible consolidation with Russian River and Monte Rio Fire Protection Districts, but no formal proposals have been made.

### **Evaluation of Management Efficiencies**

The District has expressed concern about how wage increases might impact its ability to retain adequate staff in the near future.

### **Local Accountability and Governance**

BBFPD has a five-member Board of Directors, which meets the second Tuesday of each month at the fire station. Information is also provided to the public through brochures and fire safety outreach at local schools.

## **CLOVERDALE**

### **Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies**

The District's single fire station, which is shared with Cloverdale law enforcement, is not adequate to meet current demand. CFPD has failed in two attempts to pass special taxes in order to fund the construction of a replacement station.

### **Growth and Population Projections**

The City of Cloverdale, which is served by CFPD, is among Sonoma County's fastest growing communities, with a population projected to increase at a rate of almost 3 percent annually between 2000 and 2020.

### **Financing Constraints and Opportunities**

The District maintains reserves equal to approximately 10 percent of its \$967,000 operating budget. It is carrying about \$500,000 in debt. In areas annexed by the City of Cloverdale, the District's revenue from property taxes is limited to a fixed amount, unadjusted for inflation or growth. This constraint has contributed to CFPD's difficulties in paying for new facilities and staff. The City and District plan to renegotiate the arrangement in the near future.

### **Cost Avoidance Opportunities**

Cooperation with the City of Cloverdale, such as additional shared facilities and a planned joint Public Safety Master Plan, could eliminate significant costs for the District.

### **Opportunities for Rate Restructuring**

The District has made two unsuccessful attempts to pass bond measures in order to fund the construction of a new station. It is negotiating with the City of Cloverdale regarding its share of property taxes.

### **Opportunities for Shared Facilities**

CFPD shares its facility with the City of Cloverdale's law enforcement agency. It is also collaborating with the City on a public safety Master Plan.

### **Government Structure Options**

No changes in government structure are pending or proposed.

### **Evaluation of Management Efficiencies**

The District contracts with the California Department of Forestry for two full-time firefighters. The costs of this contract are rising rapidly; if CFPD is unable to pay for CDF support, it may not have the staff necessary to operate at maximum efficiency.

### **Local Accountability and Governance**

Cloverdale Fire Protection District's five-member Board of Directors meets publicly the second Monday of each month at the fire station. The District also publishes fire safety news and information in the local newspaper.

## FORESTVILLE

### **Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies:**

Forestville Fire Protection District infrastructure and facilities appear adequate to serve projected growth. Under its informal capital improvement plan, the District buys a new engine every ten years to keep equipment up-to-date.

### **Growth and Population Projections**

A new development featuring low-income housing and office space may slightly increase the demand for fire protection services in central Forestville. The Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Department projects annual growth of 0.76 percent for the Russian River area as a whole; no major population increases are anticipated within FFPD boundaries.

### **Financing Constraints and Opportunities**

Forestville Fire Protection District maintains designated reserves equal to almost 8 percent of its annual operating budget. It does not have general reserves. The District is carrying over \$200,000 in debt.

### **Cost Avoidance Opportunities**

The cost of fire prevention could be shared if negotiations with Russian River, Monte Rio, and Bodega Bay FPDs are successful.

### **Opportunities for Rate Restructuring**

The District special tax is currently set at its maximum allowable rate of \$10 per unit of risk, i.e., \$40 per single-family dwelling.

### **Opportunities for Shared Facilities**

Forestville Fire Protection District made an unsuccessful attempt to consolidate with Guerneville Fire Protection District in 2000.

### **Government Structure Options**

Forestville Fire Protection District boundaries are not expected to change in the near future. No changes to government structure are pending or proposed.

### **Evaluation of Management Efficiencies**

No changes to FFPD's management are pending or proposed.



### **Local Accountability and Governance**

FFPD's Board of Directors holds public meetings the second Tuesday of each month at the Forestville fire station. Information regarding fire protection services is also made available to the public through the fire station's bulletin board, a yearly letter to property owners, information tables at community events, and presentations by the fire chief to local homeowners' associations.

## GEYSERVILLE

### **Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies:**

Geyserville Fire Protection District recently replaced an engine and will soon begin construction of a new fire station. These improvements will serve the District's facilities and equipment needs for at least the next five years; the District states that current revenues are adequate to cover necessary equipment upgrades.

### **Growth and Population Predictions:**

According to Sonoma County projections, the population of the County's rural northeast area will increase at an annual rate of about 1.4 percent between 2000 and 2020, while the unincorporated areas around Healdsburg will grow at about 0.9 percent a year. No major growth is anticipated within the District.

### **Financing Constraints and Opportunities:**

GFPD maintains reserves (comprising "designated reserves" and "provisions for reserves") equal to approximately 24 percent of its general fund budget. It has a \$3.5 million lease purchase obligation, to be paid back over the next 20 years with tax revenue. In addition to property taxes, the District receives over \$300,000 a year in service fees through its contract with a local Indian casino.

### **Cost Avoidance Opportunities**

According to the District, improvements to infrastructure such as roads and water facilities would allow GFPD to provide more efficient service without incurring increased costs.

### **Opportunities for Rate Restructuring**

The District does not have a special assessment tax and has made no attempt to pass one. It does not anticipate that its contract with the Pomo Indian tribe will be renegotiated in the near future.

### **Opportunities for Shared Facilities**

GFPD has automatic aid agreements with neighboring districts. No additional opportunities for shared facilities have been identified or considered.

### **Government Structure Options**

Geyserville FPD's boundaries are not expected to change in the near future. No changes to government structure are pending or proposed. There is a possibility that the River Rock Casino will eventually take over its own fire protection services, but this is not likely to happen in the near term.

### **Evaluation of Management Efficiencies**

The District's lack of full-time employees may prevent it from operating at maximum efficiency.

### **Local Accountability and Governance**

The District's Board of Directors meets the second Wednesday of each month at Fire Station #1. Meetings are open to the public. Call logs are posted in the local newspaper, and the District maintains a website.

## **GLEN ELLEN**

### **Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies**

Glen Ellen Fire Protection District infrastructure and facilities appear adequate to serve projected growth. Under its informal capital improvement plan, the District makes an effort to rotate equipment to achieve total replacement every 24 years.

### **Growth and Population Predictions**

The Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Department projects a population growth of around 0.71 percent annually through 2020 for the entire Sonoma Valley area. Construction of a 50-room inn within District boundaries was recently approved. In general, however, major growth in Glen Ellen is unlikely due to the lack of vacant land appropriate for large construction projects.

### **Financing Constraints and Opportunities**

GEFPD maintains general reserves equal to approximately 16 percent of its operating budget; total reserves (including designated reserves) are equal to 90 percent of the budget. The District is not currently carrying any debt, thanks in part to its practice of paying for new equipment through grants and fund raising, including the sale of advertisements on the sides of District engines.

