

**MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW
AND SPHERE OF INFLUENCE STUDY
FOR NORTH COUNTY (REGION 6)
FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICE AGENCIES**

Subject Agencies:

**Cloverdale
Fire Protection District**

**Northern Sonoma County
Fire Protection District**

**County Service Area 40 – Fire Services
(IRP 61 - Geysers, IRP 63 – Fitch Mountain, IRP 64 -
Sotoyome)**

Public Review Draft

Sonoma Local Agency Formation Commission

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Date of Last MSR/SOI Adopted by LAFCO: MSR and SOI Adoption for Geyserville FPD, 2018

MSR and SOI Study (not adopted) for Cloverdale and Geyserville FPDs, 2015

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MSR/SOI BACKGROUND

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF LAFCO

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

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

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

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

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

PURPOSE OF A MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW

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

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

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

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

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

PURPOSE OF A SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SCOPE OF STUDY

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

In North County (Region 6), the Northern Sonoma County and Cloverdale Fire Protection Districts have expressed a strong interest in consolidation, as well as annexation of the remaining County Service Area 40 territories in the region. (Northern Sonoma County FPD annexed CSA 40 territory that had been covered by the Knights Valley Volunteer Fire Company in 2019.)

The City of Healdsburg has not indicated a position with regard to consolidation efforts in the region, other than to note that it is best-positioned to continue to provide fire and emergency services to Fitch Mountain and Alexander Valley (CSA 40 territories). The

City has been providing services to these areas under contract to the County for many years.

If the Commission adopts this Municipal Service Review and its determinations and agrees to amend spheres of influence as proposed, it would be expected that Northern Sonoma County and Cloverdale FPDs would pursue consolidation, in concert with annexation of some or all of the remaining CSA 40 territory in the region. It is also expected that the new regional entity might pursue a contract for service with South Lake County FPD to provide some service coverage for a portion of the Geysers area, and that it would likely continue a contractual arrangement with the City of Healdsburg to provide some fire and emergency services to the Fitch Mountain and Alexander Valley areas.

Note Regarding Terminology

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

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

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

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

ORGANIZATION OF STUDY

This report includes a discussion of issues common to both of the subject agencies, with an accompanying set of determinations. The balance of the report features what are effectively “stand alone” Municipal Service Reviews for each subject agency, describing agency conditions, and making accompanying determinations.

The format of the “stand-alone” MSR’s are based on the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Act, the LAFCO MSR Guidelines prepared by the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research, and adopted Sonoma LAFCO local policies and procedures.

This report includes four appendices:

Appendix 1: Individual Agency Profiles

Appendix 2: Guide to Response Time Standards

Appendix 3: Guide to Revenue Sources for Subject Agencies

Each agency MSR includes:

- A description of the subject agency;
- MSR draft determinations for public and Commission review; and
- Identification of any other issues that the Commission should consider.

AFFECTED AGENCIES

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

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

The affected local agencies for this MSR/SOI are:

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

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

- CALFIRE
- Coastal Valleys EMS Agency
- Napa County Fire
- Napa Local Agency Formation Commission
- Lake Local Agency Formation Commission
- Sonoma County Fire District
- North Sonoma Coast Fire Protection District
- South Lake County Fire Protection District
- Sanel Valley Fire Protection District

MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW: SUMMARY DETERMINATIONS

Growth and Population Projections

Determinations

- **Although there continues to be modest population growth in the North County, subject agencies point to an array of other factors driving increased call volumes.**
- **These factors include an aging population and an increase in tourist visitors to the region.**
- **Similarly, agencies do not consider land use development a driver of call volume.**

Discussion

In previous Municipal Service Reviews for fire and emergency service agencies, Sonoma LAFCO has cited population growth estimates from the County and cities to analyze the potential impacts that a growing population will have on service provision.

Those analyses have indicated that call volume growth at fire and emergency service agencies is largely disconnected from population growth – for example, agencies typically report call volume growth rates of five percent per year or higher. The general population growth rate in the County is generally just over one percent annually.

Agency staff cite a variety of other factors that they believe drives call volume growth, including:

- An aging population, which drives an increase in medical service calls.
- An influx of residents from suburban and urban regions of the Bay Area and elsewhere, where expectations of service are higher. Agency staff indicate that these residents are more likely to avail themselves of emergency services than longtime residents who may be more independent.
- A steady increase in tourism, bringing visitors to the area, as well as increased traffic on the roadways throughout the region. This population drives rescue and medical service calls.

It is difficult to imagine sources of information that would accurately quantify the service impacts that these trends would engender. Therefore, in the subsequent agency sections, high-impact trends will be noted alongside historical call volume growth statistics to indicate how agencies are being impacted.

Disadvantaged Unincorporated Communities

Determinations

- **There are no LAFCO-designated disadvantaged unincorporated communities within the territories served by the subject agencies.**

Discussion

SB 244 (Chapter 513, Statutes of 2011) made changes to the CKH Act related to disadvantaged unincorporated communities. Disadvantaged unincorporated communities, or "DUCs," are inhabited territories (containing twelve or more registered voters) where the annual median household income is less than eighty percent of the statewide annual median household income.

On October 12, 2012, LAFCO adopted a policy for the definition of 'Inhabited Territory' for the Implementation of SB 244 Regarding Disadvantaged Unincorporated Communities, which identified twenty-one inhabited unincorporated communities for purposes of implementing SB 244. Of these, seven communities are designated as disadvantaged:

- Boyes Hot Springs
- Cazadero
- Glen Ellen
- Guerneville
- Monte Rio
- Temelec
- Valley Ford

Because none of the subject agencies provide fire and emergency medical services to the disadvantaged unincorporated communities, a determination regarding the lack of appropriate services to these territories is not warranted.

Capacity and Adequacy of Public Facilities and Services

Determinations

- **The subject agencies are experiencing staffing challenges of one form or another. These challenges range across a spectrum that includes:**
 - **A decline in active volunteer ranks**
 - **Declines in volunteer availability during particular shifts/times**
 - **A lack of promotional career paths for career professionals**
 - **Difficulty in retaining career professionals due to salary and benefit competition in Sonoma County and the Bay Area region**
- **Improvements to stipend programs for volunteers may enable the agencies to address staffing challenges without transitioning fully to career-professional staffing, which the agencies cannot support financially.**
- **The North County agencies manage to provide “2/0” staffing at all times – the ability to respond to incident calls with two qualified personnel. This staffing level is made possible through a two-year funding agreement with the County.**
- **Establishing more career-professional positions (particularly during weekday daytime shifts) within a regional agency would provide more opportunities for career progression.**
- **The two agencies have already begun to provide training jointly as part of their recently-implemented Joint Powers Agreement.**
- **A review of response time statistics indicate that the agencies are meeting National Fire Protection Association guidelines, though the statistics are rudimentary and could obscure significant service level deficiencies.**
- **The facilities and equipment of the subject agencies are in good condition.**
- **Both agencies have expressed that provision of fire prevention services, notably vegetation management, has remained an urgent priority.**

Discussion

The capacity and adequacy of facilities and services for each agency is reported in the subsequent subject agency sections. A general, area-wide assessment is presented here.

Staffing

Staffing levels for the subject agencies are at appropriate levels, but are increasingly difficult to maintain with regard to engine staffing due to declining volunteer participation, particularly during weekday daytimes.

There are five broad categorizations of staff:

1. Leadership – Chiefs, and in limited cases captains, who can be full-time paid, part-time paid, stipend paid, or not paid.
2. Administration – Generally part-time paid positions, with responsibility for records, purchasing, financial processing, and a myriad of other activities.

3. Firefighters/medical technicians – Generally classified as firefighters or engineers, with emergency medical technician or paramedic training, on a full-time or part-time career status.
4. Volunteer firefighters/medical technicians – With the same training and capability expectations as above (save paramedic training), but serving on a voluntary, non-employee status, often provided with stipends based on shifts, call response, or training session attendance.
5. Interns/Trainees – Generally volunteers who have not completed mandatory training but who are enrolled in a training program either provided by the agency or by an institution (notably the Santa Rosa Junior College program).

