

**MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW FOR  
WEST COUNTY  
FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICE AGENCIES**

Bodega Bay Fire Protection District  
Forestville Fire Protection District  
Gold Ridge Fire Protection District  
Graton Fire Protection District  
Monte Rio Fire Protection District  
Russian River Fire Protection District  
Timber Cove Fire Protection District

Cazadero Community Services District  
Occidental Community Services District

City of Sebastopol

County Service Area 40 – Fire Services:  
Bloomfield Volunteer Fire Company  
Bodega Volunteer Fire Company  
Camp Meeker Volunteer Fire Company  
Fort Ross Volunteer Fire Company  
Valley Ford Volunteer Fire Company

**Final Report**  
**Sonoma Local Agency Formation Commission**  
**September 2019**

**Project Name:** Municipal Service Review for West County Fire and  
Emergency Service Agencies

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

**Date:** July 2019

**Subject Agencies:** Bodega Bay Fire Protection District  
Forestville Fire Protection District  
Gold Ridge Fire Protection District  
Graton Fire Protection District  
Monte Rio Fire Protection District  
Russian River Fire Protection District  
Timber Cove Fire Protection District  
  
Cazadero Community Services District  
Occidental Community Services District  
  
City of Sebastopol  
  
County Service Area 40 – Fire Services  
    Bloomfield Volunteer Fire Company  
    Bodega Volunteer Fire Company  
    Camp Meeker Volunteer Fire Company  
    Fort Ross Volunteer Fire Company  
    Valley Ford Volunteer Fire Company

**Agency Contacts:** Sean Grinnell, Chief  
Bodega Bay Fire Protection District  
  
Dave Franceschi, Chief  
Forestville Fire Protection District  
  
Dan George, Chief  
Gold Ridge Fire Protection District  
  
Bill Bullard, Chief  
Graton Fire Protection District  
  
Steve Baxman, Chief  
Monte Rio Fire Protection District

Ryan Lance, Interim Chief  
Russian River Fire Protection District

Erich Lynne, Chief  
Timber Cove Fire Protection District

Steve Krausmann, Chief  
Cazadero Community Services District

Ron Lunardi, Chief  
Occidental Community Services District

Larry McLaughlin, City Manager  
City of Sebastopol

Jim Colangelo, Interim Director  
Sonoma County Fire and Emergency Services  
Department  
(County Service Area 40 – Fire Services)

Lawrence Silacci, Chief  
Bloomfield Volunteer Fire Company

Ron Albini, Chief  
Bodega Volunteer Fire Company

Henry Baker, Chief  
Camp Meeker Volunteer Fire Company

Steve Ginesi, Chief  
Fort Ross Volunteer Fire Company

Ron Caselli, Chief  
Valley Ford Volunteer Fire Company

Confirmation of Spheres of Influence in 2006

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

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**MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW: SCOPE AND REPORT FORMAT**

**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 objectives 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 determination categories. Information regarding each of the above issue areas is provided in this document.

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

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

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

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

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

Pursuant to Sonoma LAFCO policy, an SOI includes an area adjacent to a jurisdiction where development might be reasonably expected to occur in the next twenty years. An MSR is conducted prior to, or in conjunction with, the update of a SOI and provides the foundation for updating it.

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**

It is important to note that this study of West County Fire and Emergency Service Agencies is being prepared with a limited scope, at the request of the Commission.

Specifically, the Commission has supported a staff plan to **conduct the study in two parts**. The first part, comprising this report, will review the operations of the subject agencies and make determinations regarding the seven areas noted above for Municipal Service Reviews.

The second, subsequent study, will evaluate potential sphere of influence amendments and make attendant determinations.

This plan recognizes the usefulness of a straightforward set of evaluations that can be referenced by the subject agencies as regional consolidation opportunities are discussed in early 2019. (These discussions have been taking place since 2016, and some would say, for decades.)

LAFCO intends to complete the sphere of influence study in the latter half of 2019 as a means of supporting a regional consolidation program that would best serve communities and underpin a sustainable service model for the future.

LAFCO may also make SOI amendments on an as needed basis, to accommodate agency reorganizations that represent a step towards regional consolidation, or address a pressing issue.

For example, the County has essentially closed the Fire and Emergency Services Department, and has indicated that the County Service Area 40 territories need to be reorganized with neighboring district partners within the next two years. (There are five Volunteer Fire Companies serving County Service Area 40 territory included in the scope of this report.)

#### *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 the subsequent sphere of influence study, LAFCO will propose that any eventual reorganization of subject agencies 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 one of the independent special districts.

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 all 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" MSRs 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 five appendices:

Appendix 1: Individual Agency Profiles

Appendix 2: Current Boundary/Sphere of Influence Maps

Appendix 3: Guide to Response Time Standards

Appendix 4: Guide to Revenue Sources for Subject Agencies

Appendix 5: Selected Material from "Analysis of Fire District Sphere of Influence Issues", a LAFCO Report, October 1984

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.

Although this report does not propose sphere of influence amendments (and does not purport that spheres should remain unchanged), Sonoma LAFCO notified all subject agencies and interested parties to solicit comments and corrections to the study.

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 study are:

- County of Sonoma (various departments and dependent districts)
- Sonoma Resource Conservation District
- Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District
- Palm Drive Health Care District
- Town of Windsor
- Timber Cove Water District
- Forestville County Water District
- Bodega Bay Public Utility District
- Sweetwater Springs Water District
- Camp Meeker Park and Recreation District
- Graton Community Services District
- Monte Rio Recreation and Park District
- Russian River Park and Recreation District
- Marin/Sonoma Mosquito and Vector Control District

- Sonoma Community College District
- CAL FIRE
- Coast Life Support District

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

- North Sonoma Coast Fire Protection District
- Geyserville Fire Protection District/Northern Sonoma Fire Protection District
- Sonoma County Fire District
- Rancho Adobe Fire Protection District
- City of Healdsburg
- Town of Windsor
- City of Santa Rosa
- City of Rohnert Park
- Coastal Valleys EMS Agency

## MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW: SUMMARY DETERMINATIONS

### Growth and Population Projections

#### Determinations

- **Although there continues to be modest population growth in West County, subject agencies point to an array of other factors driving increased call volumes.**
- **These factors include an aging population, a shift to year-round use of homes instead of seasonal or part-time use, an increase in the homeless population, and a dramatic increase in tourist visitors to the region.**
- **Similarly, agencies do not consider land use development a driver of call volume. Even in Sebastopol and the modest urban/suburban areas of Forestville, Guerneville, and Monte Rio, development activity is not driving subject agency service needs.**

#### 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 increase in full-time residency, particularly in what were once seasonally or part-time occupancy areas, in both River and coastal areas.
- An increase in the homeless population in the River area. Agency staff indicate that this population generates significant volumes of 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 dramatic increase in tourism, bringing large volumes of visitors to the coast and to the River area, as well as traffic on the roadways throughout the region. This population drives rescue and medical service calls.

Other than citing tourism statistics (which notably affect several of the subject agencies), 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 four LAFCO-designated disadvantaged unincorporated communities within three of the territories served by the subject agencies; the remaining three disadvantaged unincorporated communities are not adjacent to any of the subject agencies.**
- **Fire and emergency service provision is exempted from provisions of SB 244.**

#### **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 the subject agencies do not provide a service that triggers the provisions of SB 244, a LAFCO determination regarding any disadvantaged unincorporated communities within or adjacent to agency spheres of influence is not required.

Further, three of the subject agencies serve four of the territories that are designated as disadvantaged unincorporated communities; the remaining three DUCs are not adjacent to any of the subject agencies.

## Capacity and Adequacy of Public Facilities and Services

### Determinations

- **All 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 agencies to address staffing challenges without transitioning fully to career-professional staffing, which most agencies cannot support financially.**
- **Many agencies cannot provide “2/0” staffing at all times – the ability to respond to incident calls with two qualified personnel. The agencies with career professional staff are often unable to provide “3/0” staffing for responses, which is considered the optimum staffing level for providing appropriate service in suburban and urban areas.**
- **Establishing more career-professional positions (particularly during weekday daytime shifts) within a regional agency would provide more opportunities for career progression.**
- **A regional agency would, over time, provide standardized training that would improve service delivery.**
- **While a cursory review of response time statistics indicate that most agencies are meeting National Fire Protection Association guidelines, the statistics are rudimentary and can obscure significant service level deficiencies.**
- **The provision of emergency medical services and ambulance coverage throughout West County is becoming a critical concern. The Russian River and Bodega Bay FPDs are providing advanced life support and ambulance coverage for areas well beyond their boundaries, and are unlikely to be able to sustainably provide that service in the future.**
- **Many of the subject agencies in West County have deficient facilities and/or equipment, and do not have sustainable finances to rectify those deficiencies.**

### Discussion

Many subject agencies are experiencing some measure of financial, staffing, and infrastructure challenges that portend a decline in the provision of fire and emergency services to their communities in West County.

While some agencies have yet to experience these challenges, those agencies recognize that the challenges will evince themselves in the near future. This is especially true of staffing, which is the pre-eminent challenge for the current fire and emergency service system model currently relied upon in the County.

Even for agencies that are not currently in distress, the fragility of neighboring agencies affects all communities due to potential declines in mutual aid support capability.

Service declines are evidenced by increasing mutual aid responses when agencies cannot staff their own units in a timely fashion. Additionally, all agencies have very thin or even nonexistent unit redundancy, which means that a given agency can likely respond to just one incident at a time. (The lack of redundancy is particularly acute for advanced life support/ambulance service.)

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 challenges at West County Fire agencies could be characterized as fundamentally a financial issue, but there is not one of the fifteen subject agencies that wouldn't rate staffing as their primary concern.

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.

All agencies rely on volunteers to some degree; many rely solely on volunteers. The agencies that solely rely on volunteers are obvious (all of the Volunteer Fire Companies covering CSA 40 areas) and not (at Occidental FPD all staff except the administrator are remunerated only with stipends, including the chief).

The fundamental staffing challenge is that relying on volunteers is becoming untenable, necessitating a shift to more part-time and full-time career positions. Most agencies don't have the financial capability to carry out that transition. Furthermore, managing all of the associated support functions for career staff (e.g. payroll and benefits administration) is largely beyond the current administrative capability of most of the agencies in West County.

*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.

**Want To Become a Volunteer Firefighter?**

Fire and EMS agencies throughout the County have reported a surge in interest from potential volunteer firefighters after the 2017 fire disaster.

Fire Protection Districts, which often have internal training programs, and sometimes pay for outside training programs, report a fairly high success rate of converting candidates into certified volunteers.

Volunteer Fire Companies, which don't have robust internal training programs or the resources to pay for candidates to attend outside programs, report a very low "conversion" rate.

The Santa Rosa Junior College District offers a "full" training academy for candidates seeking career positions, as well as a "volunteer" academy.

OSHA has set a standard of 20-hours of training per month for firefighters, but that level is rarely met by any agency, in Sonoma or elsewhere.