### **Cost Avoidance Opportunities**

GEFPD's arrangements with Kenwood Press and the Sonoma Index Tribune allow it to avoid the production and staff costs that might otherwise be involved in publishing public information.

### **Opportunities for Rate Restructuring**

The District does not have a special assessment tax and has made no attempt to pass one. To date, other sources of revenue have generated sufficient funding for GEFPD.

### **Opportunities for Shared Facilities**

GEFPD has automatic aid agreements with neighboring districts and CSAs through Sonoma County's REDCOM computer dispatch program. It does not have plans for any other shared staff or facilities.

### **Government Structure Options**

Glen Ellen Fire Protection District boundaries are not expected to change in the near future. No changes to government structure are pending or proposed.

### **Evaluation of Management Efficiencies**

No changes to GEFPD's management are pending or proposed.

### **Local Accountability and Governance**

The District's Board of Directors meets publicly the second Tuesday of each month at Fire Station #1. Monthly response records and other information about fire protection services are published in local newspapers.



## **GOLD RIDGE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT**

### **Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies**

GRFPD's infrastructure and equipment are adequate to meet current demand and projected growth. A replacement program, intended to ensure that equipment is kept up-to-date, has been unfunded for the past eight years as funds have been shifted to staffing.

### **Growth and Population Projections**

Sonoma County estimates project a relatively low population increase – around 0.25 percent annually through 2020 – for the rural Sebastopol area. The District may also be affected by growth in the rural Cotati-Rohnert Park area, projected to 1.1 percent annually between 2000 and 2020. However, staffing shortages could make it difficult for GRFPD to meet the demands of even minimal growth without increasing personnel.

### **Financing Constraints and Opportunities**

GRFPD maintains reserves equal to approximately 38 percent of its \$1.2 million budget. It currently has a total of approximately \$412,000 in debt.

### **Cost Avoidance Opportunities**

The District has implemented cost-cutting measures such as replacing its full-time chief with a part-time employee and applying for federal grants to pay for new equipment. Its MOU with Bennett Valley allows it to eliminate some personnel costs.

### **Opportunities for Rate Restructuring**

In November 2004, voters rejected a measure to increase the District's special tax by 200 percent.

### **Opportunities for Shared Facilities**

In addition to participating in Sonoma County's REDCOM computer-dispatch program, GRFPD has individual automatic aid agreements with all of its neighboring districts. It also shares five of its staff members with Bennett Valley Fire Protection District under a Memorandum of Understanding. No opportunities for sharing physical facilities have been identified.

### **Government Structure Options**

No changes in GRFPD governance are pending or proposed.

### **Evaluation of Management Efficiencies**

The District had hoped to hire two new staff members; however, the defeat of an effort to raise the GFPD special tax may make this addition financially infeasible. Continued staffing shortages could prevent the District from operating at maximum efficiency.

### **Local Accountability and Governance**

GRFPD's seven-member Board of Directors holds public meetings the first Wednesday of every month at Station 1 or 2 (alternating weeks). The District also publishes a newsletter and places notices in the local newspaper in order to distribute information to the public.

## GRATON

### **Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies**

Graton Fire Protection District is forced to store one of its six engines offsite due to space constraints at its existing station. It has considered constructing an additional station but has not yet found an appropriate location.

### **Growth and Population Projections**

According to Sonoma County PRMD growth projections, the rural Sebastopol area (i.e., the unincorporated area outside the City USA) is projected to experience an annual population increase of 0.24 percent between 2000 and 2020. However, the District states that its call volume is increasing by 10 percent annually due to population growth and aging among the existing population.

### **Financing Constraints and Opportunities**

Graton Fire Protection District maintains general fund reserves equal to just 2.8 percent of its current operating budget, but has building fund reserves totaling over \$1 million, over 200 percent of operating expenditures. It is carrying \$275,000 in debt.

### **Cost Avoidance Opportunities**

No new opportunities for cost avoidance have been identified.

### **Opportunities for Rate Restructuring**

No opportunities for rate restructuring have been identified.

### **Opportunities for Shared Facilities**

GFPD has automatic aid agreements with neighboring districts.

### **Government Structure Options**

Graton Fire Protection District boundaries are not expected to change in the near future. No changes to government structure are pending or proposed.

### **Evaluation of Management Efficiencies**

While GFPD staff levels are adequate to meet current demand, continued population growth may result in staffing shortages, preventing the District from operating at maximum efficiency.

### **Local Accountability and Governance**

Graton Fire Protection District's Board of Directors meets the second Tuesday of each month at the Graton fire station. Meetings are open to the public. Information regarding fire protection services is also published in a local newspaper.

## KENWOOD

### **Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies**

Kenwood Fire Protection District facilities and infrastructure are adequate to serve current demand and projected growth.

### **Growth and Population Projections**

No major growth is anticipated in the District. According to the projections of the Sonoma County PRMD, the population of "rural Santa Rosa" (the unincorporated region outside the Santa Rosa Urban Service Area) will experience an annual increase of around 0.6 percent between 2000 and 2020. There is a chance that the District might also be affected by growth in rural Sonoma Valley, where a population increase of 0.17 percent annually is predicted.

### **Financing Constraints and Opportunities**

The District maintains general reserves equal to over 100 percent of its current (FY 04-05) operating budget. KFPD is not carrying any debt.

### **Cost Avoidance Opportunities**

The District recently underwent ISO review; an improved ISO rating may reduce insurance costs for residents and businesses.

### **Opportunities for Rate Restructuring**

KFPD's revenue relies primarily on property taxes and a special tax. No opportunities for rate restructuring have been identified.

### **Opportunities for Shared Facilities**

KFPD has automatic aid agreements with neighboring districts and a mutual aid arrangement with CDF during the summer months. No other opportunities for shared staff or facilities have been identified.

### **Government Structure Options**

Kenwood Fire Protection District boundaries are not expected to change in the near future. No changes to government structure are pending or proposed.

### **Evaluation of Management Efficiencies**

Daytime staffing shortages in this volunteer district may prevent KFPD from operating at maximum efficiency, especially if call volume increases significantly.

### **Local Accountability and Governance**

KFPD's three-member Board of Directors meets publicly on the second Tuesday of each month at the fire station. Public announcements regarding fire protection services are published in the local newspaper.



## MONTE RIO

### **Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies**

Two out of the Monte Rio Fire Protection District's three fire stations are 50 years old and should be rebuilt, but the District lacks the funds necessary to do so.