The challenge for fire and emergency service providers is to blend a mix of these types of staff into a cohesive team, meeting staff needs, and accomplishing that using available funding.

Both agencies rely on volunteers to some degree.

Training

In order to serve the public, firefighters undergo rigorous training so that they can appropriately respond to a wide array of emergency calls.

Career firefighters often enroll in training programs offered by educational institutions; in Sonoma County, the Santa Rosa Junior College (SRJC) offers a firefighter academy program.

Volunteer firefighters do not have to complete as rigorous a training program – the SRJC also offers an academy program targeted at volunteers.

The Federal government recommends that all active firefighters undertake training for 20 hours per month. Agencies in Region 6 typically arrange training programs in house, but admit that volunteer firefighters rarely if ever meet this standard.

Northern Sonoma County and Cloverdale coordinate joint training programs.

Call Volumes

REDCOM, the joint powers agency that provides dispatch services to almost all of the fire and EMS service providers in the County, logs calls for service in a variety of ways. (Cloverdale FPD relies on CALFIRE dispatch services located in St. Helena).

A “first cut” of response statistics is simply a count of the number of calls received in each agency territory and an average of the response times for calls (see following section).

Further analysis can indicate which agency responded to calls within a given area – generally most calls are responded to by the agency, but some calls are supported with mutual aid response. (Mutual aid response can be in support of a local agency that has responded to a call, or response when the subject agency is unable to respond.)

It should be noted that Northern Sonoma County and Cloverdale jointly respond to calls in the CSA 40 territories of the Geysers (IRP 61) and that Northern Sonoma County provides significant mutual aid response in the Sotoyome (Dry Creek Valley) area of CSA 41.

Both the City of Healdsburg's Fire Department and CALFIRE provide significant coverage for the CSA 40 territories of Sotoyome (Dry Creek Valley) and IRP 63 – Fitch Mountain. The City does so under contract to the County of Sonoma; CALFIRE provides service only during the fire season.

REDCOM also records the type of call received, with common categories like vehicle accidents and medical responses, and uncommon ones like structure fires or hazardous material incidents.

(One of the most common calls within the "medical" category is "lift assist", where crews respond to residents who have fallen and need assistance.)

Call volume characteristics for each agency are described in subsequent chapters.

Response Times

In each of the individual agency sections of the report, the response time statistics for the agency is listed and compared to National Fire Protection Association standards, which are discussed in Appendix 3.

Although it is clearly crucially important to evaluate an emergency service agency on the basis of response times, the statistics require clarification and understanding.

To determine response time statistics, one would look at all of the calls directed to an agency within a given timeframe, and then average the time it took for the agency to arrive on scene for each call.

The statistics listed in this report attempt to follow that methodology, but crucial factors are not reflected in the numbers.

For example, if an agency is unable to respond to a call for any reason, it is redirected to a neighboring agency that provides mutual aid backup, and the call is no longer part of the response time statistics for the "base" agency.

Clearly, mutual aid response is the ideal course of action, but the response time statistics make no distinction regarding why an agency was unable to respond – were resources responding to other calls, or were there no resources available due to unavailability of staffing?

Similarly, the statistics simply indicate how long it took to respond to a call and not whether appropriate resources were dispatched.

Therefore, although the response time statistics shown in this report are valid, they do not present a complete picture of an agency's ability to meet standards of service.

Emergency Medical Service

All subject agencies report that three-quarters or more of service calls are related to medical needs, so provision of emergency medical services ("EMS") is really their primary mission.

In the vernacular of fire and EMS agencies, providing emergency medical service is "turning victims into patients", and is considered a crucial "front door" entry point for medical care.

Agencies provide emergency medical services in a variety of ways:

Basic Life Support

The Region 6 agencies provide what is termed "basic life support" service, meaning that firefighters are trained as Emergency Medical Technicians ("EMTs"), providing a level of medical care for victims of illness or injury until they can be provided full medical care by an advanced life support provider or at a hospital. Basic life support ("BLS") comprises an initial assessment of a victim and airway maintenance and cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

A key understanding of BLS responses to incidents is that the firefighter EMTs assess and stabilize a victim in preparation for transport by an agency or private provider that has ambulance capability.

Advanced Life Support

Provision of Advanced Life Support service, or "ALS", requires a higher degree of training, because staff can use needles, administer drugs, and make incisions in victims to stabilize them for transport to a hospital. Firefighters who are trained in ALS procedures are called paramedics.

Because of the more expansive set of medical interventions that paramedics can provide, ALS provision requires a more expansive array of equipment and supplies.

Paramedics can be based on ambulances or on engines. If an ambulance is staffed with cross-trained paramedics, the ambulances are often based on box vans rather than panel vans, to enable storage of rescue equipment and supplies. (ALS service can be provided using the typical panel van ambulance, if the paramedics are relying on firefighters to do rescue and extractions.)

The subject agencies in Region 6 do not provide ALS coverage, relying instead on the Cloverdale Health Care District, and Bells Ambulance (a private company).

Ambulance (Transport) Service

The subject agencies do not provide ambulance transport services.

Is ALS Service Financially Sustainable?

Providing advanced life support service is expensive:

- There are no volunteer paramedics; paramedics are paid staff.
- Supplies for paramedic services are more numerous and expensive than supplies for basic life support service.
- If ALS service is provided using ambulances, rather than engines, equipment costs are high. (Ambulances have far shorter lifetimes than engines, requiring replacement on a three- to five-year timeframe instead of the twenty years or more lifetime for engines.)

Despite the high costs of “standing up” ALS resources, a layperson could be excused for assuming that “ambulance service” can “make money” for an agency, given that patients are billed for service.

Indeed there is a revenue stream for agencies that provide ambulance-based service: an emergency response requiring transport to a hospital is generally billed at rates on the order of \$4000. However, given the vagaries of the health care system, agencies recoup just over thirty percent of their billing rate from insurers.

Simply put, ambulance-based life support coverage can only recoup costs (or make a return) if service utilization is high – with ambulance crews busy on calls most of the time, not just a few times per shift. Private providers also make significant returns on “transports” – moving patients from one health care facility to another.

Facilities

The North County agencies own and maintain a variety of facilities that house vehicles and equipment and in two cases provide quarters for employees.

The stations in Geyserville and Cloverdale were constructed relatively recently, and are suited for employee housing and administrative uses.

Northern Sonoma County FPD maintains three stations suited only for vehicle storage, not staffing. If their operational status is unchanged, these stations are adequate, but may require installation of ventilation equipment or other improvements if they are used more frequently in operations.

CALFIRE operates two stations in the Region, one at the southern end of Cloverdale and the other just north of the City of Healdsburg. These operations provide mutual aid service during the wildfire season but are not staffed in the off-season.

The Dry Creek Rancheria Band of Pomo Indians maintains fire fighting vehicles and equipment at the River Rock Casino. Though the Rancheria provides on-site and some mutual aid capability in the area, this operation is not studied within the scope of this report.

Table 1 – Facility Inventory

Agency - Facility	Suited for Staff	Upgrade Needed for Staff	Seismic Issues	Rebuild/Remodel Indicated	Notes
Northern Sonoma County (Headquarters)	Yes	No	No	No	
Northern Sonoma County (Remote)	No	No	Unknown		Vehicle storage only
Cloverdale	Yes	No	No		

Equipment

Agencies in North County utilize a variety of equipment, including “typical” engines, “wildland” engines, rescue trucks, one ladder truck, water tenders, and other specialized equipment

“Typical” engines are suited for structure fire deployments and rescues and are designated as Type 1 or 2. “Wildland” engines are designated as Types 3 through 7, and among other features include four wheel drive and high ride clearance.

Most agencies plan to retain vehicles for a fifteen or twenty-year life cycle. Although vehicles can have quite low mileage at the end of that lifespan (sometimes under 20,000 miles), maintenance costs for hydraulic equipment becomes prohibitively expensive and parts availability becomes problematic. Although there are cases where vehicles are well past their useful life, generally speaking the agency vehicle fleets are in reasonable condition.