Most districts indicate that they hold weekly training sessions, usually for three or four hours; they also have internal training requirements. Volunteer companies typically hold training sessions less often, and in many cases rely on sending potential volunteers to the SRJC "volunteer" academy to qualify their recruits for duty.

There have been attempts to hold multi-agency training sessions in West County, but results have been fitful at best.

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

The Volunteer Fire Companies used to receive training support from the County's Fire and Emergency Services department. A two-year contract between the County and North Bay Fire (an organization representing the remaining VFCs) is intended to provide funding to secure leadership and administrative support for the VFCs, and may also be used to secure training support.

A number of West County agencies, notably in Region 5 (the River area), have attempted to organize joint training opportunities, but these efforts have not been terribly successful.

#### *Call Volumes*

REDCOM, the joint powers agency that provides dispatch services to all of the West County agencies (and almost all of the fire and EMS service providers in the County), logs calls for service in a variety of ways.

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.)

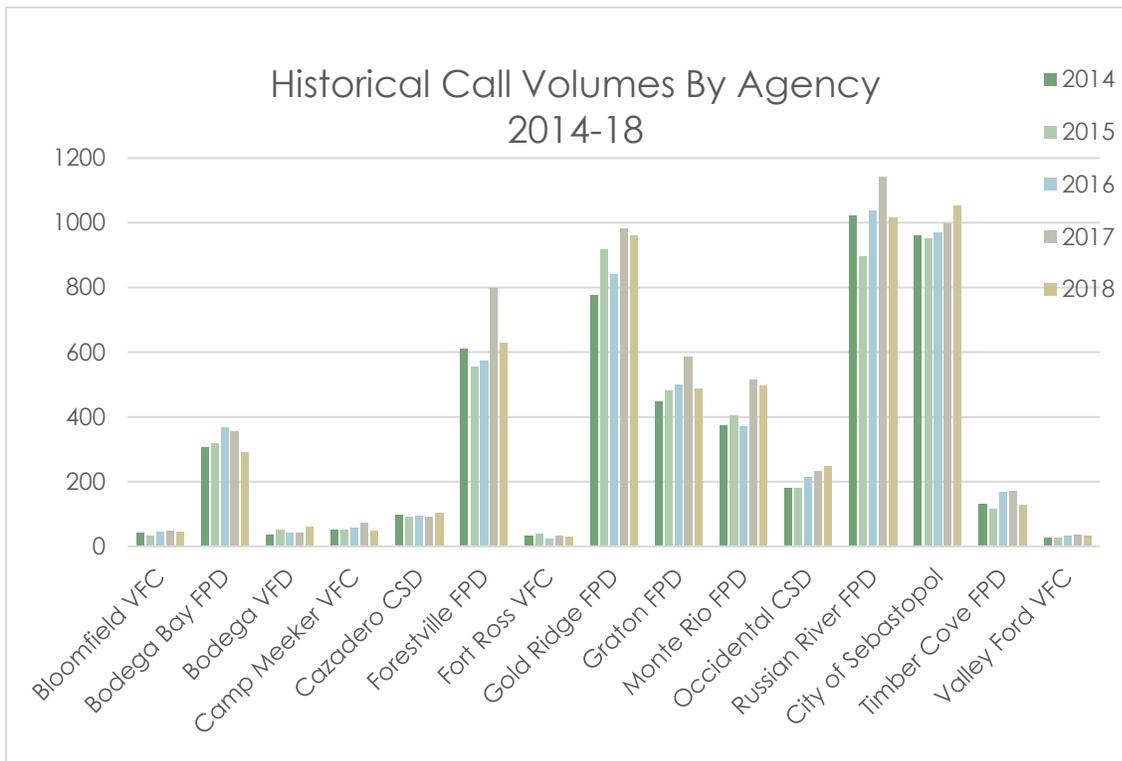
Some agencies note that they respond to more mutual aid than in-agency calls, but it should be noted that these distinctions are becoming less meaningful. In some cases agencies respond with "automatic mutual aid" to neighboring jurisdictions, with the possibility of being "called off" if the neighboring jurisdiction determines it can handle the response alone.

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.)

The following chart summarizes historical call volumes for 2014 through 2018 for the subject agencies. **It is important to note that these statistics indicate the number of calls generated within each agency territory, not the number of calls that each agency responded to.**

**Chart 1: Historical Call Volumes Generated Within Agency Territories**



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

*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 gathered from REDCOM, the County-wide dispatch center, 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 either 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. In particular, many agencies in West County acknowledge that a subset of their calls are addressed with “1/0” staffing – just one firefighter responds.

While not being unfairly critical of this response level, no one in the fire and emergency services community would advocate anything less than “2/0” staffing response as a minimum requirement. (In suburban and urban areas, “3/0” staffing is considered a minimum.)

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 West County 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*

Most 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.

All of the agencies in West County, save the Russian River and Bodega Bay Fire Protection Districts, provide BLS service.

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.)

Box van ambulances have an additional advantage in that they can accommodate two or even more patients.

The two agencies in West County who provide ALS service are the Russian River and Bodega Bay Fire Protection Districts. Russian River has ambulance-based paramedics; Bodega Bay has an ambulance-based paramedic team and now has a second team based on an engine.

### *Ambulance (Transport) Service*

The agencies in West County that provide BLS service rely on Russian River FPD, Bodega Bay FPD, or private providers to transport victims after they are stabilized.

Russian River and Bodega Bay provide the most coverage in West County, providing not only transport service but ALS service to most of the region. An ALS private provider is nominally stationed in Occidental but is often posted further inland.

(Ambulances throughout the County are often repositioned, or “shifted”, to provide optimum coverage. For example, if Bodega Bay’s ambulance is on a call/transport, which will often take two or more hours, private provider ambulances in the “core” region of the County are nominally repositioned to be on hand for service on the coast.)

### *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 five-year or so 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.

#### *Russian River and Bodega Bay FPD Ambulance Service*

Two public agencies, the Russian River and Bodega Bay Fire Protection Districts, provide ambulance-based advanced life support services, not only within their district territories, but throughout most of the West County region.

Though covering territory outside of their District boundaries improves service utilization – the Districts have a higher call volume and therefore a greater revenue stream – neighboring districts that rely on the service are not contributing to the “stand up” costs of having the service available.

Both Districts are struggling with the financial impacts of providing ambulance-based advanced life support service, and have a limited set of options to secure financial stability:

- Seek additional financial support, in the form of voter-approved special taxes, from their District residents. Bodega Bay FPD proposed an increase in their already high parcel tax in 2014; that measure was soundly defeated. Russian River FPD has a much lower parcel tax, where single-family homes are typically assessed \$140. Seeking additional financial support from District property owners might be considered inequitable given that neighboring agencies are receiving service without providing any financial support to Bodega Bay and Russian River.
- Raise service rates. The agencies have the right to set rates, but as noted before, typically only recoup just over thirty percent of what they charge. Bodega Bay also notes that district residents will not be keen to pay higher call rates when they pay one of the highest parcel tax rates in the State.
- Transition to engine-based service. Engine-based service is likely somewhat cheaper due to lower vehicle costs, but the agencies would also forgo all revenue, so this option will not improve the financial performance of providing ALS service.
- Transition to Basic Life Support service. Transitioning to BLS would lower vehicle, equipment, and (marginally) employee costs, but would also generate no revenue, so similar to the previous option, would not likely improve financial conditions. Moving to BLS would clearly significantly diminish service not only to

the residents and visitors to the Districts' territories, but also to much of the West County region.

- Seek financial support from the County, in recognition that some portion of service calls come from transient populations (tourists and visitors), so local residents should not be called on to fully support emergency medical services. Bodega Bay FPD estimates that over eighty percent of medical service calls are for visitors; the proportion for Russian River is likely far lower but still significant.
- Seek some financial support as part of the County-wide provision of EMS services, and in particular the granting of "franchise" rights to private providers in the central portion of the county. The County, through the Coastal Valleys EMS agency, grants exclusive rights to serve a central "core" of the County to a private provider through a bidding process undertaken every seven-to-ten years. The provider is expected to offer reasonable rates and meet coverage standards, including meeting response time targets in outlying parts of the core territory. That model could be extended to insure that all areas of the County receive a determined standard of coverage using the financial earnings from the core. The model could include subsidies to agency providers that cover remote areas.
- Seek financial support from neighboring agencies. The ambulance/advanced life support services of Bodega Bay and Russian River FPDs extend far beyond their respective District territories, and while the agencies receive revenue from service calls outside their area, they receive no "base" financial support from neighboring agencies. From an equity perspective, all of the residents within each agency's EMS service area should be financially supporting the resources needed to provide coverage. It is likely unrealistic to expect neighboring agencies to agree to financially support Bodega Bay and Russian River FPDs for the EMS service; it would be more reasonable to expect that the situation would be addressed only through a regional consolidation of agencies that synched with the service zones.

### *Facilities*

Subject agencies own and maintain a variety of facilities that house vehicles and equipment and in some cases provide quarters for employees.

Many agencies have facilities that are substandard for their current use, or otherwise require significant upgrades or outright replacement. Additionally, as some agencies begin to employ career-professional staff, upgrades to facilities will be required, including installation of dormitory housing.

Other than the Graton fire station, all stations in West County are not fully compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). While many facilities can accommodate disabled persons in their public areas (notably meeting rooms that are used for board meetings), a variety of non-compliance issues are evident. (By law, all areas of publicly-owned facilities, which for fire stations includes crew quarters, must be compliant.)

Perhaps the most troubling facility issue for several of the subject agencies (including Cazadero, Monte Rio, and Russian River) are stations that are notably seismically

deficient. These stations feature unreinforced concrete block construction. There is a significant risk that these facilities could fail catastrophically in an earthquake, potentially trapping equipment inside and endangering staff.

While many agencies have installed ventilation systems for truck bays, there are a significant number that do not have these essential systems in place.

Lastly, many facilities are insufficiently sized and equipped to house vehicles. Some unmanned, "satellite" stations (like Monte Rio's Jenner facility) are simply not large enough to house engines; others (like Occidental) do not have proper ventilation equipment installed.

**Table 1 – Facility Inventory**

<b>Agency - Facility</b>	<b>Suited for Staff</b>	<b>Upgrade Needed for Staff</b>	<b>Seismic Issues</b>	<b>Rebuild Indicated</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Bodega Bay	Yes	No	No	No	
Forestville	Yes	No	No	No	
Gold Ridge – Twin Hills	Yes	No	No	No	
Gold Ridge - Hessel	Yes	No	No	No	
Gold Ridge - Freestone	No	No	Maybe	Yes, if staffed	Storage only
Graton	Yes	No	No	No	Newest facility in West County
Monte Rio - Monte Rio (Headquarters)	No	Yes	Yes	<b>Yes</b>	
Monte Rio - Duncans Mills	No	Yes, if staffed	No	No	Storage only
Monte Rio - Jenner	No	Yes, if staffed	Yes	Yes	Facility is suitable only for small vehicle storage

**SONOMA LAFCO MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW**

Russian River – Guerneville	Yes	No	Yes	<b>Yes</b>	Building is seismically unsound
Russian River – Rio Nido	No	No	Unknown	No	Storage Only
Timber Cove	No	No	No	No	Staffing not anticipated
Cazadero – Cazadero Hwy (Headquarters)	No	No	Yes	<b>Yes</b>	Staffing not anticipated; seismically unsound
Cazadero – Austin Creek Road	Yes	No	Maybe	No	
Occidental	Yes	No	Partial	No	Vehicle bays require ventilation and potentially seismic upgrade
City of Sebastopol	No	No	No	No	Bay addition anticipated
CSA 40 – Bloomfield	No	Yes, if staffed	No	Yes	Major upgrades or replacement required
CSA 40 – Bodega	Yes	No	No	No	
CSA 40 – Camp Meeker	No	No	No	No	No staffing anticipated
CSA 40 – Fort Ross (4 Facilities)	No	No	No	No	Suitable for current use
CSA 40 – Valley Ford	No	Yes, if staffed as proposed	No		

## Equipment

Agencies in West County utilize a variety of equipment, including “typical” engines, “wildland” engines, rescue trucks, water tenders, and other specialized equipment (e.g. boats for swift water or near-shore rescue).