### **Growth and Population Projections**

According to Sonoma County projections, the population of the Russian River area will grow at 0.76 percent annually between 2000 and 2020. MRFPD does not anticipate any major growth or changes to its service boundaries in the near future.

### **Financing Constraints and Opportunities**

The District's FY 04-05 budget does not include existing general or designated reserves, but provisions for reserves are equal to almost 15 percent of the total operating budget. MRFPD's current debt is \$125,000.

### **Cost Avoidance Opportunities**

The cost of fire prevention could be shared if negotiations with Russian River, Forestville, and Bodega Bay FPDs are successful.

### **Opportunities for Rate Restructuring**

MRFPD is planning to place a bond measure on the November 2005 ballot in order to establish a new special tax. The District currently relies on property taxes for the majority of its revenues.

### **Opportunities for Shared Facilities**

The District has mutual aid agreements with neighboring districts and participates in joint purchasing and training programs with the rest of Sonoma County. It is currently exploring the possibility of consolidation with Russian River and Bodega Bay FPDs.

### **Government Structure Options**

The District has discussed the possibility of eventual consolidation with Russian River and Bodega Bay Fire Protection Districts, though no formal proposals have been made.

### **Evaluation of Management Efficiencies**

Daytime staffing shortages in this volunteer district may prevent MRFPD from operating at maximum efficiency, especially if the demand for services increases significantly.

### **Local Accountability and Governance**

The MRFPD's five-member Board of Directors meets the second Tuesday of each month at the main fire station. Meetings are open to the public. Information about the District is also published in the local newspaper.

## RANCHO ADOBE

### **Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies**

RAFPD facilities and infrastructure are adequate to meet current demand and projected growth.

### **Growth and Population Projections**

Sonoma County PRMD projects that the population of rural Petaluma will grow by an average of 0.76 percent annually between 2000 and 2020. Growth in rural Rohnert Park-Cotati is predicted to be somewhat higher, with the population increasing at an average rate of 1.2 percent per year. According to the District, the City of Cotati (part of the District's service area) is considering permits for several new high-density subdivisions, which could increase the RAFPD's population by two to three thousand.

### **Financing Constraints and Opportunities**

The District maintains general reserves equal to about 35 percent of its expenditure budget, with total reserves equal to over 50 percent. As of 2003, it had approximately \$340,000 in debt.

### **Cost Avoidance Opportunities**

RAFPD itself is the result of a cost-saving merger between the Cotati and Penngrove Fire Protection Districts. The District also chose to replace its full-time chief with a part-time employee in order to decrease the cost of benefits.

### **Opportunities for Rate Restructuring**

In 2002, the District attempted to pass Measure Z, which would have increased special tax rates. Voters rejected the measure, and no rate restructuring has been proposed since that time. The District may consider placing another special tax increase on the ballot in 2006.

### **Opportunities for Shared Facilities**

RAFPD has automatic aid agreements with most of its neighboring fire districts. The District has had a contract with Sonoma County under which the County supplies RAFPD with a chief and deputy chief; the District negotiated for the early termination of this arrangement, which will end as of December 31, 2005. No additional opportunities for shared staff or facilities have been identified.

### **Government Structure Options**

There have been discussions between Rancho Adobe FPD and County Service Area 40 concerning possible reorganization. A formal model for reorganization has not yet been determined.

### **Evaluation of Management Efficiencies**

RAFPD's small full-time staff is not always able to operate at maximum efficiency. The January 2005 decision to eliminate two full-time positions could exacerbate this problem, though coverage by new part-time employees may help maintain current service levels. The termination of the District's contract with the County may also affect staffing issues.

### **Local Accountability and Governance**

The Rancho Adobe Fire Protection District's seven-member Board of Directors holds public meetings the third Wednesday of every month at Station 1. Information regarding District services is also published in the local newspaper and posted at the fire station and local post office.

## RINCON VALLEY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

### **Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies**

Of RVFPD's four fire stations, three are aging and too small to accommodate current staffing requirements. The District lacks the necessary funds to expand these stations. It has discussed the possibility of sharing one of its stations with the City of Santa Rosa.

### **Growth and Population Projections**

According to the projections of the Sonoma County PRMD, the population of "rural Santa Rosa" (the unincorporated region outside the Santa Rosa Urban Service Area) will grow from 24,899 to 28,100 between 2000 and 2020, an annual increase of around 0.6 percent. RVFPD does not anticipate any major growth in the near future. A proposed casino and resort hotel within the RVFPD service area could affect the demand for fire protection services, though specific arrangements between the District and the casino have not yet been determined.

### **Financing Constraints and Opportunities**

The District maintains reserves in excess of \$1.5 million, over 34 percent of its \$4.4 million operating budget. It has no debt.

### **Cost Avoidance Opportunities**

Continuing to share training and battalion chief duties with the Windsor Fire Protection District may allow RVFPD to cut costs in those areas.

### **Opportunities for Rate Restructuring**

The District charges a special tax of \$36 per single-unit residential parcel. No opportunities for rate restructuring have been identified.

### **Opportunities for Shared Facilities**

RVFPD has automatic aid agreements with surrounding jurisdictions, and shares some training and battalion chief duties with the Windsor Fire Protection District. It has informally discussed the possibility of sharing one of its facilities with the City of Santa Rosa Fire Department.

### **Government Structure Options**

No changes to RVFPD's governance are pending or proposed.

### **Evaluation of Management Efficiencies**

Aging facilities may prevent the District from operating at maximum efficiency.



### **Local Accountability and Governance**

The District has a seven-member Board of Directors, which holds public meetings on the second Monday of each month at the Lark Center Drive fire station. LAFCO has approved the reduction of the Board to five members, effective December 2006, based on the ongoing decrease in District territory due to annexations.

## ROSELAND

### **Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies**

With the exception of its fire station, all of the District's equipment is supplied by contract with the City of Santa Rosa. Equipment and facilities appear adequate to meet projected demand.

### **Growth and Population Projections**

According to the projections of the Sonoma County PRMD, the population of "rural Santa Rosa" (the unincorporated region outside the Santa Rosa Urban Service Area) will grow from 24,899 to 28,100 between 2000 and 2020, an annual increase of around 0.6 percent. Santa Rosa and its Urban Service Area are expected to grow at a slightly higher rate, about 0.9 percent annually. While call volume in the Santa Rosa Fire Department's entire service area went up by almost 250 percent between 1982 and 2002, calls for service within Roseland FPD have decreased in recent years, going down by about 50 percent between 1995 and 2002. This is largely due to annexations by the City of Santa Rosa that have reduced the District's size.

### **Financing Constraints and Opportunities**

The District has designated reserves equal to about 7 percent of its FY 04-05 operating budget. It does not have general reserves and is carrying no debt. Ongoing annexations by the City of Santa Rosa have resulted in a shrinking property tax base; however, the cost of contract services from the Santa Rosa Fire Department has also decreased with reductions in Roseland FPD's area.