Almost all agencies have at least a cursory vehicle replacement plan. Most plans have short time horizons (e.g. five years).

Agencies generally do not have a dedicated capital reserve fund for equipment purchases or facility upgrades and maintenance, instead funding these categories out of unrestricted reserves.

Without a rigorous capital program analysis, it is difficult to evaluate whether a given agency can sustainably fund vehicle and facility costs.

Financial Ability to Provide Service

Determinations

- **The subject agencies do not prepare multi-year budget projections, which would nominally indicate impending financial sustainability challenges.**
- **The facilities operated by the North County agencies are generally appropriate for their use.**
- **The City of Healdsburg has provided service to the IRP 64 (Sotoyome) and IRP 63 (Fitch Mountain) areas under contract to the County for many years, but believes that the contract is not providing sufficient recompense for service provision.**
- **The County is providing short-term funding to the NSCFPD and Cloverdale FPD to support paid staffing.**

Discussion

Northern Sonoma County and Cloverdale FPDs are able to provide appropriately-staffed responses in part through a short-term funding agreement with the County.

Like many agencies in the County, the Fire Protection Districts face increasing expenses and relatively flat revenue streams. There are four general categories of rising expenses:

- The need to implement stipends for volunteer firefighters, to increase stipend levels, to establish career firefighter positions, and to increase salaries and benefits for career firefighters to remain competitive in the labor market.
- Supplies, equipment maintenance, and equipment replacement costs.
- Facility maintenance and replacement costs.
- Vehicle replacement costs.

Both Districts rely primarily on ad valorem property taxes, which rise only as property values are re-assessed (modest annual re-assessments, or reassessments when property is sold). Cloverdale FPD also relies on a voter-approved parcel tax for revenue.

Governance and Accountability

Determinations

- **The Fire Protection Districts have well-functioning governing boards.**
- **The Districts report no particular difficulty in recruiting candidates to run for board seats, though most have not seen contested seats either.**
- **There are no apparent instances of recent violations of open meeting regulations, campaign regulations, or other accountability requirements among the agencies in North County.**

Discussion

The agencies in North County have governing boards that are meeting standards of ethical and professional conduct, and have reasonably healthy elected board and council member turnover.

Opportunity for Shared Services

Determinations

- **Any proposed reorganizations of subject agencies, or contractual service arrangements, are unlikely to generate significant cost savings.**
- **A regionally consolidated agency would be better positioned to evaluate and project capital and expense needs, enabling agency leadership to develop sustainable funding strategies.**

Discussion

The opportunities to achieve cost savings through a regional consolidation of agencies in North County is likely to be modest, resulting from more cost-effective equipment replacement and management. There is little opportunity for reductions in leadership positions (although some leadership positions may be reclassified), and there would not be any expected reductions in firefighter ranks (if anything, there will be additions to paid staffing in the future).

In summary, although a regionally consolidated agency in North County would achieve some cost savings through gains in efficiency, savings will be outstripped by a likely increase, over time, in paid staffing positions.

MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW: CLOVERDALE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

Agency Profile

The Cloverdale Fire Protection District (CFPD, Cloverdale Fire, or the District) provides fire and emergency services to the northern portion of the North County in a region once designated as “Zone 6”, and now as “Region 6”. The District was formed in 1994.

The District has primary responsibility for serving over 67 square miles of territory (Figure 1) including the City of Cloverdale and surrounding territory. Other than in Cloverdale, the territory is lightly developed with rural residential development. The District serves 4,725 parcels within its service area.

CFPD maintains a headquarters station (Station #1) in the City of Cloverdale.

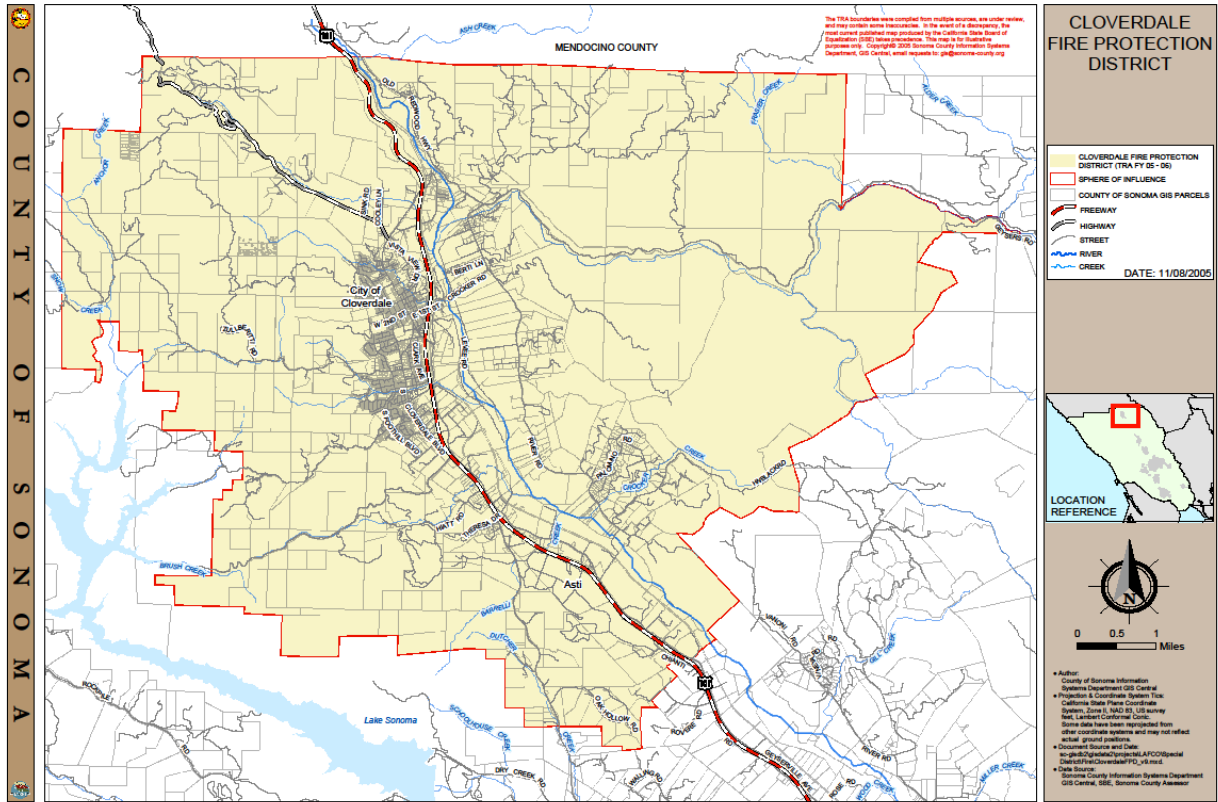
The District has mutual aid agreements with Northern Sonoma County FPD and the Anderson Valley Community Services District and Sanel Valley Fire Protection District in Mendocino County.

The District relies on part-time paid staff for leadership and administrative roles, and fire and emergency service professionals paid on a stipend basis. CFPD maintains living quarters for staff.

Primary funding for the District comes from property ad valorem taxes and from a voter-approved parcel tax. (The parcel tax rate is nominally \$88 per single family dwelling.)

The District also has an associated non-profit foundation that raises funds that are generally used to support equipment and vehicle purchases.

Figure 1: Map of Cloverdale Fire Protection District Territory



POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT MSR DETERMINATIONS

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

DETERMINATION 1. GROWTH AND POPULATION

Growth and population projections for the affected area.

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

Determinations

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

Discussion

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

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

Population

Land use planning within CFPD's territory is managed by the City of Cloverdale and the County of Sonoma's Permit Sonoma department.

The County of Sonoma's General Plan includes statistics and projections for both the City of Cloverdale and for the surrounding region.

The County General Plan 2020 divides the County into nine planning areas. Planning Area Objectives and Policies recognize the circumstances of each of the nine planning areas of the County and the fact that each area warrants its own unique policies.