“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 West County agencies deploy Type 6 engines, and Type 7s, which are based on pickup truck platforms. Type 7s are the only vehicles suited for some areas in West County due to roadway access conditions.

Most Districts 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), and do not attempt to evaluate net present costs or provide an annual capital retention estimate that would wholly fund future replacements.

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

### Best Practice

Gold Ridge FPD employs a vehicle lease plan that “smooths” equipment replacement costs. The District accesses seven-year lease funding with very low interest rates to purchase vehicles, incorporating repayment costs as a regular expense line item, thereby obviating the need to designate and manage a dedicated capital reserve fund.



### **Photograph 1: Monte Rio FPD Type 7 Engine; Suited for Poor Access Conditions**

Without a rigorous capital program analysis, it is difficult to evaluate whether a given agency can sustainably fund vehicle and facility costs. However, even without an analysis, it is clear that a significant number of agencies in West County do not have adequate funding for their next anticipated vehicle purchase, or funding set aside for major facility upgrades or replacements.

#### **Financial Ability to Provide Service**

##### **Determinations**

- **The subject agencies (with only a few exceptions) do not prepare multi-year budget projections, which would nominally inform agency boards of impending financial sustainability challenges.**
- **Similarly, most agencies have prepared only a rudimentary vehicle and equipment capital plan, and most agencies are not setting aside sufficient funding for future expenditures.**
- **While some agencies have facilities (stations) that are in reasonable condition, they have not evaluated capital funding needs for ADA compliance, seismic retrofitting, other facility upgrades (e.g. engine bay ventilation systems), or outright facility rebuilds.**

##### **Discussion**

The financial condition of each agency varies, but as a general statement, agencies are providing the level of fire and emergency services that they can afford. That said, **all** agencies in West County are facing staffing challenges and infrastructure needs that will force service reductions in the future if additional revenue sources are not secured.

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, to increase salaries and benefits for career firefighters, or to contract with another agency for services (e.g. CalFire).
- Supplies, equipment maintenance, and equipment replacement costs, particularly for the two agencies providing advanced life support services.
- Facility maintenance and replacement costs (though most agencies simply have no plans to perform seismic retrofits, ADA compliance upgrades, upgrades to accommodate career firefighter staffing, or any other facility capital program).
- Vehicle replacement.

With very limited exceptions, agencies in West County do not prepare budget forecasts beyond the next fiscal year, and very few have more than a rudimentary capital plan that identifies future costs for vehicles, equipment, and facilities.

## Governance and Accountability

### Determinations

- **The Fire Protection Districts in West County appear to have well-functioning governing boards. The governance and accountability of Volunteer Fire Company 501 (c)(3) bodies was not evaluated.**
- **No District reported any particular difficulty in recruiting candidates to run for board seats, though most have not seen contested seats either. Board members often have a fire and emergency services career background; it might better serve agency and community interests to have a wider variety of board member backgrounds and experience, and for there to be a somewhat higher turnover rate.**
- **Some districts, generally due to a lack of administrative capability, or as a matter of practice, do not ensure that board members have filed financial interest disclosures or completed state-mandated ethics training.**
- **There are no apparent instances of recent violations of open meeting regulations, campaign regulations, or other accountability requirements among the Fire Protection Districts in West County.**

### Discussion

Generally speaking, the agencies in West County have governing boards that are meeting most standards of ethical and professional conduct, and have reasonably healthy elected board member turnover.

However, most agencies could benefit from having a higher level of administrative and management support that would enable preparation of capital plans and multi-year financial projections.

Several agencies in the River area have hired the same administrative staff, leading to impressive improvements in administrative performance.

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## Opportunity for Shared Services

### Determinations

- **Any proposed reorganizations of subject agencies, or contractual service arrangements, are unlikely to generate significant cost savings.**
- **As subject agencies begin to establish or add paid professional staff positions, administrative support needs will increase. Adding administrative support capability would best be accomplished through shared staffing resources, either on a contracted basis or by regionally consolidated agencies.**
- **A regionally consolidated agency or agencies would be better positioned to evaluate and project capital and expense needs, enabling agency leadership to develop funding strategies.**

### Discussion

Simply stated, any modest cost savings that might accrue from reorganizations of West County fire and EMS agencies will be dwarfed by the underlying and impending funding shortfalls to address a quickly deteriorating ability to provide adequate service levels in the area.

While a layperson would be excused for assuming that a reorganization would result in a reduction of leadership staff, potential closures of redundant facilities, more cost-effective equipment replacement and management, and sundry other improvements in efficiencies, the reality is that these potential savings are likely to be modest.

For example, many leadership positions are unpaid, or paid with modest stipends. While there may be opportunities to close some facilities, the remaining facilities require extensive refurbishment or outright replacement. There is some likelihood that the combined vehicle fleet in West County could be downsized, that should be tempered by the realization that agencies don't have sufficient funding to maintain even a reduced fleet.

Agencies in Counties that have pursued regional or large-scale reorganizations report a need for higher levels of administrative support, particularly when paid firefighter positions are added to the organization.

Several Districts in the River area are now relying on a two-person administrative support team, yielding impressive results in enhancing management of the agencies. There are additional opportunities to share services including establishing a common training program and delivery staff, and adding battalion chief coverage across the region.

In summary, although a regionally consolidated agency would achieve some cost savings through gains in efficiency, those gains are likely to be achieved at higher leadership and administration costs, and regardless, the need to identify and secure additional revenue will be required to maintain reasonable service levels in the region.

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**MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW: BODEGA BAY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT**
**Summary Determinations**

- Bodega Bay FPD provides “all risk” coverage to residents and visitors to Bodega Bay, and ambulance/paramedic coverage to adjoining areas, using predominantly a career-staffing model supported by adjunct volunteers.
- The District is financially unsustainable if its current level of service provision is to continue. The District is rapidly depleting reserve funding for operational costs, and has no provisions for vehicle replacement or other capital needs.
- To provide redundant emergency medical service coverage, which is needed due to significant travel times to Santa Rosa-based hospitals, the District would need to add a fourth career position. Instead, the District may face the painful choice of cutting staff; resulting in a significantly degraded service level.
- The board of directors and leadership for the District has assiduously sought solutions to address financial sustainability, including securing approval from residents for one of the highest parcel taxes in the state, seeking revenue from the County in recognition of the impact of tourism on the District’s call volumes, and seeking reorganization opportunities that would in part recognize that neighboring areas are reliant on Bodega Bay FPD service without making financial contributions to the District.
- The County has recently authorized a package of fire and EMS agency funding streams that includes a two-year commitment to provide Bodega Bay FPD with funding that will stabilize service and pay for a fourth full-time position, improving redundant service provision. The funding does not provide a long-term solution for the District, both due to its short-term nature and because it does not address vehicle funding needs.

**OVERVIEW**

The Bodega Bay Fire Protection District (“Bodega Bay” or “Bodega Bay FPD”, not to be confused with the Bodega Volunteer Fire Company) serves the unincorporated village of Bodega Bay in the south, through the Salmon Creek and Carmet areas, to the Wright Hill Road area just south of Jenner, where the Russian River outfalls to the Pacific Ocean.

The District was formed in 1953 and serves approximately 1200 residents in a territory covering 34 square miles.

The District is bordered on the north by Monte Rio FPD and Occidental CSD, to the east by Bodega Bay VFC, and to the south by Marin County.

The District serves full and part-time residents within district boundaries, as well as an estimated 4 million annual visitors to the beaches and other amenities located within its service area.

Bodega Bay also provides emergency services in the form of ambulance/emergency medical coverage, to a portion of northern Marin County (under contract), to the

County Service Area 40 territories served by the Bloomfield, Valley Ford, and Bodega Volunteer Fire Companies, and to a portion of the Monte Rio FPD. This territory is more than six times greater in area (215 square miles) than that of the District proper, but only increases the resident population that the District serves by about a third (600 additional residents).

The District often provides ambulance service coverage much farther afield, including to Gold Ridge, Occidental, Monte Rio, and Timber Cove FPDs, and even central Sonoma County.

Bodega Bay is staffed with career professionals, augmented by a small cadre of volunteers. The District is funded with property tax revenue, and from a very high parcel tax.

**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.	Evaluation
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?	Yes*
c. Will projected growth require a change to agency service boundaries?	No

\* Transient population growth.

**Determinations**

- The regions served by Bodega Bay FPD 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), and to land use policies enacted by the California Coastal Commission.

## 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.

### *Resident Population*

As noted in the Summary Determinations of this report, population growth within the West County region is expected to be low. Growth within Bodega Bay FPD territory is expected to be even lower due to coastal land use regulations and a preponderance of public and protected land, and therefore will not drive a marked need for increased service provision.

### *Transient Population*

Fire and emergency services agencies respond to “transient” populations as well as resident populations within their service areas. For Bodega Bay FPD, transient population service needs, combined with out-of-district service needs (primarily emergency service/ambulance), greatly exceed the service needs of district residents.

Over three quarters of the District’s call volume are responses to transient and out-of-district calls. These calls range from fire response (low volumes), a variety of emergency responses (including rescues of various types), and, predominantly, calls for service from transient visitors to the region.

The rate of growth in call volume for the District, which has risen from 415 in 2000 to over six hundred in recent years, can be almost entirely attributed to out-of-district and transient occupant-generated calls. While there are no particular projections of future transient population growth, it is perhaps safe to assume that visitor numbers will at the least be maintained, if not even increased in the future.

### *Development*

The County of Sonoma and the Coastal Commission have jurisdiction over land use and planning for the areas served by the District.

The County General Plan does not anticipate significant development in the areas served by the District, and the Coastal Commission, as the primary land use planning agency for the majority of the District’s territory, strictly limits new development.