### **Cost Avoidance Opportunities**

Contracting with the City of Santa Rosa eliminates administrative and operational costs that might otherwise be burdensome for a district of Roseland's size.

### **Opportunities for Rate Restructuring**

No opportunities for rate restructuring have been identified.

### **Opportunities for Shared Facilities**

RFPD already shares almost all staff, equipment, and administration with the City of Santa Rosa. Short of total consolidation, no additional opportunities for cooperation have been identified.

### **Government Structure Options**

Opportunities may exist for additional reorganization of the relationship between Roseland FPD and the City of Santa Rosa; these opportunities should be explored further.

### **Evaluation of Management Efficiencies**

Unnecessary administrative expenses could be eliminated through the dissolution of the District.

### **Local Accountability and Governance**

RFPD is governed by a three-member Board of Directors, which holds public meetings the second Monday of each month.

## RUSSIAN RIVER FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

### **Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies**

According to the District, all three RRFPD facilities require extensive remodeling. Initial plans for renovation of the Rio Nido station have been approved and have received funding from the local Redevelopment Agency. The District also states that two of its three ambulances need to be replaced; possible sources of funding for the purchase are currently being explored.

### **Growth and Population Projections**

According to Sonoma County projections, the population of the Russian River area will grow at 0.76 percent annually between 2000 and 2020. No major growth or expansion is anticipated within the Russian River Fire Protection District.

### **Financing Constraints and Opportunities**

RRFPD currently has general reserves equal to just over 5 percent of its \$2.0 million budget. (Total reserves, including designated reserves, are equal to 17.6 percent of the operating budget.) The District is carrying approximately \$293,000 in debt.

### **Cost Avoidance Opportunities**

Possible cooperative arrangements, such as sharing staff with Bodega Bay Fire Protection District, could reduce costs for RRFPD. The replacement of aging equipment might also help the District avoid increasing maintenance costs.

### **Opportunities for Rate Restructuring**

RRFPD has considered attempting to increase its special benefit tax and/ or service fee schedule, but no changes are currently proposed.

### **Opportunities for Shared Facilities**

The District has automatic aid agreements with the neighboring districts of Forestville and Monte Rio, as well as a summertime mutual aid agreement with CDF. It shares its second station facility with the local post office and contracts with Bodega Bay FPD for the services of its chief. RRFPD, Bodega Bay FPD, and Monte Rio FPD are exploring potential reorganization options.

### **Government Structure Options**

The District has discussed possible consolidation with Monte Rio and Bodega Bay Fire Protection Districts. This idea is still in the early planning stages and is not likely to occur in the immediate future.

### **Evaluation of Management Efficiencies**

Daytime staffing shortages in this volunteer district may prevent RRFPD from operating at maximum efficiency, especially if the demand for services increases significantly.

### **Local Accountability and Governance**

The District's five-member Board of Directors meets the third Tuesday of every month at the main (Armstrong Woods Road) fire station. Meetings are open to the public.



## **SHELL VISTA**

### **Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies**

Schell Vista Fire Protection District's infrastructure and facilities are adequate to meet current demand and projected growth.

### **Growth and Population Projections**

According to Sonoma County PRMD predictions, population growth in the rural Sonoma Valley area (the unincorporated area outside the City of Sonoma USA) will average 0.71 percent between 2000 and 2020. No major population growth is anticipated within the Schell Vista Fire Protection District.

### **Financing Constraints and Opportunities**

SVFPD's reserves are equal to about 44 percent of its \$783,000 operating budget. It has \$250,000 in debt, with a Mello-Roos bond to be paid off through a special tax.

### **Cost Avoidance Opportunities**

Expanded cooperation with neighboring districts could eliminate some costs.

### **Opportunities for Rate Restructuring**

No opportunities for rate restructuring have been identified.

### **Opportunities for Shared Facilities**

SVFPD participates in mutual aid agreements with neighboring districts, but has not identified any other opportunities for shared facilities or staff.

### **Government Structure Options**

No changes in the District's government structure are pending or proposed.

### **Evaluation of Management Efficiencies**

No changes to SVFPD's management are pending or proposed.

### **Local Accountability and Governance**

SVFPD is governed by a three-member Board of Directors, which holds public meetings on the first Wednesday of each month at Station #1.

## **TIMBER COVE**

### **Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies**

The District has made three unsuccessful applications for FEMA grant money to cover the cost of a new Type III Wildland engine. Funding for this purchase is not available in TCFPD's current budget. Other equipment is relatively up to date; a water tender was purchased in 2004, and the District's station was built in 1996.

### **Growth and Population Projections**

Sonoma County PRMD projections for the Sonoma Coast Planning Area (encompassing the length of the County's coast and extending up to 15 miles inland) anticipate annual growth of nearly 2 percent between 2000 and 2020. No major growth or expansion is anticipated within the District.

### **Financing Constraints and Opportunities**

The District is currently paying off a \$300,000, 15-year loan taken out in 1996 to pay for construction of the Timber Cove Fire Station, and it just acquired \$60,000 in debt on its new tender. TCFPD maintains reserves equal to approximately 20 to 25 percent of its total operating budget.

### **Cost Avoidance Opportunities**

Additional cooperation with neighboring districts could eliminate costs; however, Timber Cove's size and isolated location might make such cooperation impractical.

### **Opportunities for Rate Restructuring**

No opportunities for rate restructuring have been identified.

### **Opportunities for Shared Facilities**

TCFPD has automatic aid arrangements with the neighboring districts and volunteer fire companies of Monte Rio, Sea Ranch, Cazadero, Annapolis, and Fort Ross. It does not share staff or facilities.

### **Government Structure Options**

No changes to TCFPD's governance are pending or proposed.

### **Evaluation of Management Efficiencies**

The Timber Cove Fire Protection District's dependence on volunteer staff may prevent it from operating at maximum efficiency.

### **Local Accountability and Governance**

TCTPD has a three-member Board of Directors that meets the third Tuesday of every month at the fire station. Meetings are open to the public. The District also makes information available to the public via newsletters.

## VALLEY OF THE MOON

### **Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies**

According to the District, the Center Street station dates from the 1960s and should be upgraded; the Agua Caliente Road station requires dormitory and cohabitation improvements. VMFPD is currently exploring possible funding sources for these projects.

### **Growth and Population Projections**

According to Sonoma County PRMD predictions, population growth in the rural Sonoma Valley area (the unincorporated area outside the City of Sonoma USA) will average 0.71 percent between 2000 and 2020, as the population goes from 30,125 to 34,400. The District does not anticipate that it will absorb a significant proportion of this growth.