These policies also provide specific guidance regarding the use of individual properties. Most urbanized growth is expected to occur within Urban Service Areas.

The County has two goals that reinforce the philosophy of City centered growth. These goals, as stated in the County General Plan 2020 are as follows:

GOAL LU-2: Accommodate the major share of future growth within the nine existing cities and their expansion areas and within selected unincorporated communities, which are planned to have adequate water and sewer capacities.

GOAL LU-3: Locate future growth within the cities and unincorporated Urban Service Areas in a compact manner using vacant "infill" parcels and lands next to existing development at the edge of these areas.

The General Plan includes the "North County Planning Area" and enumerates a series of policies that strictly limit development of all types, and directs that development occur within existing urban and suburban areas that have municipal service provision (sanitation and water).

Cloverdale FPD serves a portion of the North County Planning Area including the City of Cloverdale.

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

3.2 CLOVERDALE /NORTHEAST COUNTY

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

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

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

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

The County General Plan population projections for the Cloverdale Planning Area is stated in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Cloverdale/Northeast County Projected Growth

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

Transient Population

Fire and emergency services agencies respond to “transient” populations as well as resident populations within their service areas. For some agencies, the service needs for transient populations can greatly exceed the needs for resident populations.

Cloverdale notes that a portion of service calls are related to incidents on Highways 101.

Development

The City of Cloverdale and the County of Sonoma have jurisdiction over land use and planning for the area served by the District. The City of Cloverdale continues to promote appropriate residential and commercial development, in part through annexations of territory within its existing sphere of influence.

Permit Sonoma does not anticipate any significant residential or commercial development in the areas served by the District. Projects with the largest impact on the District would be new wineries or other facilities with associated event activity.

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

DETERMINATION 2. DISADVANTAGED UNINCORPORATED COMMUNITIES

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

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

Determination

- **There are no county-designated disadvantaged unincorporated areas within or adjacent to the territory served by the District.**

DETERMINATION 3. CAPACITY AND ADEQUACY OF PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

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

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

Determinations

- **The Cloverdale Fire Protection District effectively provides fire and emergency services within its existing service area and is expected to be able to serve potential population and development growth for the foreseeable future.**
- **The District is currently meeting recommended standards to operate a combination fire department under NFPA 1720 standards. (A combination department is one that relies on both paid and volunteer staffing.)**

- **The District may face the same challenge that most fire protection districts in Sonoma County face with regards to transitioning from a primarily volunteer-based staffing model to a paid staffing model, due to declines in the availability of volunteers, though it should be noted that the District currently has a robust roster of volunteers.**

Discussion

The District provides fire and emergency services within its boundaries, and provides mutual aid support to neighboring agencies. Table 3 indicates the types of incidents that the District responds to, and their historical frequency.

Table 3: Historical Call for Service Volumes, Cloverdale Fire Protection District

Type of Call for Service	2017	2018	2019	Total	Percentage
Emergency Medical/Rescue/Auto Accidents	777	800	751	2328	61%
Structure Fire	11	10	9	30	< 1%
Wildland Fire	32	28	22	82	2%
All other Fires	66	51	56	173	5%
Other / Public Assistance	389	359	449	1197	31%
Total	1275	1248	1287	3810	100%
Response time (Min/sec) from Notification to 1 st Unit On Scene	7:54	7:04	6:04		

Facilities

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

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

The District serves the City of Cloverdale, a major highway (US 101), and surrounding rural and wildland areas that are lightly populated.

Appropriately, the District maintains one main fire station/headquarters in the City of Cloverdale.

Staffing

CFPD is dissimilar to many fire protection districts in the County in that it is a “combined” department, with both paid and volunteer firefighter and EMT staffing. (Districts that have a paid chief and administration employees, with all other staff serving on a volunteer basis, are typically classified as a “volunteer” department.)

The District reports that they do not have any challenges recruiting and maintaining their workforce, but that volunteer availability (particular during normal weekday work hours) is difficult to manage despite a robust and vibrant program.

DETERMINATION 4. FINANCIAL ABILITY

Financial ability of agencies to provide services

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

Determinations

- **The Cloverdale Fire Protection District has been meeting its expenses without difficulty and has been able to provide funding for infrastructure needs (primarily vehicle and equipment replacement).**
- **Financial management of the District is sound, and is independently audited on an annual basis.**

Discussion

Budget

CFPD staff prepares annual budgets in the spring for consideration and approval by the Board of Directors prior to the upcoming fiscal year (July through June). The staff seeks

guidance from the Board, and District customers are able to comment, in successive board meetings prior to budget approval.

Cloverdale staff are enrolled in the Calpers retirement system. As with the vast majority of agencies in the system, CFPD is in arrears on contributions to the plan.

Reserves

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

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

As Table 4 illustrates, annual operational deficits have been declining, and are now lower than \$25,000. At this level, the District can comfortably cover operational deficits, though at the expense of funds for capital expenditures.

Table 4: Cloverdale Fire Protection District Budget Review

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

The District's fund balance is an appropriate source of funding for the capital cost of the new vehicle. However, the introduction of the new paid positions is establishing a cost structure that cannot be accommodated by current and projected revenues.

The District has indicated that they intend to seek approval of a parcel tax to support the new staffing program in a sustainable fashion.

The District's volunteer association has a fund of about \$150,000 that is nominally earmarked for vehicle and equipment purchases.

Opportunities for Increased Revenue

Cloverdale FPD currently assesses a voter-approved parcel tax that levies a charge of \$88 for a typical single-family dwelling unit. Seeking an increase in the parcel tax levy to a typical \$200 rate would generate approximately

Nevertheless, with about 4,725 parcels within CFSD territory, a typical \$200 per parcel annual assessment would result in something on the order of \$500,000 in additional annual revenue.

CFSD notes that they provide extensive support to the Sanel Valley Fire Protection District in Mendocino County. There may be an opportunity to negotiate a financial agreement to support those services.

Financial Policies

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

- Purchasing
- Financial Reserve Policy
- Capital Assets

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

DETERMINATION 5. SHARED SERVICES AND FACILITIES

Status of, and opportunities for, shared facilities.

	YES	MAYBE	NO
a. Is the agency currently sharing services or facilities with other organizations? If so, describe the status of such efforts.			No
b. Are there any opportunities for the organization to share services or facilities with neighboring or overlapping organizations that are not currently being utilized?			No
c. Are there any governance options that may produce economies of scale and/or improve buying power in order to reduce costs?			No
d. Are there governance options to allow appropriate facilities and/or resources to be shared, or making excess capacity available to others, and avoid construction of extra or unnecessary infrastructure or eliminate duplicative resources?			No

Determinations

- **The Cloverdale Fire Protection District is appropriately positioned to seek out and enter into agreements with other fire and emergency services providers in Region 6 to take advantage of opportunities to reduce costs, and to provide more efficient and effective services.**
- **The District has entered into a Joint Operating Agreement with the Northern Sonoma County FPD, enabling activities including joint management, administration, and employee training programs.**

Discussion

Cloverdale FPD manages operations cooperatively with neighboring agencies, notably through mutual response agreements. The District also participates in multi-agency management systems, though it is not a participant in the Redwood Empire Dispatch Communications Authority (REDCOM), which manages emergency services dispatch for the majority of emergency services agencies in the County. Instead, the District relies on the dispatch system maintained by CalFire at their St. Helena facility. (The District

indicates that radio frequency coverage, as well as the need to coordinate closely with southern Mendocino County agencies necessitates the arrangement with CalFire.)