**DETERMINATION 2. CAPACITY AND ADEQUACY OF PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

Present and planned capacity of public facilities, adequacy of public services, and infrastructure needs or deficiencies.	Evaluation
a. Are there any deficiencies in agency capacity to meet service needs of existing development within its existing territory?	Yes
b. Are there any issues regarding the agency's capacity to meet the service demand of reasonably foreseeable future growth?	Yes
c. Are there any concerns regarding public services provided by the agency being considered adequate?	Yes
d. Are there any significant infrastructure needs or deficiencies to be addressed?	Yes
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 structural fire protection within or contiguous to the agency's sphere of influence?	No

**Determinations**

- The Bodega Bay Fire Protection District has experienced call volume growth that is not commensurate with population and development growth. Call volume is being driven by an increase in medical service calls (due in part to an aging population), and service calls for transient visitors to the region.
- While the District has maintained acceptable response times, it faces an increasing risk of being unable to effectively respond to second “call outs” (a service call when the primary response team is already on a call).
- The Bodega Bay Fire Protection District effectively provides fire and emergency services within its existing service area and is expected to be able to serve population and development growth for the foreseeable future. However, without an increase in funding the District would likely implement reductions in crew staffing that could impair service quality.
- The District, because it provides emergency services/ambulance in areas outside District territory, and because of limited staffing, has very limited redundancy capability for emergency services. Therefore, for several hundred occurrences each year, the District has only long-response time back-up coverage.

**Discussion**

**Service Volumes**

Bodega Bay FPD provides fire and emergency services within its boundaries, and provides mutual aid support to neighboring agencies. Table 2 indicates the historical frequency of calls generated within the District territory (Bodega Bay responds to many calls outside of the District both as a mutual aid provider and for advanced life support/ambulance responses).

**Table 2: Historical Call for Service Volumes – Bodega Bay Fire Protection District**

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Calls Generated Within District	307	317	366	354	289

The District undertook an analysis of call volumes compared to client population since 2000 and determined that call volume growth is essentially wholly attributable to outside-district and transient occupant generated calls.

**Response Standards**

A discussion of response time standards is included in Appendix 3 of this report.

Bodega Bay FPD serves a territory with **rural** demands and currently operates with “2/0” staffing (a two-member crew is generally dispatched to calls, with a third staff resource on hand for support or for second calls).

**Table 3: Response Time Statistics – Bodega Bay Fire Protection District**

Year	Average Response Times (Dispatched to “Arrived On Scene”)
2014	6 minutes 35 seconds
2015	6 minutes 34 seconds
2016	6 minutes 53 seconds
2017	6 minutes 47 seconds
2018	6 minutes 41 seconds

These statistics indicate that Bodega Bay FPD meets NFPA response time standards for rural areas for calls that are generated from within the District territory.

### **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.

Bodega Bay FPD has not identified any specific deficiencies with regard to its fire station.

However, severe traffic congestion on Highway 1, generally occurring on weekends and holidays, can severely inhibit travel to incidents.

Support from the Bodega Volunteer Fire Company six miles to the south can partially alleviate this challenge, but there are no similarly situated mutual aid resources to the north. (Monte Rio Fire Protection District does provide support from the north, but travel distances are much longer than for Bodega VFC from the south.)

The challenges for where resources are sited is especially acute for ambulance service. Generally, the District can rely on mutual aid ambulance support from either Russian River Fire Protection District in Guerneville, or a private ambulance provider which is nominally posted in Occidental.

If a third ambulance unit could be supported in the West County region, there may be an opportunity to rethink the geographical deployment of those resources.

### **Staffing**

Bodega Bay FPD is a "combined" department, with both career and volunteer firefighter and EMT staffing.

The District reports that it does have challenges recruiting and maintaining its career professional workforce. Career staff cannot afford to live within the District, and many staff members have pursued their careers at other agencies outside of the County after training and working at Bodega Bay. The District's pool of volunteers is limited by a small and increasingly part-time resident populace.

**DETERMINATION 3. FINANCIAL CONDITION**

Financial ability of agencies to provide services	Evaluation
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?	Maybe
b. Is the organization lacking adequate reserve to protect against unexpected events or upcoming significant costs?	Yes
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?	Yes
d. Is the organization unable to fund necessary infrastructure maintenance, replacement and/or any needed expansion?	Yes
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 Bodega Bay Fire Protection District has been meeting its expenses, though to some extent this has been accomplished with occasional funding support from the County. District financial projections indicate that reserves will be depleted as early as the next fiscal year.
- Bodega Bay FPD will require additional, sustained revenue to support its current operations, which includes a “2/0” staffing program.
- Financial management of the District is sound and is independently audited on an annual basis. The District is one of few west county agencies that prepares budget projections for future years.

**Discussion**

*Budgeting*

The Bodega Bay FPD 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 residents are able to comment, in successive board meetings prior to budget approval.

The District is one of the few west county fire and emergency service agencies that forecasts budgets for future years.

*Finances*

Bodega Bay FPD career staff are enrolled in the CalPERS retirement system. The District is making regular annual contributions to the plan and is also paying an amortized amount to pay off an unfunded account balance with a current value of just over \$1.25 million.

Table 4 shows historical and projected budgets for Bodega Bay FPD.

**Table 4: Bodega Bay FPD Budget Review**

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Revenue</b>	<b>Salaries and Benefits</b>	<b>Operating and Capital Expenditures</b>	<b>Surplus / (Deficit)</b>	<b>Reserves</b>
16-17	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
17-18	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
18-19*	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
19-20*	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
20-21*	\$	\$	\$	(\$)	\$
21-22*	\$	\$	\$	(\$)	\$

\* Reflects budgeted or projected.

Bodega Bay FPD faces several challenges related to sustainably funding operations:

- Staffing costs (salaries and benefits) are increasing at a higher rate than revenue increases. The District has been forced to increase salary rates in an attempt to attract and retain employees. Recent employee hires have had tenures of as short as three weeks, as candidates seek more lucrative positions at other Sonoma County or Bay Area agencies.
- The District has ongoing vehicle and equipment replacement needs. This is particularly acute for ambulance vehicles, which require replacement on a five-year schedule compared to a fifteen to twenty-year replacement schedule for fire and rescue vehicles.

- Medical supplies and other ambulance-related equipment costs are increasing at a rapid rate.
- Insurance reimbursement rates for ambulance service calls are under continued pressure. Service providers rarely receive more than thirty percent of billed costs for reimbursements.

### *Reserves*

Bodega Bay FPD maintains cash reserves and manages them per a board-adopted Financial Reserve Policy.

Current reserves amount to approximately \$XXXXXX, and are intended for general operating expenditures. The District has a policy of maintaining at least two months of operating expenses in reserve.

However, the District has proposed using essentially the entirety of reserves to pay for a fourth staffed position, to provide service redundancy, through the end of the current fiscal year. The County of Sonoma has recently authorized a fire and emergency service funding program for two years that will provide Bodega Bay with the funding needed for the fourth position.

Nevertheless, the District will have no financial cushion to pay for other operational expenses or capital needs beginning in the next fiscal year.

### *Financial Policies*

Bodega Bay FPD has adopted financial policies to help ensure the proper fiscal management, including:

- Purchasing
- Financial Reserve
- Capital Assets

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

## **FINANCIAL OPTIONS**

Appendix 4 generally describes options for subject agencies to increase revenues and decrease costs, either as stand-alone agencies or through a regional consolidation program.

### **Revenue Source Options**

The Bodega Bay Fire Protection District was formed in 1984 as a combination of a volunteer fire department that began in 1953, and Bodega Bay Rescue, which was formed in 1979.

Property tax allocations for the District were determined at formation, and, as shown in Appendix 4, the District has a very low average property tax allocation, of 3.9%, compared to the average for fire districts in the County of 7.89%.

Bodega Bay FPD does have a parcel tax that features rate classes based on “units of risk” – different rates are charged depending on a number of factors including building type and size. The parcel tax does not feature an escalation factor for cost of living adjustments, and therefore does not provide increases over time.

The District's parcel tax, at \$524 for a single-family residence, is by far the highest in Sonoma County, and is perhaps the highest in the state. District residents soundly defeated a measure to increase the tax in 2014.

Given this revenue structure, the District might best raise additional revenue through an infusion from the County of Sonoma, either through an adjustment of its property tax allocation rate or through a dedicated stream of Transient Occupancy Tax revenue.

The District should continue to seek equitable tax revenue treatment from the regions outside the District where it provides emergency medical/ambulance coverage. Although the District receives some revenue from these calls, that revenue does not address any portion of the costs for “upstanding” the resource – to equitably pay for having the resource available.

### **Potential Cost Savings from Consolidation**

It is generally assumed that district consolidations might generate increased efficiencies that would result in cost savings. For consolidations of fire and emergency service agencies, these efficiencies could include elimination of redundant staffing, streamlined administrative support, vehicle fleet reductions, and reduced facilities costs (if there are facility redundancies).

For Bodega Bay FPD, some of these efficiencies are possible, but are unlikely to deliver anything but modest cost savings.

Operationally, it is unclear if a regional district would result in changes to station locations or staffing of those stations that would result in cost savings. However, leadership of a regional district would have the potential opportunity to re-evaluate station staffing levels.

Lastly, a regional district would certainly have the opportunity to re-evaluate equipment needs, as it is often the case that districts own and operate specialty vehicles that could be shared over a wider region. For Bodega Bay, and several other West County agencies, that includes rescue watercraft.

(Although the Sonoma County Sheriff's Department is not a subject agency of this report, it is perhaps of note that the Department operates a boat program out of Bodega Bay Harbor with superior equipment to the District's, with an exceedingly low use rate. It would behoove both agencies to explore a conjoined boat rescue and policing response program.)

### **Resources:**

Audited financial statements, approved current budgets, and budget projections are on file with LAFCO.

**DETERMINATION 4. SHARED SERVICES AND FACILITIES**

Status of, and opportunities for, shared facilities.	Evaluation
a. Are subject agencies currently sharing services or facilities with other organizations? If so, describe the status of such efforts.	Yes
b. Are there any opportunities for the organizations to share services or facilities with neighboring or overlapping organizations that are not currently being utilized?	Yes
c. Are there any governance options that may produce economies of scale and/or improve buying power in order to reduce costs?	Yes
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**

- Were Bodega Bay to join a regional consolidation of fire and emergency service agencies there would likely only be modest reductions in total administrative and leadership costs.
- Although not analyzed in this report, a consolidated agency might realize modest reductions in fleet costs by eliminating duplicative equipment.

**Discussion**

Bodega Bay FPD manages operations cooperatively with neighboring agencies, notably through mutual response agreements. They also participate 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 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 for the District is presented in Table 5.

**Table 5: Coordination Best Practices – Bodega Bay Fire Protection District**

<b>Best Practice</b>	<b>Observation and findings</b>
The District participates in the Redwood Empire Dispatch Communications Authority (REDCOM)	Yes
The District has mutual aid agreements with other agencies.	Yes
The District contracts for accounting and audit services with other districts or the County.	No
The District participates with other districts or the County for equipment purchasing or leasing.	No
The District participates in joint insurance programs.	Yes
The District has an "Amador Contract" with CalFire.	No
The District participates in joint training with other districts or the County.	No
The District participates with another district or the County for joint administration services.	No
The District shares facilities with other districts.	No
The District shares a fire chief or other staff with another District.	No
The District participates in joint recruitment with other districts.	No

*REGIONAL AGENCY CONSOLIDATION*

The Bodega Bay Fire Protection District has been a leader in undertaking discussions with West County fire and emergency services agencies regarding consolidation.