### **Financing Constraints and Opportunities**

VMFPD maintains general reserves equal to around 1 percent of its \$2.8 million budget, with overall reserves (including unrestricted designated funds) equal to 38 percent. The District is carrying \$300,000 in debt.

### **Cost Avoidance Opportunities**

VMFPD has a JPA with the City of Sonoma Fire Department under which the two agencies share some staff, training, and office space, resulting in significant cost savings. A separate contract for administrative support from the City of Sonoma may provide for additional cost avoidance.

### **Opportunities for Rate Restructuring**

The District's special tax was approved in November 2000. No opportunities for rate restructuring have been identified since then.

### **Opportunities for Shared Facilities**

VMFPD participates in automatic aid agreements with Sonoma County, under which it provides coverage for nearby volunteer districts, and with the Glen Ellen Fire Protection District. No opportunities for sharing of physical facilities have been identified.

### **Government Structure Options**

Under a Joint Powers Agreement, VMFPD and the City of Sonoma Fire Department are organized as the Sonoma Valley Fire Rescue Authority. There has been preliminary discussion of various options for the future of this JPA, including the possibility of making it the employer for both agencies.

### **Evaluation of Management Efficiencies**

The District has considered making the Sonoma Valley Fire and Rescue Authority its official employer, a move that could potentially increase management efficiency.

### **Local Accountability and Governance**

VMFPD is governed by a five-member Board of Directors, which meets the second Tuesday of each month at Station 1. These meetings are open to the public.



## WINDSOR

### **Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies**

Windsor Fire Protection District initiated plans to rebuild one of its two stations in 1999, but the project has stalled due to lack of funds. New multistory development in the Windsor Redevelopment Area has also created a need for specialized equipment, such as aerial ladders, for which the District currently lacks funding. A recent attempt to increase the District's special tax did not receive the two-thirds voter approval necessary to pass.

### **Growth and Population Projections**

Windsor's population has expanded rapidly in recent years; according to the District, between 1990 and 2003, the Town's population increased by over 100 percent, while calls for WFPD services went from 1.4 to 4.4 per day. New construction in the Town of Windsor's 486-acre redevelopment area will contribute to continued growth.

### **Financing Constraints and Opportunities**

WFPD has general reserves equal to 42 percent of its total expenditure budget; total reserves, both designated and general, are equal to 136 percent of the budget. Reserves are designated for tracking purposes only and their use is not restricted. The District is not carrying any debt. Tax revenues from the Windsor Redevelopment Area do not take into account assessed value acquired since the formation of the RDA; these revenues are frequently not sufficient to cover the cost of service to the area.

### **Cost Avoidance Opportunities**

Publishing District information in the local press allows WFPD to avoid costs that might otherwise be incurred by outreach efforts.

### **Opportunities for Rate Restructuring**

A measure on the November 2004 ballot attempted to triple the District's special tax, increasing it for the first time since it was passed in 1986; however, this measure did not receive the necessary two-thirds voter approval.

### **Opportunities for Shared Facilities**

The District has automatic aid agreements with Geyserville, Healdsburg, and Forestville. It works very closely with Rincon Valley Fire Protection District, sharing training, battalion chief duties, and emergency staff coverage. No additional opportunities for sharing of staff or facilities have been identified.

### **Government Structure Options**

No changes in WFPD governance are pending or proposed.

### **Evaluation of Management Efficiencies**

The Windsor Fire Protection District's dependence on volunteer staff could prevent it from operating at maximum efficiency.

### **Local Accountability and Governance**

WFPD is governed by a five-member elected Board of Directors, which meets the third Wednesday of each month at Station 1. Additional public information is made available on the District's recently updated website and in the local press.

## CAZADERO COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT

### **Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies**

CCSD's infrastructure and equipment are adequate to meet current demand and projected growth.

### **Growth and Population Projections**

No major growth is anticipated within the District's service area.

### **Financing Constraints and Opportunities**

The District maintains reserves equal to approximately 150 percent of its total operating budget, which includes expenditures for the fire protection, street lighting, and recreation services provided by CCSD. It is paying off around \$180,000 in debt on a recent engine purchase.

### **Cost Avoidance Opportunities**

No new opportunities for cost avoidance have been identified.

### **Opportunities for Rate Restructuring**

The District does not levy any special taxes. No opportunities for rate restructuring have been identified.

### **Opportunities for Shared Facilities**

The District participates in REDCOM, through which it provides reciprocal support to adjacent jurisdictions such as Russian River and Monte Rio Fire Protection Districts and Occidental Community Services District. CDF responds to calls within State Responsibility Areas of the District.

### **Government Structure Options**

No changes in CCSD's governance are pending or proposed.

### **Evaluation of Management Efficiencies**

No opportunities for improved management efficiency have been identified.

### **Local Accountability and Governance**

CCSD is governed by a five-member Board of Directors, which meets the second Monday of each month at the main fire station. Meetings are open to the public.

## OCCIDENTAL COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT

### **Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies**

OCSD's equipment is maintained through a 20-year replacement program. Renovation of its station is scheduled to begin in 2005. Infrastructure and equipment appear adequate to meet current and projected demand.

### **Growth and Population Projections**

No major growth is anticipated within the District's service area.

### **Financing Constraints and Opportunities**

The District maintains reserves equal to approximately 20 percent of its total \$189,000 operating budget.

### **Cost Avoidance Opportunities**

No new opportunities for cost avoidance have been identified.

### **Opportunities for Rate Restructuring**

The District has a parcel tax of \$12 per unit of risk, with four units of risk assigned to a single-family dwelling. This tax has a voter-approved maximum of \$20 per unit of risk.

### **Opportunities for Shared Facilities**

The District participates in REDCOM, through which it provides reciprocal support to adjacent jurisdictions such as Graton, Gold Ridge, Bodega Bay, and Monte Rio Fire Protection Districts and Cazadero Community Services District.

### **Government Structure Options**

While it is anticipated that Occidental and Camp Meeker CSDs will form a JPA or new CSD to provide consolidated water services, the fire branch of the District would not be affected by such an agreement.

### **Evaluation of Management Efficiencies**

No opportunities for improved management efficiency have been identified.

### **Local Accountability and Governance**

OCSD is governed by a five-member Board of Directors, which meets the second Tuesday of each month at the main fire station. Meetings are open to the public.

## **CITIES**

### **HEALDSBURG**

#### **Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies**

Healdsburg's 2002 Draft General Plan Update stated that development and annexation in the northern part of the City would necessitate the construction of a northern substation. Funding for construction of a new facility is not available at this time.