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

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

A summary of best practices for fire district coordination with other agencies is presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Coordination Best Practices, Cloverdale Fire Protection District

Best Practice	Observation and findings
The District participates in the Redwood Empire Dispatch Communications Authority (REDCOM)	No; CFPD uses CalFire dispatch services.
The Districts has mutual aid Agreements with other Districts.	All of the Region 6 fire agencies participate in multiple mutual and or automatic aid agreements.
The District contracts for accounting and audit services with other districts or the County.	No. The District formerly contracted with the County, but now manages finances independently.
The District participates with other districts or the County for equipment purchasing or leasing.	Yes
The District participates in joint insurance programs.	Yes
The District has an "Amador Contract" with CalFire.	No districts in Region 6 can afford contracts for service from CALFIRE.
The District participates in joint training with other districts or the County.	Yes
The District participates with another district or the County for joint administration services.	No. Cloverdale secures administration services through a half-time District employee.
The District shares facilities with other districts.	In the event of a region-wide reorganization, there may be opportunities to evaluate the status and staffing of fire stations.
The District shares a fire chief or other staff with another District.	The Joint Operating Agreement with Northern Sonoma County FPD includes joint leadership and administrative staffing.
The District participates in joint recruitment with other districts.	Not at this time.

REGIONAL AGENCY CONSOLIDATION

Cloverdale has been an active participant in regional discussions that have taken place to consider appropriate fire and emergency service agency consolidation in Region 6.

DETERMINATION 6. ACCOUNTABILITY, STRUCTURE AND EFFICIENCIES

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

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

Determinations

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

Discussion

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

Board members file financial interest statements and comply with State training requirements for public officials.

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

CFPD has entered into a Joint Powers Agreement with Northern Sonoma County FPD, sharing leadership, management, administrative, and training functions. The District is committed to joining a regionally-consolidated district.

MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW: NORTHERN SONOMA COUNTY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

Agency Profile

The Northern Sonoma County Fire Protection District (NSCFPD, Northern Sonoma County Fire, or the District) provides fire and emergency services to the central portion of the North County in a region once designated as “Zone 6”, and now as “Region 6”. The District was formed in 1996.

The District has primary responsibility for serving over 273 square miles of territory (Figure 2) including the village of Geyserville, the Lake Sonoma Recreation Area, valley floor territory which is largely under cultivation, the area once served by the Knights Valley Volunteer Fire Company, and wild land hillside and mountainous territory to both the east and west. Other than in Geyserville, the territory is lightly developed with rural residential development.

NSCFPD maintains a headquarters station (Station #1) in the village of Geyserville, and three ancillary stations for vehicle storage only. NSCFPD may be granted access to the former Knights Valley Volunteer Fire Company off of Franz Valley Road; it would likely be used for vehicle storage also.

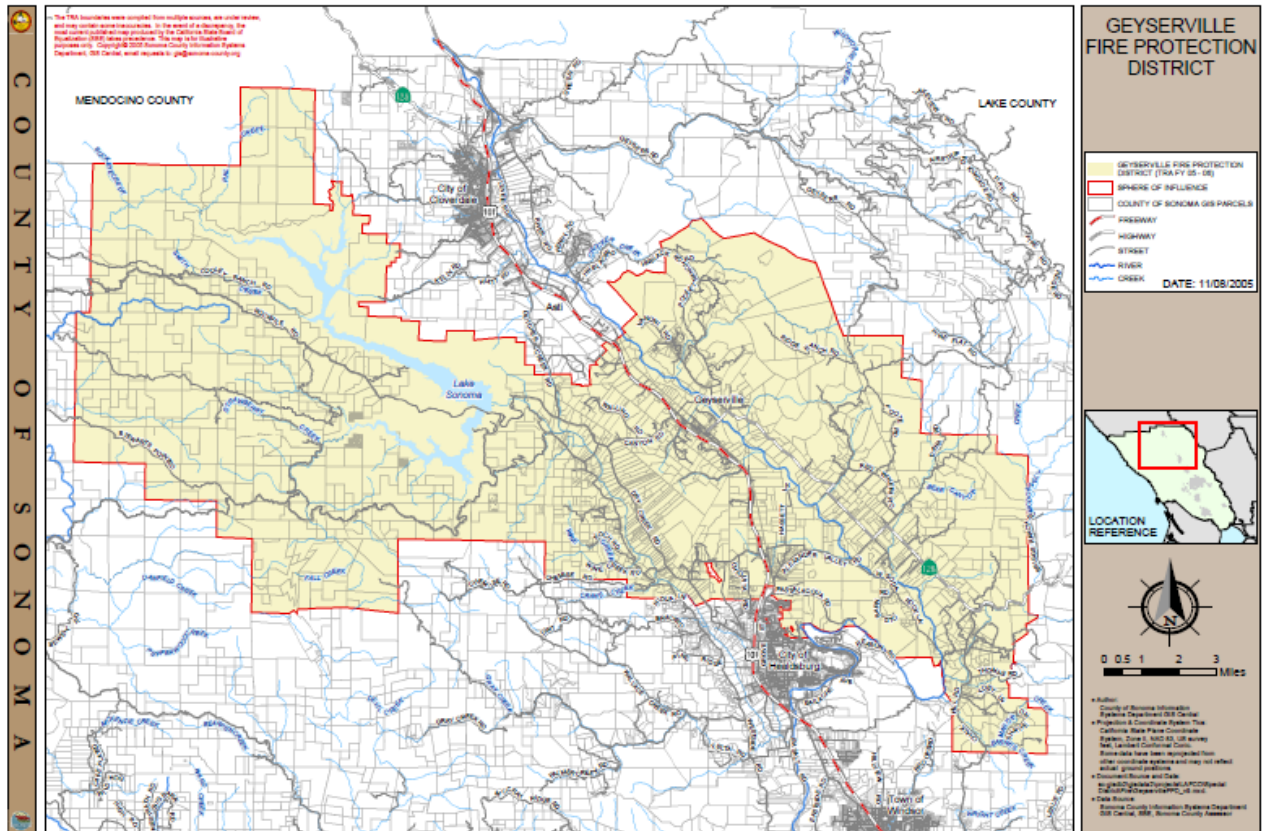
The District has mutual aid agreements with Cloverdale FPD and the City of Healdsburg, and has a contractual aid arrangement with the Calistoga FPD in Napa County for service to the easternmost territory in the District. The District also relies on mutual aid support from CALFIRE during the fire season.

The District relies on a part-time Chief, a part-time paid administrative manager, six paid fire fighter/EMTs, and a roster of twenty-five volunteer firefighters. NSCFPD maintains living quarters for staff.

Primary funding for the District comes from property ad valorem taxes.

The District was recently unsuccessful in seeking voter approval for a parcel tax to support ongoing operations of the District. The District also has an associated non-profit foundation that raises funds that are generally used to support equipment and vehicle purchases.

Figure 2: Map of Northern Sonoma County Fire Protection District



POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT MSR DETERMINATIONS

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

DETERMINATION 1. GROWTH AND POPULATION

Growth and population projections for the affected area.

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

Determination

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

Discussion

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

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

Population

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

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

The County has two goals that reinforce the philosophy of City centered growth. These goals, as stated in the County General Plan 2020 are as follows:

GOAL LU-2: Accommodate the major share of future growth within the nine existing cities and their expansion areas and within selected unincorporated communities, which are planned to have adequate water and sewer capacities.

GOAL LU-3: Locate future growth within the cities and unincorporated Urban Service Areas in a compact manner using vacant "infill" parcels and lands next to existing development at the edge of these areas.

The General Plan includes the "North County Planning Area" and enumerates a series of policies that strictly limit development of all types, and directs that development occur within existing urban and suburban areas that have municipal service provision (sanitation and water).

Northern Sonoma County FPD serves a portion of the North County Planning Area; the territory features very low development densities.

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

3.2 CLOVERDALE /NORTHEAST COUNTY

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

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

Lake Sonoma and increased tourism related to the wine industry, particularly in Dry Creek and Alexander Valleys, will create pressure for additional recreation

and visitor serving uses. In recent years, increases in tourism have been primarily associated with winery promotions and events.

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

The County General Plan population projections for the Cloverdale and Healdsburg Planning Areas are stated in Tables 6 below.

Table 6: Cloverdale/Northeast County Projected Growth

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

Transient Population

Fire and emergency services agencies respond to “transient” populations as well as resident populations within their service areas. For some agencies, the service needs for transient populations can greatly exceed the needs for resident populations.