*POTENTIAL COST SAVINGS FROM CONSOLIDATION*

Should the District join a regional consolidation in the future, modest cost savings might accrue from sharing of leadership and administration personnel and potentially from vehicle fleet reductions.

While the District does not have redundant vehicles or other equipment, there may be a modest opportunity to reduce inventories, particularly of specialized vehicles and equipment, if it joined a regional consolidation program.

The District does provide water rescue services through a “boat program”. The program is needed for close-to-shore rescues that cannot be conducted by the Coast Guard.

The Sonoma County Sheriff also operates a boat program out of Bodega Bay harbor. Although LAFCO has no oversight of the Sheriff’s office, it is recommended that Bodega Bay and the Sheriff analyze whether a coordinated program could reduce costs for both agencies (by obviating the need for ownership and maintenance of one vessel), and potentially provide superior capabilities.

**DETERMINATION 5. ACCOUNTABILITY, STRUCTURE AND EFFICIENCIES**

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

### **Determinations**

- The 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.
- Bodega Bay 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 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 District is in compliance with all public noticing requirements for board meetings. The District makes files available to the general public when requested, and pertinent files are available on the district web site.

Board members file financial interest statements and comply with State training requirements for public officials. There have been no noted Brown Act violations by the district directors.

Bodega Bay undergoes annual financial audits and changes auditors regularly.

District staff and board members have supported discussions regarding operational and governance options in Regions 4, 5, and 8, up to and including a West County-wide reorganization and consolidation of fire and emergency service agencies.

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**MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW: FORESTVILLE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT**
**SUMMARY DETERMINATIONS**

- **Forestville FPD is widely admired for its ability to manage a combined staff of both career and volunteer firefighters, and envied for maintaining a steady volunteer recruitment program relying on local residents.**
- **Despite a solid staffing condition and currently healthy finances, the District does have a sense that it will face challenges in the future, and is cautiously open to proposals for regional consolidation.**
- **The District would like to move to “3/0” staffing, and to share battalion chief coverage with neighboring agencies if a system can be put in place.**
- **The District relies to a large degree on the Russian River FPD for EMS/ambulance support, but does not contribute financially for that service. Barring a reform of EMS/ambulance service provision in the region, including equitable financial support, District residents would likely see a significant degradation in EMS/ambulance service.**

**OVERVIEW**

The Forestville Fire Protection District (“Forestville” or “Forestville FPD”) serves the unincorporated community of Forestville and small communities along the Russian River. Formed in 1938, the District serves 25 square miles of territory.

Forestville FPD is bordered on the east by the newly-reorganized Sonoma County Fire Protection District (which includes the former Windsor and Rincon Valley FPDs); to the south by Graton FPD; to the west by Russian River and Monte Rio FPDs; and to the north by County Service Area 40 – Fire Services (Sotoyome).

The District territory features the typical diversity of terrain for Russian River-area agencies, though generally the District has less territory that has extremely difficult territory to serve by virtue of access.

Forestville serves approximately 8,500 residents within district boundaries, as well as travelers on Highway 116 and River Road.

Forestville is staffed with career professionals, augmented by volunteers. The District is funded with property tax revenue and two voter-approved parcel taxes.

**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.	Evaluation
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 to agency service boundaries?	No

**Determinations**

- The region served by Forestville 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.

*Resident Population*

The District serves a resident population of about 8,500, with growth rates expected to remain very low.

*Overall Effect*

Forestville FPD serves rural residential communities. Growth in those unincorporated areas is low and therefore will not drive a marked need for increased service provision.

*Transient Population*

Fire and emergency services agencies respond to “transient” populations as well as resident populations within their service areas. While Forestville FPD does experience transient-driven traffic on River Road and Highway 116, staff reports that service calls for this population are reasonably low.

*Development*

The County of Sonoma has jurisdiction over land use and planning for the areas served by the District.

The County General Plan does not anticipate significant development in the areas served by the District.

**DETERMINATION 2. CAPACITY AND ADEQUACY OF PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

Present and planned capacity of public facilities, adequacy of public services, and infrastructure needs or deficiencies.	Evaluation
g. Are there any deficiencies in agency capacity to meet service needs of existing development within its existing territory?	No
h. Are there any issues regarding the agency's capacity to meet the service demand of reasonably foreseeable future growth?	Maybe
i. Are there any concerns regarding public services provided by the agency being considered adequate?	No
j. Are there any significant infrastructure needs or deficiencies to be addressed?	No
k. Are there changes in state regulations on the horizon that will require significant facility and/or infrastructure upgrades?	No
l. Are there any service needs or deficiencies for disadvantaged unincorporated communities related structural fire protection within or contiguous to the agency's sphere of influence?	No

**Determinations**

- The District has been able to maintain service response times.
- Forestville effectively provides fire and emergency services within its existing service area and is expected to be able to serve population and development growth for the foreseeable future.

## Discussion

### Service Volumes

Forestville provides fire and emergency services within its boundaries, and provides mutual aid support to neighboring agencies. Table 6 indicates the historical frequency of calls generated within Forestville's territory.

**Table 6: Historical Call for Service Volumes – Forestville FPD**

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Calls Generated Within District	611	556	573	798	630

### Response Standards

A discussion of response time standards is included in Appendix 3 of this report.

Forestville serves a territory with **rural** demands and currently operates crews with “2/0” staffing (two-member crews are dispatched to all calls, sometimes with a third crew member if available).

**Table 7: Response Time Statistics – Forestville FPD**

Year	Average Response Times (Dispatched to “Arrived On Scene”)
2014	5 minutes 46 seconds
2015	5 minutes 38 seconds
2016	5 minutes 58 seconds
2017	6 minutes 6 seconds
2018	6 minutes 6 seconds

These statistics indicate that Forestville meets NFPA response time standards for rural areas for calls that are generated from within the District's territory.

### 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.

Forestville has not identified any need for additional facilities based on the call volumes and profiles it foresees in the future.

**Staffing**

Forestville FPD is a “combined” department, with both career and volunteer firefighter and EMT staffing.

The District reports that it does not have challenges recruiting and maintaining its career professional workforce, who all live within the District’s territory. The District is planning to close part-time career positions in the near future.

Forestville maintains a solid volunteer program, though ranks are slowly decreasing. Volunteers are paid stipends on a shift basis. The District tries to provide social opportunities, the opportunity to serve on active calls, and a training program that supports volunteers seeking career positions. (The District continues to offer an Explorer program.)

The District notes that some volunteers may not be fully meeting annual training requirements, but believes that volunteers are completing the most crucial training programs and pass physical fitness training.

(Forestville's chief notes that training records for some volunteers are held at other agencies – it is fairly typical for volunteers to serve at more than one agency.)

In part due to fairly lengthy ambulance response times (the District relies primarily on Russian River FPD for emergency medical/ambulance coverage), the District would like to move to a “3/0” staffing level, but does not have the financial capability at this time.

**DETERMINATION 3. FINANCIAL CONDITION**

Financial ability of agencies to provide services	Evaluation
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

Financial ability of agencies to provide services	Evaluation
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 District has been meeting its expenses without difficulty and has been able to provide funding for infrastructure needs (primarily vehicle and equipment replacement).
- Forestville will require additional, sustained revenue if it is to support a “3/0” staffing program.
- Financial management of the District is sound and is independently audited on an annual basis.

**Discussion**

*Budgeting*

The District 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 residents are able to comment, in successive board meetings prior to budget approval.

*Finances*

Forestville career staff are enrolled in the CalPERS retirement system. The District is making regular annual contributions to the plan and is also paying an amortized amount to pay off an unfunded account balance of just over \$1 million.

Table 8 shows historical and projected budgets for Forestville FPD.

**Table 8: Forestville FPD Budget Review**

Fiscal Year	Revenue	Salaries and Benefits	Operating and Capital Expenditures	Surplus / (Deficit)	Reserves
15-16	\$	\$	\$	(\$)	\$

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Revenue</b>	<b>Salaries and Benefits</b>	<b>Operating and Capital Expenditures</b>	<b>Surplus / (Deficit)</b>	<b>Reserves</b>
16-17	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
17-18	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
18-19*	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$

\* Reflects budgeted or projected.

Forestville FPD faces several challenges related to sustainable funding:

- Costs are increasing at a rate higher than revenues.
- The District has ongoing vehicle and equipment replacement needs that may exceed the amount held in reserve for these uses.

*Reserves*

Forestville maintains cash reserves and manages them per a board-adopted Financial Reserve Policy.

Current reserves amount to approximately \$100,000, and are intended for general operating expenditures.

*Debt*

Forestville FPD has approximately \$1 million of under-funded CalPERS pension liabilities, and is making supplemental payments on a thirty-year payoff plan.

*Financial Policies*

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

- Purchasing
- Financial Reserve
- Capital Assets

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

**FINANCIAL OPTIONS**

Appendix 4 describes options for subject agencies to increase revenues and decrease costs, either as stand-alone agencies or through a regional consolidation program.

## Revenue Source Options

Forestville FPD was formed in 1938, long before the passage of Proposition 13. Property tax allocations for the District were determined at formation, and, as shown in Appendix 4, Forestville has a quite healthy average property tax allocation, of 11.89%, compared to the average for fire districts in the County of 7.89%.

Forestville does have two modest parcel taxes that features rate classes based on “units of risk” – different rates are charged depending on a number of factors including building type and size. The parcel taxes do not feature an escalation factor for cost of living adjustments, and therefore do not provide increases over time.

One of the District's parcel taxes levies a fee of \$75 per year regardless of parcel size or developed use. The second tax, which is based on “units of risk”, levies a charge of \$40 per year for a typical single-family residence.

District staff believe that the current parcel tax structure does not adequately assess commercial property. Staff also believes that there is potential to seek more financial support through special taxes, but that a higher level of service would need to be offered to justify an increase.

Given its revenue structure, the District's best avenue for securing additional revenue would be through a parcel tax increase.

## Potential Cost Savings from Consolidation

It is generally assumed that district consolidations might generate increased efficiencies that would result in cost savings. For consolidations of fire and emergency service agencies, these efficiencies could include elimination of redundant staffing, streamlined administrative support, vehicle fleet reductions, and reduced facilities costs (if there are facility redundancies).

For Forestville, some of these efficiencies are possible, but are unlikely to deliver anything but modest cost savings. The District does note that there is potential to reduce the chief position to part-time, and that that could be accomplished through a regional agency model.

Operationally, it is unclear if a regional district would result in changes to station locations or staffing of those stations that would result in cost savings. However, leadership of a regional district would have the potential opportunity to re-evaluate station staffing levels.

Lastly, a regional district would certainly have the opportunity to re-evaluate equipment needs, as it is often the case that districts own and operate specialty vehicles that could be shared over a wider region.

### Resources:

Audited financial statements, approved current budgets, and budget projections for the District are on file with LAFCO.