#### **Growth and Population Projections**

According to the Healdsburg Draft General Plan Update, the 2000 population of 10,722 is expected to increase to 12,894 at buildout; assuming 20-year buildout (not specified in the General Plan), this represents annual growth of just over 1 percent.

#### **Financing Constraints and Opportunities**

In addition to General Fund revenues, the Department receives funding from two contracts for service in County Service Area 40. A recent special equipment purchase was funded through an Indian Benefit Gaming Grant, and a portion of the Transient Occupancy Tax increase passed in November 2004 could go toward fire protection services, contingent on City Council approval. The Department's current operating budget is approximately \$1.35 million.

#### **Cost Avoidance Opportunities**

The Department is working to lower its ISO-assigned base fire flow through a sprinkler loan program that encourages high-risk buildings to retrofit their sprinkler systems. A lower base flow would require less equipment to respond to structure fires, freeing up funds to pay for needed wildland fire equipment. The District's plans to expand its volunteer program through incentives such as subsidized housing might also result in cost savings.

#### **Opportunities for Rate Restructuring**

No opportunities for rate restructuring have been identified.

#### **Opportunities for Shared Facilities**

The Healdsburg Fire Department shares responsibility for the protection of a "mutual threat zone" with CSA 40 and the Geyserville FPD. It has an automatic aid agreement with Windsor FPD and shares emergency medical response duties with a private ambulance company.

#### **Government Structure Options**

No changes in the Department's governance are pending or proposed.



### **Evaluation of Management Efficiencies**

The Department plans to expand its use of volunteers to compensate for staffing limitations.

### **Local Accountability and Governance**

The Healdsburg Fire Department is accountable to the City Manager, who is responsible to the City Council, a five-member elected body that meets the first and third Mondays of each month. Healdsburg is a General Law city.

## **PETALUMA**

### **Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies**

#### **Growth and Population Projections**

According to ABAG projections cited in the City's General Plan, Petaluma's population is expected to increase at an annual rate of 0.8 percent between 2000 and 2020. The District states that calls for service have outpaced growth in recent years, increasing by 88 percent between 1994 and 2002 (when the population grew by just 20 percent).

#### **Financing Constraints and Opportunities**

The Fire Department's operating budget of \$8.89 million comes primarily from the City's General Fund; General Fund reserves are \$3.4 million. The Department's ambulance service operates as an enterprise fund.

#### **Cost Avoidance Opportunities**

The Department plans to encourage the use of fire-resistant building materials and landscaping techniques, which may avoid costs through fire prevention.

#### **Opportunities for Rate Restructuring**

No opportunities for rate restructuring have been identified.

#### **Opportunities for Shared Facilities**

The Petaluma Fire Department has automatic aid agreements with the Rancho Adobe Fire Protection District and with the San Antonio, Wildemar, and Lakeville Volunteer Fire Companies.

#### **Government Structure Options**

No changes in the Department's governance are pending or proposed.

#### **Evaluation of Management Efficiencies**

The Department recently added three new positions in order to decrease overtime and meet increased demand for staff.

#### **Local Accountability and Governance**

The Petaluma Fire Department is accountable to the City Manager, who is responsible to the City Council, which consists of six elected members and an elected mayor. It meets the first and third Mondays of each month. Petaluma is a charter city.

## ROHNERT PARK

### **Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies**

Rohnert Park Department of Public Safety staff has identified the need for an additional staffed fire station and training facility located west of U.S. 101. Mitigation fees from an MOU between the City and the operators of a proposed casino are expected to pay for the construction and staffing of this facility, but the Department has not yet identified an acceptable site. In addition, staff has identified the need for an additional fire station to provide service to the growing community on the City's east side. No plans have been made to fund a fire station or additional personnel in this area. Rohnert Park's Public Facilities Financing Plan (PFFP) addresses the continued provision of necessary services, including police and fire, in the City's expansion areas; the PFFP recommends the use of a Maintenance Annuity Fund (MAF) of \$7,400 per new residential unit to fund these services.

### **Growth and Population Projections**

According to the Rohnert Park General Plan, the City's population is expected to increase at an average annual rate of 1 percent between 1999 and 2020. The development of new entertainment and commercial facilities, such as a proposed casino, a proposed shopping mall, and a concert hall that is currently under construction, may significantly increase the number of visitors to the area.

### **Financing Constraints and Opportunities**

The total Public Safety Department operating budget, for police and fire services combined, is \$15.6 million in FY 04-05. Rohnert Park maintains general reserves of around \$2.8 million (10 percent of net General Fund expenditures).

### **Cost Avoidance Opportunities**

Rohnert Park's Public Safety Department combines fire and police services. Public safety officers are trained in both areas and administrative support is shared between the two divisions, eliminating personnel costs and overhead.

### **Opportunities for Rate Restructuring**

No opportunities for rate restructuring have been identified.

### **Opportunities for Shared Facilities**

The Fire Division of the Public Safety Department has automatic aid agreements with Rancho Adobe and Rincon Valley Fire Protection Districts.

### **Government Structure Options**

No changes in the Department's governance are pending or proposed.

### **Evaluation of Management Efficiencies**

The use of shared staff between the Department's police and fire divisions may increase overall efficiency.

### **Local Accountability and Governance**

The Rohnert Park Public Safety Department is accountable to the City Manager, who is in turn responsible to the Council, which has five elected members and meets the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month. Rohnert Park operates under a Council-Manager form of government.

## **SANTA ROSA**

### **Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies**

A study completed in 2002 recommended the relocation of three Santa Rosa fire stations and the construction of three new stations in order to provide adequate service to growing areas of the City. Several of the Department's engines are also in need of upgrade or replacement. The November 2004 passage of a dedicated sales tax, a portion of which will pay for fire protection services, will help fund many of these infrastructure improvements. Capital expenditures budgeted under the sales tax measure include the construction of four stations and the purchase of three new engines. The City is also in the process of updating its development impact fees, which could provide additional revenues for capital projects.

### **Growth and Population Projections**

According to the City's General Plan, Santa Rosa's population is expected to experience an annual increase of 0.9 percent between 2000 and 2020. There has been especially significant growth in the southwestern part of the City, resulting in rapid increases in the demand for service in that area.

### **Financing Constraints and Opportunities**

The Department's current budget is approximately \$21.0 million; funding comes primarily from the City's General Fund. General Fund reserves are expected to be around \$22.0 million as of June 2005. A sales tax increase passed in November 2004 and dedicated to public safety improvements will generate annual revenues estimated at \$2.8 million. The City is currently working with a consultant to prepare an update of its Capital Facilities Fee, which could generate additional revenues for Fire Department facilities.

### **Cost Avoidance Opportunities**

The Department receives free training and contractual fees in exchange for the use of its Training Center and Training Tower.