Northern Sonoma County notes that a portion of service calls are related to incidents on Highways 101 and 128 and from visitors to the Lake Sonoma Recreation Area and to area wineries.

Development

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

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

DETERMINATION 2. DISADVANTAGED UNINCORPORATED COMMUNITIES

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

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

Determination

- **There are no county-designated disadvantaged unincorporated areas within or adjacent to the territory served by the District.**

DETERMINATION 3. CAPACITY AND ADEQUACY OF PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

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

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

Determinations

- **The Northern Sonoma County Fire Protection District effectively provides fire and emergency services within its existing service area and is expected to be able to serve potential population and development growth for the foreseeable future.**
- **The District is currently meeting recommended standards to operate a combination fire department under NFPA 1720 standards. (A combination department is one that relies on both paid and volunteer staffing.)**

- **The District may face the same challenge that most fire protection districts in Sonoma County face with regards to transitioning from a primarily volunteer-based staffing model to a paid staffing model, due to declines in the availability of volunteers, though it should be noted that the District currently has a robust roster of volunteers.**

Discussion

The District provides fire and emergency services within its boundaries, and provides mutual aid support to neighboring agencies. Table 7 indicates the types of incidents that the District responds to, and their historical frequency.

Table 7: Historical Call for Service Volumes, Northern Sonoma County Fire Protection District

Type of Call for Service	2017	2018	2019	Total	Percentage
Emergency Medical/Rescue/Auto Accidents	298	272	305	875	47%
Structure Fire	44	40	40	124	7%
Wildland Fire	58	45	38	141	8%
All other Fires	20	12	14	46	3%
Other / Public Assistance	201	174	317	692	37%
Total	621	543	714	1,878	100%
Response time (Min/sec) from Notification to 1 st Unit On Scene	10:19	9:46	10:23		

Facilities

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

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

The District serves two major highways, and large rural and wildland areas that are lightly populated. The District area also includes wineries, a casino, and Recreation Area.

Appropriately, the District maintains one main fire station/headquarters, and has three supplemental stations where equipment can be stored or pre-positioned.

Staffing

NSCFPD is dissimilar to many fire protection districts in the County in that it is a “combined” department, with both paid and volunteer firefighter and EMT staffing. (Districts that have a paid chief and administration employees, with all other staff serving on a volunteer basis, are typically classified as a “volunteer” department.)

The District reports that they do not have any challenges recruiting and maintaining their workforce, but that volunteer availability (particular during normal weekday work hours) is difficult to manage despite a robust and vibrant program.

DETERMINATION 4. FINANCIAL ABILITY

Financial ability of agencies to provide services

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

Determinations

- **The Northern Sonoma County Fire Protection District has been meeting its expenses without difficulty and has been able to provide funding for infrastructure needs (primarily vehicle and equipment replacement).**
- **Financial management of the District is sound, and is independently audited on an annual basis.**

Discussion

Budget

NSCFPD staff prepares annual budgets in the spring for consideration and approval by the Board of Directors prior to the upcoming fiscal year (July through June). The staff

seeks guidance from the Board, and District customers are able to comment, in successive board meetings prior to budget approval.

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

Reserves

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

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

As Table 8 illustrates, annual operational deficits have been declining, and are now lower than \$25,000. At this level, the District can comfortably cover operational deficits, though at the expense of funds for capital expenditures.

Table 8: Northern Sonoma County Fire Protection District Budget Review

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

The District's fund balance is an appropriate source of funding for the capital cost of the new vehicle. However, the introduction of the new paid positions is establishing a cost structure that cannot be accommodated by current and projected revenues.

The District has indicated that they intend to seek approval of a parcel tax to support the new staffing program in a sustainable fashion.

The District's volunteer association has a fund of about \$250,000 that is nominally earmarked for vehicle and equipment purchases.

Opportunities for Additional Revenue

It is difficult to assess how much additional revenue could be collected in the NSCFPD territory through a parcel tax, because it is difficult to consider how commercial properties (primarily wineries) would be assessed under a potential parcel tax regime.

Most districts have established special tax rates for commercial properties based on a “units of risk” basis, which evaluates facility area and use as criteria for assessments. Additionally, many of the parcels within NCSFPD are likely to be undeveloped; these parcels would typically be assessed at a much lower rate than parcels with residential development.

Nevertheless, with about 3,584 parcels within NCSFSD territory, a typical \$200 per parcel annual assessment would result in something on the order of \$700,000 in additional annual revenue.

Financial Policies

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

- Purchasing
- Financial Reserve Policy
- Capital Assets

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

DETERMINATION 5. SHARED SERVICES AND FACILITIES

Status of, and opportunities for, shared facilities.

	YES	MAYBE	NO
a. Is the agency currently sharing services or facilities with other organizations? If so, describe the status of such efforts.			No
b. Are there any opportunities for the organization to share services or facilities with neighboring or overlapping organizations that are not currently being utilized?		Maybe	
c. Are there any governance options that may produce economies of scale and/or improve buying power in order to reduce costs?			No
d. Are there governance options to allow appropriate facilities and/or resources to be shared, or making excess capacity available to others, and avoid construction of extra or unnecessary infrastructure or eliminate duplicative resources?		Maybe	

Determinations

- **The Northern Sonoma County Fire Protection District is appropriately positioned to seek out and enter into agreements with other fire and emergency services providers in Region 6 to take advantage of opportunities to reduce costs, and to provide more efficient and effective services.**
- **The District has entered into a Joint Operating Agreement with the Cloverdale FPD, enabling activities including joint management, administration, and employee training programs.**

Discussion

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

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

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

A summary of best practices for fire district coordination with other agencies is presented in Table 9.

Table 9: Coordination Best Practices, NSCFPD

Best Practice	Observation and findings
The District participates in the Redwood Empire Dispatch Communications Authority (REDCOM)	Yes.
The Districts has mutual aid Agreements with other Districts.	All of the Region 6 fire agencies participate in multiple mutual and or automatic aid agreements.
The District contracts for accounting and audit services with other districts or the County.	No. The District formerly contracted with the County, but now manages finances independently.
The District participates with other districts or the County for equipment purchasing or leasing.	Yes
The District participates in joint insurance programs.	Yes
The District has an "Amador Contract" with CalFire.	No districts in Region 6 can afford contracts for service from CALFIRE.
The District participates in joint training with other districts or the County.	Yes
The District participates with another district or the County for joint administration services.	No. Northern Sonoma County secures administration services through a half-time District employee.
The District shares facilities with other districts.	In the event of a region-wide reorganization, there may be opportunities to evaluate the status and staffing of fire stations.
The District shares a fire chief or other staff with another District.	The Joint Operating Agreement with Cloverdale FPD includes joint leadership and administrative staffing.
The District participates in joint recruitment with other districts.	Not at this time.

REGIONAL AGENCY CONSOLIDATION

Northern Sonoma County has been an active participant in regional discussions that have taken place to consider appropriate fire and emergency service agency consolidation in Region 6.

DETERMINATION 6. ACCOUNTABILITY, STRUCTURE AND EFFICIENCIES

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

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

Determinations

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

Discussion

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

Board members file financial interest statements and comply with State training requirements for public officials.

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

NCSFPD has entered into a Joint Powers Agreement with Cloverdale FPD, sharing leadership, management, administrative, and training functions. The District is committed to joining a regionally-consolidated district.

MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW: COUNTY SERVICE AREA 40 TERRITORIES

SUMMARY DETERMINATIONS

- **The County of Sonoma does not directly provide fire and emergency services to the extensive County Service Area 40 territories in Region 6, which include IRP 61 (the Geysers area), IRP 63 (Fitch Mountain), and IRP 64 (Sotoyome).**
- **Northern Sonoma County and Cloverdale FPDs provide coverage to the IRP 61 area, and mutual aid coverage to the IRP 64 (Sotoyome) territory west of the City of Healdsburg.**
- **The City of Healdsburg provides coverage, under contract to the County, to IRP 63 and IRP 64 (Sotoyome).**
- **The County has embarked on an effort to support reorganizations that would eventually eliminate CSA 40.**
- **The CSA 40 territories in Region 6 generate a preponderance of the tax revenue that has been used to support Volunteer Fire Companies and other agencies that provide coverage to CSA 40 territories throughout the County.**

OVERVIEW

The County of Sonoma, through the dependent district of County Service Area 40 (CSA 40), supports the provision of fire and emergency services to areas in the County that are not served by City departments or independent special districts. Historically, that support has been directed towards Volunteer Fire Companies, in limited cases through contracts with independent special districts, and through mutual aid response from special districts.

There are currently seven Volunteer Fire Companies and another seven IRP areas serviced by CSA 40, located in the north, west, and south portions of the county.

In the past five years, the County has endeavored to cede CSA 40 territory to willing independent special districts, in response to guidance from the fire serves community throughout the County. As part of that effort, the County has effectively closed its fire services department, which provided support to the Volunteer Companies.

In its place, the County has entered into a multi-year contract with North Bay Fire, Inc., which was formed as a 501.3(c) and is made up of representatives from the remaining Volunteer Companies. North Bay Fire, Inc. in turn contracts with the Gold Ridge Fire Protection District to provide administrative and other support to the remaining Volunteer Companies.

There are three CSA 40 territories in North County (Region 6), including IRP 61 (Geysers), IRP 63 (Fitch Mountain), and IRP 64 (Sotoyome).

The IRP 61 (Geysers) territory is comprised of predominantly wildland, and features the geothermal generation plants at higher elevations proximate to the Lake County border.

The IRP 63 (Fitch Mountain) area is quite small, abutting the eastern flank of the City of Healdsburg, and featuring rural residential development.

The IRP 64 (Sotoyome) area is largely to the west of the City of Healdsburg. It also includes a small territory immediately east of the IRP 63 (Fitch Mountain) area. The territory features sparse rural residential development, as well as wineries and agricultural uses (vineyards).

None of the CSA 40 territories in the North County are served by Volunteer Fire Companies. For IRP 61 (Geysers), NSCFPD and CFPD provide coverage and are reimbursed for each call response by the County. For IRP 63 (Fitch Mountain) and IRP 64 (Sotoyome), the City of Healdsburg has been contracted with by the County to provide service. The contract is valued at approximately \$175,000 per year.

Because the CSA 40 territories are sparsely populated, and because the agency provides no direct services, the only pertinent analysis to present in this report is with regard to the Financial Ability to Provide Services.

SIGNIFICANT MSR DETERMINATIONS

The MSR determinations reviewed below are potentially significant, as indicated by "yes" or "maybe" answers to the key policy questions in the checklist and corresponding discussion.

DETERMINATION 1. FINANCIAL ABILITY

Financial ability of agencies to provide services

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

Determinations

- **The County collects the majority of property tax revenue to support County Service Area 40 within the three territories in North County (Region 6).**
- **The County has ample tax revenue to support the contract for services with the City of Healdsburg for service provision to the IRP 63 (Fitch Mountain) and IRP 64 (Sotoyome) territories.**
- **The County has a contract with NSCFPD for service provision to IRP 61 (Geysers).**

Discussion

The County of Sonoma collects a portion of property tax assessments designated for fire and emergency services within the three CSA 40 territories in North County. In addition,

a Mello Roos tax assessment was approved in the IRP 64 (Sotoyome) territory, providing additional revenue.

The County only provides direct fire and emergency services to the IRP 63 and IRP 64 (Sotoyome) territories through a contractual arrangement with the City of Healdsburg.

Table 10 summarizes CSA 40 property tax receipts.

Table 10: CSA 40 Fire and Emergency Service Property Tax Receipts by Area

Territory	Area (square miles)	Population (2010 Census)	# of Parcels	Property Tax Revenue (Fire)
IRP 61 (Geysers)	102	278	762	\$644,945
IRP 63 (Fitch Mountain)	0.84	543	725	\$203,432
IRP 64 (Sotoyome)	64.5	1,657	1,245	\$342,149

In addition, there is a Mello Roos tax assessment within IRP 64 (Sotoyome), with annual revenue of approximately \$109,087.

The County expends approximately \$175,000 on a contract for services with the City of Healdsburg for primary response activities in the IRP 63 (Fitch Mountain) and IRP 64 (Sotoyome) territories.

Therefore, the County is collecting approximately \$1,125,000 in annual revenue in North County (Region 6), after direct service provision costs, that is being used to support the CSA 40 territories outside of the Region.

It is difficult to assess how much additional revenue could be collected in the CSA territories through a parcel tax, because it is difficult to consider how the power generation facilities and commercial properties (primarily wineries) would be assessed under a potential parcel tax regime.

Most districts have established special tax rates for commercial properties based on a "units of risk" basis, which evaluates facility area and use as criteria for assessments. Additionally, many of the parcels within the CSA 40 territories are likely to be

undeveloped; these parcels would typically be assessed at a much lower rate than parcels with residential development.

Nevertheless, with about 2,700 parcels within the CSA 40 areas, a typical \$200 per parcel annual assessment would result in something on the order of \$540,000 in additional annual revenue.

SPHERE OF INFLUENCE STUDY

Summary Determinations

- **The sphere of influence of the Northern Sonoma County Fire Protection District should be expanded to cover territory served by the Cloverdale Fire Protection District, and all of the County Service Area 40 territory in Region 6, including IRP 61 (Geysers), IRP 63 (Fitch Mountain), and IRP 64 (Sotoyome).**
- **The sphere of influence of the Cloverdale Fire Protection District should be set at “zero”.**
- **The sphere of influence of County Service Area 40 should be amended to exclude territory within Region 6.**

Discussion

Staff is recommending that the Commission consider amending Northern Sonoma County FPD's sphere to include the territory served by Cloverdale FPD, and all of the County Service Area 40 territory in the Region.

At this time, there is no recommendation to amend the City of Healdsburg's sphere of influence with regard to fire and emergency medical service provision, though the City is not precluded from seeking a sphere amendment and subsequent reorganization in the future.

The sphere of influence for Cloverdale FPD would be set to “zero”, indicating that the District is likely to be dissolved and annexed into the regional agency.

(Please note that the Commission does not have an adopted policy regarding a “zero” sphere designation, but that term can be defined as: a transitional sphere of influence designation assigned to a local agency indicating that the public service responsibility and functions of the agency should ultimately be abandoned or re-allocated to another government agency.)

Staff further recommends that the sphere of CSA 40 be retracted from the Region 6 areas.

It should be reiterated that registered voters and landowners would have the opportunity to protest proposed reorganizations, at lower “hurdle rates” than those for approving special taxes. (A cohort of either 50% of registered voters or 50% of landowners can nullify a reorganization proposal through protest proceedings; approval of special tax measures requires a two-thirds-plus one approval by registered voters.)

This recommendation is in no way intended to diminish the capabilities of the Cloverdale FPD.

Formation of a Northern County fire and emergency medical service agency, based on the proposed sphere of influence amendments, would not preclude the formation of a County-wide agency at a later date.

Benefits of Regional Consolidation

Financial

If the Commission concurs with the recommended sphere of influence amendments, Northern Sonoma County FPD would be eligible to seek dissolution and subsequent annexation of the territories now served by Cloverdale FPD, and detachment and subsequent annexation of all the CSA 40 territory in the Region.

It is expected that the new Northern Sonoma fire and emergency medical service agency would contract with the City of Healdsburg for fire service support for the IRP 64 (Sotoyome) territory, as well as for the IRP 63 (Fitch Mountain) territory. The agency might also seek operational support on a contracted basis from the Sanel Valley FPD for services to the Geysers area.

(Northern Sonoma County FPD already has a contractual agreement with the City of Saint Helena for operational support in the Knights Valley area.)

At this time, the subject agencies do not have voter-authorized parcel taxes. Seeking approval for taxes to support the operations of a regional agency may be more difficult than for the existing agencies separately, but it would result in a more equitable approach – all landowners receiving services would be paying to support them.