**DETERMINATION 4. SHARED SERVICES AND FACILITIES**

Status of, and opportunities for, shared facilities.	Evaluation
a. Are subject agencies currently sharing services or facilities with other organizations? If so, describe the status of such efforts.	No
b. Are there any opportunities for the organizations to share services or facilities with neighboring or overlapping organizations that are not currently being utilized?	Yes
c. Are there any governance options that may produce economies of scale and/or improve buying power in order to reduce costs?	Yes
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**

- Were Forestville FPD to join a regional consolidation of fire and emergency service agencies there would likely only be modest reductions in total administrative and leadership costs.
- Although not analyzed in this report, a consolidated agency might realize modest reductions in fleet costs by eliminating duplicative equipment.

**Discussion**

Forestville FPD manages operations cooperatively with neighboring agencies, notably through mutual response agreements. They also participate 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 Agency 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 for the Agency is presented in Table 9.

**Table 9: Coordination Best Practices – Forestville Fire Protection District**

Best Practice	Observation and findings
The District participates in the Redwood Empire Dispatch Communications Authority (REDCOM)	Yes
The District has mutual aid agreements with other agencies.	Yes
The District contracts for accounting and audit services with other districts or the County.	No
The District participates with other districts or the County for equipment purchasing or leasing.	No
The District participates in joint insurance programs.	Yes
The District has an "Amador Contract" with CalFire.	No
The District participates in joint training with other districts or the County.	Occasionally
The District participates with another district or the County for joint administration services.	No
The District shares facilities with other districts.	No
The District shares a fire chief or other staff with another District.	No
The District participates in joint recruitment with other districts.	No

*REGIONAL AGENCY CONSOLIDATION**POTENTIAL COST SAVINGS FROM CONSOLIDATION*

Should the District join a regional consolidation in the future, modest cost savings might accrue from sharing of leadership and administration personnel and potentially from vehicle fleet reduction.

While the District does not have redundant vehicles or other equipment, there may be a modest opportunity to reduce inventories, particularly of specialized vehicles and equipment, if it joined a regional consolidation program.

**DETERMINATION 5. ACCOUNTABILITY, STRUCTURE AND EFFICIENCIES**

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

**Determinations**

- The 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.
- Forestville FPD 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 regarding opportunities for coordinating service provision to produce efficiencies and cost savings, up to and including potential consolidation of operations in the future, despite the relative "comfort" of its existing operational and financial condition.

**Discussion**

The District is in compliance with all public noticing requirements for board meetings. The District makes files available to the general public when requested, and pertinent files are available on the district web site.

Board members file financial interest statements and comply with State training requirements for public officials. There have been no noted Brown Act violations by the district directors.

Forestville FPD undergoes annual financial audits and change auditors regularly.

District staff and board members have supported discussions regarding operational and governance options in Region 5, and with the newly-reorganized Sonoma County Fire District.

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**MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW: GOLD RIDGE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT**
**SUMMARY DETERMINATIONS**

- **The Gold Ridge Fire Protection District has a history of conservative fiscal management, with a “live within means” credo. Nonetheless, Gold Ridge, which has one of the most diverse set of position classes of any West County agency, recognizes that pressure will build to support more paid career firefighters, which will strain financial resources.**
- **Gold Ridge has a vehicle leasing program which could serve as a model to other West County fire and emergency services agencies, and to agencies throughout the County.**
- **It is apparent that Gold Ridge provides crucial, regular mutual aid service to the City of Sebastopol, along with the Graton FPD. Regardless of reorganization and consolidation opportunities, the District might consider codifying this provision of support through a contractual arrangement with the City.**
- **The District primarily relies on ambulance coverage provided by the contracted provider for the “Exclusive Operating Area” in Sonoma County, which is currently AMR.**
- **The District relies in part on the Bodega Bay FPD for EMS/ambulance support, but does not contribute financially for that service. Barring a reform of EMS/ambulance service provision in the region, including equitable financial support, some District residents would likely see a significant degradation in EMS/ambulance service if Bodega Bay revamps coverage.**

**OVERVIEW**

The Gold Ridge Fire Protection District (“Gold Ridge” or “Gold Ridge FPD”) serves 75 square miles of territory including the unincorporated region generally west, south, and southeast of Sebastopol. The District was formed as a consolidation of the Hessel and Twin Hills Fire Protection Districts in 1993.

The Agency serves a population of about 23,000 residents within district boundaries.

Gold Ridge shares borders with ten other fire and emergency services agencies – more than any other agency considered in this study. These include County Service Area 40 – Fire Services territory served by four Volunteer Fire Companies (Bodega, Valley Ford, Bloomfield, and Two Rock); two cities (Sebastopol and a sliver of Santa Rosa); and four Districts (Occidental CSD, Graton FPD, Sonoma County FPD, and Ranch Adobe FPD).

Territory served by the District is primarily rural residential and agricultural, with very limited commercial activity. The District does include sections of Highway 116 and 12, as well as portions of many east/west rural roads.

The District is staffed with ten career professionals (full- and part-time), augmented by a cadre of volunteers. The District is funded with property tax revenue and through a special (parcel) tax.

**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.	Evaluation
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 to agency service boundaries?	No

**Determinations**

- The communities served by Gold Ridge 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.

*Resident Population*

The areas served by the District have approximately 23,000 residents. District staff believe that there has been a trend of increasing year-round residency (as opposed to seasonal or vacation home use) in recent years, but that there will not be substantial development and attendant resident population growth in the future.

Recent County land use planning regulation changes will likely permit more accessory dwelling units, which may lead to a modest increase in resident population.

*Overall Effect*

Gold Ridge serves rural residential communities. Growth in those unincorporated areas is low and therefore will not drive a marked need for increased service provision.

*Transient Population*

Fire and emergency services agencies respond to “transient” populations as well as resident populations within their service areas. For Gold Ridge, transient population service needs are primarily driven by visitors transiting through the area on Highways 116 and Bodega Highway.

*Development*

The County of Sonoma has jurisdiction over land use and planning for the areas served by the District. The County General Plan does not anticipate significant development in the areas served by the District.

**DETERMINATION 2. CAPACITY AND ADEQUACY OF PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

Present and planned capacity of public facilities, adequacy of public services, and infrastructure needs or deficiencies.	Evaluation
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?	Maybe
c. Are there any concerns regarding public services provided by the agency being considered adequate?	Maybe
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?	Yes
f. Are there any service needs or deficiencies for disadvantaged unincorporated communities related structural fire protection within or contiguous to the agency's sphere of influence?	No

**Determinations**

- The Gold Ridge Fire Protection District has experienced call volume growth commensurate with population and development growth. The District has been able to meet response time standards.

- Gold Ridge effectively provides fire and emergency services within its existing service area and, with additional funding, can be expected to be able to serve population and development growth for the foreseeable future.

**Discussion**

**Service Volumes**

Gold Ridge FPD provides fire and emergency services within its boundaries, and provides mutual aid support to neighboring agencies (notably the City of Sebastopol). Table 10 indicates the historical frequency of calls generated within Gold Ridge's territory.

**Table 10: Historical Call for Service Volumes – Gold Ridge Fire Protection District**

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Calls Generated Within District	775	916	840	983	960

**Response Standards**

A discussion of response time standards is included in Appendix 3 of this report.

Gold Ridge serves a territory with **rural** demands and currently operates crews with "2/0" staffing (two-member crews are dispatched to all calls).

**Table 11: Response Time Statistics – Gold Ridge FPD**

Year	Average Response Times (Dispatched to "Arrived On Scene")
2014	6 minutes 34 seconds
2015	6 minutes 43 seconds
2016	6 minutes 47 seconds
2017	7 minutes 4 seconds
2018	7 minutes

These statistics indicate that Gold Ridge meets NFPA response time standards for rural areas for calls that are generated from within the District's territory.

**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.

Gold Ridge operates two staffed stations, the headquarters on Hessel Road and the Twin Hills station on Watertrough Road. The District also has a small station in Freestone that houses an engine and water tender, and is staffed by local volunteers.

The District does not identify any need to reorient station staffing, but if a third EMS/ambulance was added to the West County service "mix", Freestone has been mooted as a potential location to provide coverage that complemented the Bodega Bay FPD and Occidental-based Exclusive Operating Area (Falck 531) units.

**Staffing**

Gold Ridge shares the diversity of staff of Graton and Forestville FPDs, including full-time and part-time career staff, stipend-paid volunteers, and an explorer unit.

Gold Ridge reports that it does have challenges recruiting and maintaining its career professional workforce. Career staff cannot afford to live within the area, and many staff members have pursued their careers at other agencies outside of the County after training and working at Gold Ridge.

The District's pool of volunteers is drawn from a local population that is aging and has a workforce that works out of the area.

**DETERMINATION 3. FINANCIAL CONDITION**

Financial ability of agencies to provide services	Evaluation
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?	Maybe

Financial ability of agencies to provide services	Evaluation
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 District has been meeting its expenses without difficulty and has been able to provide funding for infrastructure needs (primarily vehicle and equipment replacement).
- Gold Ridge will require additional, sustained revenue to support its current operations, if downward trends in volunteer availability continue.
- Financial management of Gold Ridge is sound and is independently audited on an annual basis.

**Discussion**

*Budgeting*

The District 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 residents are able to comment, in successive board meetings prior to budget approval.

*Finances*

Gold Ridge career staff are enrolled in the CalPERS retirement system. The District is making regular annual contributions to the plan and is also paying an amortized amount to pay off an unfunded account balance.

Table 12 shows historical and projected budgets for Gold Ridge FPD.

**Table 12: Gold Ridge FPD Budget Review**

Fiscal Year	Revenue	Salaries and Benefits	Operating and Capital Expenditures	Surplus / (Deficit)	Reserves
14-15	\$1,846,339	\$1,385,568	\$438,771	(\$15,000)	\$7,000
15-16	\$ 2,013,467	\$ 1,538,576	\$452,391	(\$15,000)	\$7,500

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Revenue</b>	<b>Salaries and Benefits</b>	<b>Operating and Capital Expenditures</b>	<b>Surplus / (Deficit)</b>	<b>Reserves</b>
16-17	\$1,898,103	\$ 1,450,302	\$640,653	\$ 45,693	\$238,545
17-18	\$2,066,571	\$1,471,180	\$ 384,613	\$10,000	\$200,778
18-19*	\$2,140,304	\$1,510,641	\$382,249	\$37,500	\$209,914

\* Reflects budgeted or projected.

Gold Ridge faces several challenges related to sustainable funding:

- The District will likely have to continue a transition to more career professional staffing.
- The District has ongoing vehicle and equipment replacement needs.

*Reserves*

Gold Ridge maintains cash reserves and manages them per a board-adopted Financial Reserve Policy.

Current reserves amount to approximately \$200,000, and are intended for general operating expenditures. The District has a policy of maintaining at least two months of operating expenses in reserve.

The District does not allocate reserves for specific cost categories.

*Financial Policies*

Gold Ridge has adopted financial policies to help ensure the proper fiscal management, including:

- Purchasing
- Financial Reserve
- Capital Assets

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

**FINANCIAL OPTIONS**

Appendix 4 describes options for subject agencies to increase revenues and decrease costs, either as stand-alone agencies or through a regional consolidation program.