### **Opportunities for Rate Restructuring**

The City is currently working with a consultant to prepare an update of its Capital Facilities Fee, which could generate additional revenues for Fire Department facilities.

### **Opportunities for Shared Facilities**

The Department contracts to provide all staff, services, and equipment for Roseland Fire Protection District. It also has automatic aid agreements with Rincon Valley, Kenwood, and Bennett Valley FPDs and participates in a three-way mutual threat zone agreement with Rincon Valley FPD and the California Department of Forestry.

### **Government Structure Options**

No changes in the Department's governance are pending or proposed.

### **Evaluation of Management Efficiencies**

The November 2004 passage of a new dedicated sales tax will allow the Department to add new positions and retain positions that would have otherwise been eliminated, decreasing the likelihood that staffing shortages will affect Department services.

### **Local Accountability and Governance**

The Santa Rosa Fire Department is responsible to the City Manager, who is accountable to the City Council, an elected body of seven members that meets the first four Tuesdays of each month. Santa Rosa is a charter city.



## SEBASTOPOL

### **Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies**

The Sebastopol Fire Department's equipment and facilities appear adequate to meet projected growth.

### **Growth and Population Projections**

The City of Sebastopol General Plan anticipates annual growth of 0.75 percent between 2000 and 2005, with no projections beyond that year. ABAG projects similar growth of 0.7 percent annually between 2000 and 2020.

### **Financing Constraints and Opportunities**

The majority of the Department's \$445,000 operating budget comes from the City's General Fund. Sebastopol maintains overall general reserves of around \$51,000. Annexation fees and a special sales tax dedicated to citywide capital improvements provide additional sources of revenue to the Fire Department.

### **Cost Avoidance Opportunities**

The Department has introduced a number of cost saving measures in recent years, including a countywide purchasing agreement resulting in lower pager costs and the use of energy-efficient solar power equipment to decrease utilities expenses.

### **Opportunities for Rate Restructuring**

A ¼ cent sales tax passed in November 2002 and renewed in November 2004 has been designated by the City Council for citywide capital improvements, including fire facilities and infrastructure. No further opportunities for rate restructuring have been identified.

### **Opportunities for Shared Facilities**

The Department has automatic aid agreements with Gold Ridge, Rincon Valley, and Graton Fire Protection Districts.

### **Government Structure Options**

No changes in the Department's governance are pending or proposed.

### **Evaluation of Management Efficiencies**

The Department's largely volunteer force may not be capable of meeting the demands of a growing and aging population; in order to operate at maximum efficiency, additional full-time staff may be necessary.

### **Local Accountability and Governance**

The Sebastopol Fire Department is accountable to the City Manager, who is responsible to the City Council, which consists of five elected members and meets the first and third Tuesdays of each month. Sebastopol has a Council-Manager form of government.

## **SONOMA**

### **Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies**

New high-density, multistory development in Sonoma may require specialized equipment that is not included in the Department's current capital replacement plan.

### **Growth and Population Projections**

ABAG projects that the City of Sonoma's population will increase at an average annual rate of 0.8 percent between 2000 and 2020. A growing emphasis on high-density development may result in new demand for equipment that is adapted to multistory buildings.

### **Financing Constraints and Opportunities**

The Department's FY 04-05 operating budget is approximately \$1.9 million, primarily from the City's General Fund. General Fund reserves amount to \$17 million. The Department's FireMed ambulance service division operates as an enterprise fund.

### **Cost Avoidance Opportunities**

Potential changes to the Department's existing JPA with Valley of the Moon Fire Protection District, such as making the JPA the employer for both agencies, could eliminate administrative costs.

### **Opportunities for Rate Restructuring**

No opportunities for rate restructuring have been identified.

### **Opportunities for Shared Facilities**

The Department participates in a JPA with Valley of the Moon Fire Protection District under which the two agencies share training, call responses, and other operations. Sonoma Fire Department and Valley of the Moon FPD have discussed making this JPA the employer for both agencies, among various options.

### **Government Structure Options**

No changes in the Department's governance are pending or proposed.

### **Evaluation of Management Efficiencies**

No opportunities for increased management efficiency have been identified.

### **Local Accountability and Governance**

The Sonoma Fire Department is accountable to the City Manager, who is in turn responsible to the five-member elected City Council, which meets the first and third Wednesdays of each month. Sonoma operates under the Council-Manager form of government.



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## APPENDIX A:

# EXAMPLES OF CONSOLIDATIONS AND REORGANIZATIONS OF FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES IN CALIFORNIA

**Appendix A**  
**Consolidation and Reorganization of Fire Protection Services**  
**Sonoma County LAFCO Municipal Service Reviews, EPS #13023**

Fire Protection Provider	Participating Agencies	Area (sq. mi.)	Service Pop.	Employees	Date of Formation
Orange County Fire Authority	Cities of Aliso Viejo, Dana Point, Laguna Niguel, La Palma, Placentia, San Clemente, Stanton, Westminster, Buena Park, Irvine, Laguna Woods, Los Alamitos, San Juan Capistrano, Tustin, Yorba Linda, Cypress, Laguna Hills, Lake Forest, Mission Viejo, Rancho Santa Margarita, Seal Beach, Villa Park, and Unincorporated Orange County	511	1.3 million	1,081	Formed in 1980 as the Orange County Fire Department; renamed in 1995.
Southern Marin Fire District	Alto-Richardson FPD and Tamalpais FPD; JPA with City of Sausalito; MOU with City of Mill Valley, investigating further future consolidation	9.5	20,500	37 full-time, 12 volunteer	1999
Tualatin Valley Fire and Rescue (OR)	Washington County Fire District No. 1, Tualatin Rural Fire Protection District, Multnomah County Fire District No. 20, Beaverton City Fire Department. (Service area covers cities of Beaverton, Durham, King City, Rivergrove, Sherwood, Tigard, Tualatin, West Linn, and Wilsonville, and unincorporated areas in Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington Counties.)	210	400,000+	400 paid, 100 volunteer	1972 - Formation of Washington County Fire District No. 1; 1989 - Washington County Fire District and Tualatin Rural Fire Protection District form Tualatin Valley Fire and Rescue; 1995 - Multnomah Co. Fire District No. 20 joins TVFR; 1996 - Beaverton City Fire Department joins TVFR
Alameda County Fire Dept.	Unincorporated County, City of San Leandro, City of Dublin, Lawrence Berkeley National Lab; original consolidation brought together Castro Valley Fire Dept., Eden Fire Dept., and County Fire Patrol.	460	234,500	261 authorized positions, 50 reserve joined 1997, Lawrence Berkeley Lab joined 2002	1993; City of San Leandro joined 1995, City of Dublin joined 1997, Lawrence Berkeley Lab joined 2002
E. Contra Costa Fire Protection District	Communities of Bethel Island, Brentwood, Byron, Discovery Bay, Knightsen, and Oakley, and portions of Marsh Creek canyon and Morgan Territory.	250		57	2002
Livermore-Pleasanton Fire Dept.	Cities of Livermore and Pleasanton	46	123,000		1997
Tracy Fire Department	Tracy City Fire Dept. and Tracy Rural Fire Dept.	218		70, plus reserve force of 30	1999
San Diego County	35 existing fire protection agencies				November 2004 - advisory measure asking voter opinion on possible consolidation of 35 existing fire protection agencies received 81% approval; study underway.