A necessarily simplistic analysis indicates that if a \$200 annual parcel tax was approved by voters, a regional agency could secure something on the order of \$2,100,000 annually.

A reallocation of some or all of the property taxes currently collected by the County to support CSA 40 to a new regional agency is similarly a more equitable model than the current situation whereby service is being provided to IRP areas by the subject agencies without recompense. A reallocation will necessitate a good-faith negotiated tax exchange that recognizes the costs of service provision and directs an equitable portion of tax receipts to a regionally consolidated agency.

Similarly, a regional agency will likely need to renegotiate the contract for service support from the City of Healdsburg to operationally cover the IRP 64 (Sotoyome) and IRP – 63 (Fitch Mountain) territories.

Operational

Northern Sonoma County and Cloverdale FPDs are currently operating under a Joint Powers Agreement, combining leadership, management, and administrative activities to provide solid operational coverage.

Additionally, Northern Sonoma County FPD completed a reorganization in 2019 that included taking on CSA 40 territory that was served by the Knights Valley Volunteer Fire Company.

Representatives of the subject agencies assert that a regional agency would be best-positioned to allocate operational resources, and in particular would be best-suited to administer and deliver fire prevention services including vegetation management.

Additionally, a regional operation may offer more opportunities for career advancement for volunteers, apprentices, and paid professionals. A consolidated agency would be in a better position to add paid staff in the future (subject to funding), and would provide a broader leadership and administrative organization offering better opportunities for career movement.

Service Enhancements

There is broad acknowledgement that fire prevention (particularly vegetation management) and disaster planning (particularly evacuation planning and community preparedness) are acute needs throughout the County. Region 6 includes a huge swath of the wildland areas in the County, and both subject agencies are intent on improving the provision of these services.

These activities will be dependent on securing appropriate funding, again, potentially through a reallocation of existing tax revenue generated within the CSA 40 areas and through new voter-approved parcel taxes.

A regionally consolidated agency will be best-positioned to design and deliver the crucial services of fire prevention and disaster planning.

Governance

The County has identified the need to devolve fire and emergency medical services in CSA 40 areas to local agencies, in part acknowledging that regional agencies will be better positioned to determine service models. A consolidated agency covering almost the entirety of Region 6 (absent the City of Healdsburg, though it could be included at a later date) will be governed by a board elected from citizenry throughout the region, ensuring that service provision is appropriate and equitable.

Barriers to Regional Consolidation

There are three likely pathways to a regional consolidation:

- Consolidation of the Northern Sonoma County and Cloverdale FPDs.
- Consolidation of IRP 61 (Geysers) into the regional agency.
- Consolidation of IRP 63 (Fitch Mountain) and IRP 64 (Sotoyome) into the regional agency, with a renegotiated contract with the City of Healdsburg for service provision.

Subsequent regionalization efforts might include folding Healdsburg's fire and emergency services program into the regional agency, and potentially, participation in a County-wide consolidation effort.

Consolidating Northern Sonoma County and Cloverdale FPDs appears eminently feasible, given the recent approval of a joint powers authority.

Inclusion of any CSA 40 territory in a regionalization program will require a negotiation with the County for tax reallocations. To date, despite extensive talks over several years, there has been little evidence that an accommodation can be reached.

(Per State statute, the County is charged with negotiating tax reallocations on behalf of its own interests as well as the interests of the local agencies. This essentially leaves the agencies with only the option of accepting a reallocation offered by the County or to refuse to seek reorganization.)

The positions taken by the County and the subject agencies are opposed in a fundamental regard.

The agencies believe that locally-generated tax revenue (the property taxes collected in the CSA 40 areas for fire service provision) should remain in the area rather than be used to support all of the remaining CSA territory in the County. Additionally, they contend that the full reallocation of this revenue can be used to greatly expand fire prevention and emergency planning activities, which they regard as an acute need for the Region.

The County takes the position that a strict "return to source" tax allocation model is untenable given the need to provide sufficient services throughout the remaining CSA 40 areas. This has led the County to take the position that reallocations should be based on existing service costs, and not for expansions of service levels.

There are only a few options that might bring these issues to closure:

- The County could cede all tax revenues generated within the CSA 40 territory within the Region to a regionally consolidated agency, and through other means find appropriate and necessary funding to support the remainder of CSA 40.
- The consolidated regional agency could accept a tax reallocation based on existing service provision levels and costs, and seek additional funding through other means to support service enhancements and improvements. (The other means could include a voter-approved parcel tax, or revenues generated through a county-wide taxation measure.)
- Some interstitial arrangement between the two previous options.

Lastly, it should be noted that adding the IRP 63 (Fitch Mountain) and IRP 64 (Sotoyome) into the regionally consolidated agency would likely require a three-party negotiation between the regional agency, the County, and the City of Healdsburg. (The City has indicated that they feel the existing contract does not provide sufficient funding for the provision of services.)

POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT SOI DETERMINATIONS

SOI DETERMINATION 1. NEED FOR PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

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

	YES	MAYBE	NO
a. Would the SOI conflict with the Commission's goal to increase efficiency and conservation of resources by providing essential services within a framework of controlled growth?			No
b. Would the SOI expand services that could be better provided by a city or another agency?		Maybe	
c. Does the SOI represent premature inducement of growth or facilitate conversion of agriculture or open space lands?			No
d. Are there any areas that should be removed from the SOI because existing circumstances make development unlikely, there is not sufficient demand to support it or important open space/prime agricultural land should be removed from urbanization?			No
e. Have any agency commitments been predicated on expanding the agency's SOI such as roadway projects, shopping centers, educational facilities, economic development or acquisition of parks and open space?			No

Determinations

- **The recommended sphere of influence amendments, if followed by a regional consolidation through annexations, would provide modest operational and cost efficiencies, though these efficiencies would not ensure the continued viability of the new agency.**
- **A regional consolidation would, if appropriately financed through a variety of methods, ensure continued service levels in the region. There is a desire by the elected leaders of the Districts, and from residents in Region 6, that additional fire**

prevention activities (notably vegetation management and community emergency planning and outreach activities) be provided.

Discussion

The financial and operational advantages of a consolidated, regional fire and emergency services agency comprised of the territories in Region 6 have been outlined in the opening portion of this section of the report.

It is worth reiterating that while a regional agency would realize some modest cost savings as well as a significant revenue increase, in combination these benefits will not be sufficient to safeguard existing levels of service provision or to address significant staffing and infrastructure costs that need to be determined to ensure ongoing sustainability of the subject agencies separately or in aggregate.

Regardless of whether the subject agencies petition LAFCO for reorganization into a regional entity, other sources of additional revenue must be secured to ensure ongoing viability of service provision in the region. Nevertheless, staff is recommending that the spheres of influence of the subject agencies be amended to allow for a regional reorganization.

SOI DETERMINATION 2. CAPACITY AND ADEQUACY OF PROVIDED SERVICES

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

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

Determinations

- **The Northern Sonoma County and Cloverdale FPDs have a strong predisposition to consolidation, evidenced by their recently-enacted Joint Powers Agreement, which combines their leadership, management, and administration activities.**
- **While the subject agencies face the same fiscal and operational challenges that agencies throughout the County are experiencing, there is apparent capacity and capability within the two organizations to support the management of a regionally-consolidated agency covering the majority of Region 6.**

Discussion

The subject agencies have evidenced their commitment to a regional service model by:

- Entering into a joint powers agreement that combines their respective leadership, management, and administrative functions.
- Successfully completing a reorganization involving the annexation of CSA 40 territory that was served by a failing Volunteer Fire Company into the Northern Sonoma County FPD in 2017.
- Engaging in long-running talks with the County about a fair and equitable tax reallocation for the remaining CSA 40 areas in the Region.

The boards and leadership of both subject agencies have shown strong leadership in pursuit of regionalization, and their combined resources are highly likely to succeed in providing appropriate service levels to the majority of the territory in the Region.