## Revenue Source Options

The Agency was formed in 1993 through the consolidation of two pre-Proposition 13 agencies (Twin Hills and Hessel FPDs). Property tax allocations for the District average (as shown in Appendix 4) a low 4.89%, compared to the average for fire districts in the County of 7.89%.

Gold Ridge does have two voter-approved parcel taxes; one is based on “units of risk” – different rates are charged depending on a number of factors including building type and size; the other is a fixed per-parcel fee.

A typical single-family home is assessed \$65 per year in total from the two taxes. The parcel taxes do not feature an escalation factor for cost of living adjustments, and therefore do not provide increases over time.

The District intends to place a special tax measure on the November 2019 ballot to support increased staffing levels. One board member reckoned that the District was on a “smoldering platform” rather than a burning one, but that having a discussion with District residents for further financial support was “in the cards”.

## Potential Cost Savings from Consolidation

It is generally assumed that district consolidations might generate increased efficiencies that would result in cost savings. For consolidations of fire and emergency service agencies, these efficiencies could include elimination of redundant staffing, streamlined administrative support, vehicle fleet reductions, and reduced facilities costs (if there are facility redundancies).

For Gold Ridge, some of these efficiencies are possible, but are unlikely to deliver anything but modest cost savings.

Operationally, it is unclear if a regional district would result in changes to station locations or staffing of those stations that would result in cost savings. However, leadership of a regional district would have the potential opportunity to re-evaluate station staffing levels.

Lastly, a regional district would certainly have the opportunity to re-evaluate equipment needs, as it is often the case that districts own and operate specialty vehicles that could be shared over a wider region.

### Resources:

- Audited financial statements, approved current budgets, and budget projections for the Agency are on file with LAFCO.

**DETERMINATION 4. SHARED SERVICES AND FACILITIES**

Status of, and opportunities for, shared facilities.	Evaluation
a. Are subject agencies currently sharing services or facilities with other organizations? If so, describe the status of such efforts.	Yes (pending). The District is entering into a medical training agreement with Bodega Bay FPD, and intends to provide services to North Bay Fire, which represents Volunteer Fire Companies operating in CSA 40.
b. Are there any opportunities for the organizations to share services or facilities with neighboring or overlapping organizations that are not currently being utilized?	Yes
c. Are there any governance options that may produce economies of scale and/or improve buying power in order to reduce costs?	Yes
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**

- Were Gold Ridge to join a regional consolidation of fire and emergency service agencies there would likely only be modest reductions in total administrative and leadership costs.
- Although not analyzed in this report, a consolidated agency might realize modest reductions in fleet costs by eliminating duplicative equipment.

**Discussion**

Gold Ridge manages operations cooperatively with neighboring agencies, notably through mutual response agreements. They also participate 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.

Gold Ridge FPD 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 for the District is presented in Table 13.

**Table 13: Coordination Best Practices – Gold Ridge Fire Protection District**

<b>Best Practice</b>	<b>Observation and findings</b>
The District participates in the Redwood Empire Dispatch Communications Authority (REDCOM)	Yes
The District has mutual aid agreements with other agencies.	Yes
The District contracts for accounting and audit services with other districts or the County.	No
The District participates with other districts or the County for equipment purchasing or leasing.	No
The District participates in joint insurance programs.	Yes
The District has an "Amador Contract" with CalFire.	No
The District participates in joint training with other districts or the County.	Yes (pending)
The District participates with another district or the County for joint administration services.	Yes
The District shares facilities with other districts.	No
The District shares a fire chief or other staff with another District.	Yes (pending)
The District participates in joint recruitment with other districts.	No

*REGIONAL AGENCY CONSOLIDATION*

*POTENTIAL COST SAVINGS FROM CONSOLIDATION*

Should the District join a regional consolidation in the future, modest cost savings might accrue from sharing of leadership and administration personnel and potentially from vehicle fleet reduction.

While the District does not have redundant vehicles or other equipment, there may be a modest opportunity to reduce inventories, if it joined a regional consolidation program.

**DETERMINATION 5. ACCOUNTABILITY, STRUCTURE AND EFFICIENCIES**

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

**Determinations**

- The 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.
- Gold Ridge 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 regarding opportunities for coordinating service provision to produce efficiencies and cost savings, up to and including potential consolidation of operations in the future.
- The District might consider in particular holding discussions with the City of Sebastopol and the Graton FPD to determine if there are opportunities to contractually provide mutual aid service. (Sebastopol is considering adding career positions, but has otherwise been over-reliant on support from Gold Ridge and Graton.)

**Discussion**

The District is in compliance with all public noticing requirements for board meetings. There have been no noted Brown Act violations by the district directors.

The District makes files available to the general public when requested, and pertinent files are available on the district web site.

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

Gold Ridge undergoes annual financial audits and change auditors regularly.

District staff and board members have supported discussions regarding operational and governance options, up to and including a West County-wide reorganization and consolidation of fire and emergency service agencies. The District also offered to act as a contracted entity to provide administrative and leadership services to County Service Area 40 – Fire Services.

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**MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW: GRATON FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT**
**SUMMARY DETERMINATIONS**

- **The Graton Fire Protection District has a healthy financial, staffing, and operational outlook.**
- **The District has recently been awarded a SAFER grant, which would allow the addition of paid staff resulting in “3/0” staffing of responses. However, Graton is reticent to add staffing that may have to be reduced at the conclusion of the three-year grant, so is directing funding in July 2019 to two career engineers and a stipend program for volunteers. The District expects that this will preserve “2/0” staffing levels for some time.**

**OVERVIEW**

The Graton Fire Protection District (“Graton” or “Graton FPD”) serves the unincorporated community of Graton immediately north of the City of Sebastopol. The District was founded in 1951.

The District includes a section of Highway 116, as well as portions of major east/west rural roads such as Guerneville Road, Green Valley Road, Graton Road, and Occidental Road. The territory is primarily agricultural and rural residential, with some commercial development in Graton and some agricultural processing facilities (notably wineries).

The District serves almost 7,000 residents in a territory covering 26 square miles.

Graton FPD is staffed wholly by volunteers who are reimbursed through pay-per-call or shift stipends (e.g., “sleeper” shifts). The District maintains an active trainee program developing three to six new firefighters per year.

The District is funded solely with property tax revenue, and recently was awarded a SAFER grant to augment staffing for a three-year period.

**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.	Evaluation
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 to agency service boundaries?	No

**Determinations**

- The region served by Graton 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.

*Resident Population*

An analysis by the County of Sonoma indicated that the District had 6,925 residents in 2018. The District does not report any particular prevalence of seasonal or short-term rental activity beyond typical levels for the West County area.

*Development*

The County of Sonoma has jurisdiction over land use and planning for the areas served by the District. The County General Plan does not anticipate significant development in the areas served by the District.

**DETERMINATION 2. CAPACITY AND ADEQUACY OF PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

Present and planned capacity of public facilities, adequacy of public services, and infrastructure needs or deficiencies.	Evaluation
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 structural fire protection within or contiguous to the agency's sphere of influence?	No

**Determinations**

- The District has experienced call volume growth that exceeds population and development growth. The District has been able to meet response time standards.
- The District effectively provides fire and emergency services within its existing service area and is expected to be able to serve population and development growth for the foreseeable future.

**Discussion**

**Service Volumes**

Graton FPD provides fire and emergency services within its boundaries, and provides mutual aid support to neighboring agencies. Table 14 indicates the historical frequency of calls generated within Graton's territory.

**Table 14: Historical Call for Service Volumes – Graton Fire Protection District**

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Calls Generated Within District	446	482	501	585	488

**Response Standards**

A discussion of response time standards is included in Appendix 3 of this report.

Graton FPD serves a territory with **rural** demands and currently operates crews with “2/0” staffing (two-member crews are dispatched to all calls).

**Table 15: Response Time Statistics – Graton Fire Protection District**

Year	Average Response Times (Dispatched to “Arrived On Scene”)
2015	
2016	
2017	
2018	

These statistics indicate that Graton FPD meets NFPA response time standards for rural areas for calls that are generated from within the Agency territory.

**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.

Graton has the newest station in West County, located almost centrally within District territory. The District does not anticipate any facility needs in the long-term future.

**Staffing**

Graton FPD is a “volunteer” department, with some volunteers EMT certified.

The District reports that it has a healthy roster of volunteers, and has not required career staffing to meet community needs.

**DETERMINATION 3. FINANCIAL CONDITION**

Financial ability of agencies to provide services	Evaluation
a. Does the organization routinely engage in budgeting practices that may indicate poor financial management, such as	No

Financial ability of agencies to provide services	Evaluation
overspending its revenues, failing to commission independent audits, or adopting its budget late?	
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 District has been meeting its expenses without difficulty and has been able to provide funding for infrastructure needs (primarily vehicle and equipment replacement).
- Graton has a mortgage of \$2.9 million for the firehouse, but is paying off the debt with extra payments of \$100,000 per year.
- Financial management of Graton is sound and is independently audited on an annual basis.

**Discussion**

*Budgeting*

The District 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 residents are able to comment, in successive board meetings prior to budget approval.

Finances

Table 16 shows historical and projected budgets for Graton FPD.

**Table 16: Graton FPD Budget Review**

Fiscal Year	Revenue	Salaries and Benefits	Operating and Capital Expenditures	Surplus / (Deficit)	Reserves
15-16	\$	\$	\$	(\$)	\$
16-17	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
17-18	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
18-19*	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$

\* Reflects budgeted or projected.

The District believes that it's only financial challenge in the near-term is related to vehicle and equipment replacement.

Reserves

Graton maintains cash reserves and manages them per a board-adopted Financial Reserve Policy.

Current reserves amount to approximately \$2,550,000, and are intended for general operating expenditures. (About \$750,000 will be used for two impending vehicle purchases.)

The District also allocates funds to an assigned capital replacement reserve and maintains a five-year "capital replacement plan", which anticipates major expenditures such as vehicle and equipment replacements. Graton is allocating \$70,000 annually for vehicle replacement reserves.

Financial Policies

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

- Purchasing
- Financial Reserve
- Capital Assets

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

## FINANCIAL OPTIONS

Appendix 4 describes options for subject agencies to increase revenues and decrease costs, either as stand-alone agencies or through a regional consolidation program.

### Revenue Source Options

The District was formed in 1951, well before the passage of Proposition 13. Property tax allocations for the District were determined at formation, and, as shown in Appendix 4, the District has a somewhat low property tax allocation, of 6.39%, compared to the average for fire districts in the County of 7.89%.

Graton does not assess any special taxes.

Given this, the District might best raise additional revenue through seeking voter approval of a parcel tax, which it is considering doing in late 2019. If it does so, the District is contemplating a tax based on "units of risk", incorporating an escalation factor.

### Potential Cost Savings from Consolidation

It is generally assumed that district consolidations might generate increased efficiencies that would result in cost savings. For consolidations of fire and emergency service agencies, these efficiencies could include elimination of redundant staffing, streamlined administrative support, vehicle fleet reductions, and reduced facilities costs (if there are facility redundancies).