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## APPENDIX B:

### “NEXT STEPS” MEMO



## MEMORANDUM

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To: Carole Cooper, Sonoma LAFCO  
From: Walter Kieser and Richard Berkson  
Subject: Fire MSRs "Next Steps"; EPS #13023  
Date: July 20, 2005

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We are pleased with the extensive MSR participation and input from fire service providers at last week's hearing. We were also gratified by the Commission's willingness to help sustain the effectiveness of fire protection services in Sonoma County. This Memorandum outlines a process that we recommend for taking this next important step.

Specifically, the Commission asked us to offer our ideas regarding how LAFCO could help with this process. The MSR report on the fire protection services identified a number of issues that over time that, if not addressed, could result in reduced fire protection, especially in the more rural portions of the County. More broadly, the fiscal (cost and revenue) conditions of nearly all fire fighting organizations, including the city departments, are deteriorating due to costs increasing faster than available revenues. Thus, the opportunities to improve efficiencies and to be more cost effective are essential to maintaining or improving fire protection services throughout the County. Higher levels of cooperation between existing entities, and in some instances further consolidation, should be considered as a part of this agenda.

The Fire Services MSR Report provides a good data base and identifies specific problems. There is no need to belabor these points; however, it will be valuable to keep the information in the Report up to date as time goes on. As a part of the follow-on effort, additional targeted analysis may be valuable as specific options are considered; for example, it may be helpful to engage a consultant specializing in fire protection analysis to study the geography of existing station and equipment deployment and to consider alternative configurations. Operational analysis of emergency medical services in relation to fire protection services may also be in order. Similarly, more detailed operational analysis may be necessary to determine the timing (and other implications) of conversion from volunteer to full time position fire fighters. The following procedural outline is simply intended to guide LAFCO as it helps organize this multi-jurisdictional cooperative effort.



## SUSTAINING FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES

The LAFCO-sponsored effort following the completion of the Fire Service MSR Report is envisioned as a cooperative effort engaging all of the fire fighting organizations serving Sonoma County. While LAFCO seeks to address the identified problems, it has no particular agenda or desired outcome. It is hoped that through a sincere consideration of the facts, identification of options available, and targeted analysis, that a set of solutions acceptable to all stakeholders will be forthcoming. The importance of public education in these affairs should not be underestimated. The public tends to take all public services for granted, including fire protection. The Committee will be cognizant of this and should therefore employ appropriate public relations strategies.

1. Establish an Ad Hoc Committee. LAFCO should facilitate an effort to convene a Sonoma County Fire Service Committee composed of fire chiefs and other representatives. This Committee should be tasked with identifying and evaluating cooperation and reorganization options. LAFCO staff can assist the Committee with organizational and logistical support.
2. Establish strategic objectives and limitations. The MSR Report provides a sound basis for establishing a set of strategic objectives regarding increased levels of cooperation and reorganization. The strategic objectives will provide, on an ongoing basis, the rationale for the effort, answering the question "why are we doing this". The strategic objectives will also assist with the identification of options and the evaluation of these options.
3. Describe geographic distinctions. As an initial step the Committee should assign problems that have been identified to geographic sub-areas of the County. It is recognized that certain problems (e.g. fire fighter compensation and benefits) are common to all organizations while other problems are more geographically limited. In this regard is important to emphasize that there will always be significant differences between levels of service between urban portions of the County and the rural areas.
4. Identify cooperation and reorganization options. Following the geographic articulation of problems, the Committee should identify and define possible cooperation and reorganization options. At the present time there are several successful examples of ongoing cooperation (e.g. REDCOM) that could be built upon. It is also important to recognize the unique characteristics of sub-areas of the County; the problems differ given these distinctions and so the solutions will likely vary too. Options for increased cooperation and reorganization can be based on cooperation and reorganization efforts in other counties, as well as options that are appropriate for fire protection services and organization in Sonoma County.

5. Evaluation of cooperation and reorganization options. Following the initial identification of the options, key characteristics can further described and evaluated, both in terms of transition steps, financial implications, and impacts on service levels and the affected organizations. It is at this stage that consultant support may be helpful. For example, a number of firms specialize in dynamic, computer-based analysis fire protection and emergency medical services. Similarly, fiscal consultants can prepare detailed budget forecasts that account for expected growth in revenues versus the differential growth in costs associated with a cooperation or reorganization option.
6. Selection of a preferred strategy. The evaluation of cooperation and reorganization options will allow the Committee to "zero in" on those that show the most promise technically and also meet other decision criteria, including those typically applied by LAFCO in its consideration of reorganization proposals. This consideration and sifting would hopefully result in a preferred strategy; the strategy would articulate a specific set of cooperation and reorganization recommendations that can be embraced by the fire districts and the other fire fighting entities. It would be at this time that the individual Boards of Directors and city councils would be apprised of the Committee's efforts and given the opportunity to weigh in.
7. Conduct Community Workshops. The preferred strategy, along with the foregoing work by the Committee and input from Board and city council members, should be presented to the public in a set of public workshops held around the County. These meetings would be part of the broader effort to engage and educate the public regarding fire fighting issues and proposals to assure continuation and/or improvement of service levels.
8. Initiation of Action Plan. Comments by the individual Boards and the city councils and the response to the Public Workshops regarding the Committee's preferred strategies can lead to refinement and prioritization of the actions that comprise the strategy. Initiation of specific actions may involve unilateral decisions by individual (or cooperating) fire fighting entities.
9. LAFCO consideration of reorganization proposals. The preferred strategy may include actions that require LAFCO consideration. LAFCO staff, who will be a technical participant in the Committee efforts, will keep abreast of its efforts and thus anticipate and even help shape such proposals assuring their completeness and accuracy. As with all reorganization proposals, LAFCO will follow statutory and locally established procedures in considering the merits and rendering a decision regarding each reorganization proposal.

Throughout the process described above, LAFCO staff can be involved in Committee meetings and also assist with decision-maker and the proposed community workshops. LAFCO resources or special grants from the County or city governments will be needed to support Committee efforts, particularly if consulting services are required.