For Graton FPD, some of these efficiencies are possible, but are unlikely to deliver anything but modest cost savings.

Operationally, a regional district would likely maintain a volunteer-based operation in Graton. However, leadership of a regional district would have the potential opportunity to re-evaluate station staffing, perhaps adding career staffing to meet community needs.

Graton also notes that operational consolidation might enable the establishment of a regional duty officer roster, relieving individual chiefs of continuous duty absent coverage arrangements made with neighboring agencies.

Lastly, a regional district could have the opportunity to re-evaluate equipment needs, as it is often the case that districts own and operate specialty vehicles that could be shared over a wider region.

#### Resources:

- Audited financial statements, approved current budgets, and budget projections for the Agency are on file with LAFCO.

**DETERMINATION 4. SHARED SERVICES AND FACILITIES**

Status of, and opportunities for, shared facilities.	Evaluation
a. Are subject agencies currently sharing services or facilities with other organizations? If so, describe the status of such efforts.	Yes
b. Are there any opportunities for the organizations to share services or facilities with neighboring or overlapping organizations that are not currently being utilized?	Perhaps (Administration)
c. Are there any governance options that may produce economies of scale and/or improve buying power in order to reduce costs?	Yes
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**

- Were Graton FPD to join a regional consolidation of fire and emergency service agencies there would likely only be modest reductions in total administrative and leadership costs, and no reduction in staffing and leadership costs.
- Although not analyzed in this report, a consolidated agency might realize modest reductions in fleet costs by eliminating duplicative equipment.

**Discussion**

Graton FPD manages operations cooperatively with neighboring agencies, notably through mutual response agreements. They also participate 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 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 for the Agency is presented in Table 70.

**Table 70: Coordination Best Practices – Graton Fire Protection District**

Best Practice	Observation and findings
The District participates in the Redwood Empire Dispatch Communications Authority (REDCOM)	Yes
The District has mutual aid agreements with other agencies.	Yes
The District contracts for accounting and audit services with other districts or the County.	No
The District participates with other districts or the County for equipment purchasing or leasing.	No
The District participates in joint insurance programs.	Yes
The District has an "Amador Contract" with CalFire.	No
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
The District shares facilities with other districts.	No
The District shares a fire chief or other staff with another District.	No
The District participates in joint recruitment with other districts.	No

*REGIONAL AGENCY CONSOLIDATION**POTENTIAL COST SAVINGS FROM CONSOLIDATION*

Should the District join a regional consolidation in the future, modest cost savings might accrue from vehicle fleet reduction.

While the District does not have redundant vehicles or other equipment, there may be a modest opportunity to reduce inventories, if it joined a regional consolidation program.

**DETERMINATION 5. ACCOUNTABILITY, STRUCTURE AND EFFICIENCIES**

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

**Determinations**

- The 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.
- Graton FPD 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 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 District is in compliance with all public noticing requirements for board meetings. There have been no noted Brown Act violations by the district directors.

The District makes files available to the general public when requested, and pertinent files are available on the district web site.

Board members file financial interest statements and comply with State training requirements for public officials. There is reasonable turnover on the District board.

Graton FPD undergoes annual financial audits and change auditors regularly.

District staff has supported discussions regarding operational and governance options in Region 8. However, the District's board is fiscally conservative, and from that perspective, sees no apparent justification for a consolidation program.

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**MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW: MONTE RIO FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT**
**SUMMARY DETERMINATIONS**

- **The Monte Rio Fire Protection District manages to provide a remarkable level of fire and emergency service given limited resources, a hugely challenging service area, and what has been an all-volunteer operation. However, the District acknowledges that service provision is “nominal” – often at “1/0” staffing for much of a given week.**
- **The District recently secured approval of a parcel tax, which will be used to support career staffing during workhours on weekdays.**
- **The District’s facilities are in need of a comprehensive review, which would include the development of a plan to build a new facility in Monte Rio, and to evaluate the viability and use of the Duncans Mills and Jenner facilities.**
- **The District relies on the Russian River and Bodega Bay FPDs for EMS/ambulance support, but does not contribute financially for that service. Barring a reform of EMS/ambulance service provision in the region, including equitable financial support, District residents might see a significant degradation in EMS/ambulance service.**

**OVERVIEW**

The Monte Rio Fire Protection District (“Monte Rio” or “Monte Rio FPD”) serves the unincorporated communities of Jenner, Duncans Mills, and Monte Rio. Formed in 1920, it is the oldest Fire Protection District in Sonoma County.

The District is bounded by the Pacific Ocean on the west; by Timber Cove FPD, Fort Ross VFC, Cazadero CSD, and Russian River FPD on the north; by Forestville FPD on the east; and by Occidental CSD, Camp Meeker VFC, and Bodega Bay FPD to the south. The territory covers 45 square miles.

The terrain within the district territory includes coastal beaches and bluffs, the swath of the Russian River, open wildland, and redwood forests. Most development is clustered on either side of the Russian River and along creek tributaries. The District also serves a number of seasonal camps, notably the Bohemian Grove.

Some areas of the District, such as “The Terraces” immediately west and above the District headquarters, are heavily wooded and have very poor access, with very narrow, constricted roadways. The District has invested in Type 7 vehicles (based on pickup truck chassis) that are short enough to access these areas.

Monte Rio serves full and part-time residents within district boundaries, though the trend has been conversion of seasonal home use to year-round use. The district does experience a seasonal uptick in population in the summer, particularly due to camp use.

Monte Rio is currently an all-volunteer agency, though with the infusion of tax revenue from a recently-approved parcel tax, the District will be hiring career staff to provide daytime, weekday staff coverage.

**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.	Evaluation
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 to agency service boundaries?	No

**Determinations**

- The regions served by Monte Rio FPD 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), and by restrictions on coastal-area development imposed by the California Coastal Commission.

**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.

*Resident Population*

The District has a population of about 2500 residents, with a significant visitor population during summer months.

*Transient Population*

Fire and emergency services agencies respond to “transient” populations as well as resident populations within their service areas. For Monte Rio, transient population service needs are driven by Russian River-area tourism (including use of seasonal camps such as the Bohemian Grove) and related vehicle traffic through the corridor.

*Development*

The County of Sonoma and the Coastal Commission have jurisdiction over land use and planning for the areas served by the District. The County General Plan does not anticipate significant development in the areas served by the District, and the Coastal Commission has essentially enacted the equivalent of a moratorium on coastal-area development. (The entirety of Jenner, along with Sonoma Coast State Beach, is under Coastal Commission jurisdiction.)

**DETERMINATION 2. CAPACITY AND ADEQUACY OF PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

Present and planned capacity of public facilities, adequacy of public services, and infrastructure needs or deficiencies.	Evaluation
a. Are there any deficiencies in agency capacity to meet service needs of existing development within its existing territory?	Yes
b. Are there any issues regarding the agency's capacity to meet the service demand of reasonably foreseeable future growth?	Maybe
c. Are there any concerns regarding public services provided by the agency being considered adequate?	Yes
d. Are there any significant infrastructure needs or deficiencies to be addressed?	Yes
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 structural fire protection within or contiguous to the agency's sphere of influence?	No

**Determinations**

- The District has experienced call volume growth commensurate with population and development growth. The District has been able to meet response time standards.
- Although call response times for the District are within standards, Monte Rio is providing a level of service below what is recommended by NFPA standards, often responding to calls with only one firefighter/medic. A recently-authorized parcel tax will allow the District to hire career firefighters and to potentially increase volunteer stipend payments, which may enable the District to provide “2/0” call coverage.

**Discussion**

**Service Volumes**

Monte Rio provides fire and emergency services within its boundaries, and provides mutual aid support to neighboring agencies. (The District has a contractual arrangement with neighboring Cazadero Community Services District to provide weekday daytime call coverage.)

The District primarily responds to medical response calls, but is also occasionally called on for cliff rescues and flood response.

Table 18 indicates the historical frequency of calls generated within Monte Rio's territory.

**Table 18: Historical Call for Service Volumes – Monte Rio Fire Protection District**

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Calls Generated Within District	373	404	371	516	496

**Response Standards**

A discussion of response time standards is included in Appendix 3 of this report.

Monte Rio serves a territory with **rural** demands and strives to operate crews with “2/0” staffing (two-member crews are dispatched to all calls).

**Table 19: Response Time Statistics – Monte Rio Fire Protection District**

Year	Average Response Times (Dispatched to “Arrived On Scene”)
2015	5 minutes 50 seconds
2016	5 minutes 37 seconds

2017	4 minutes 53 seconds
2018	5 minutes 8 seconds

These statistics indicate that Monte Rio meets NFPA response time standards for rural areas for calls that are generated from within the District's territory.

**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.

Monte Rio FPD has four facilities: a headquarters station in Monte Rio; an auxiliary station across the street from the headquarters facility, which is used solely for vehicle storage; a two-bay station with capacity for four vehicles in Duncans Mills; and a two-bay station in Jenner suitable for storage of small vehicles.

The headquarters station, which was built in 1954, has limited capability for full-time staffing, and the vehicle bays are not sufficiently high. The station has not been evaluated for seismic stability, and is not compliant with ADA requirements. The auxiliary building across the street has a deteriorating foundation and is unsuitable for use for anything other than vehicle and equipment storage.

The Duncans Mills station has limited capability for staffing (the station does not have water service). The Jenner facility is of little operational use.

The District has a vision of trading land with the County to enable the construction of a new headquarters/fire station adjacent to the existing facility, but there is no planning effort to determine if this is feasible, and the District does not have any financial resources for a station construction project.

If a regional agency consolidation effort were undertaken in the Russian River-area, the Duncans Mills facility might serve as part of a facility plan for the lower river area. The Jenner facility is unlikely to serve any use in its current condition.

**Staffing**

Monte Rio FPD is a volunteer department, transitioning to a "combined" department, with both career and volunteer firefighter and EMT staffing. The volunteer roster has slowly declined, with only half of the dozen volunteers on the roster taking active duty.

The District intends to supplement staffing with newly-authorized parcel tax revenue, adding one paid and one stipend-paid position for weekday day hours. The District intends to mirror wages and stipend rates with what the Russian River FPD offers.

**DETERMINATION 3. FINANCIAL CONDITION**

Financial ability of agencies to provide services	Evaluation
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?	Yes
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?	Maybe
d. Is the organization unable to fund necessary infrastructure maintenance, replacement and/or any needed expansion?	Yes
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 District has been meeting its expenses without difficulty and has been able to provide funding for some infrastructure needs (primarily vehicle and equipment replacement). The District does not have funding for facility replacement.
- Financial management of Monte Rio FPD has improved due to an arrangement for administrative support from Russian River FPD.

**Discussion**

*Budgeting*

The District 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 residents are able to comment, in successive board meetings prior to budget approval.

*Finances*

Table 20 shows historical and projected budgets for the Monte Rio Fire Protection District.

Table 20: Monte Rio FPD Budget Review

Fiscal Year	Revenue	Salaries and Benefits	Operating and Capital Expenditures	Surplus / (Deficit)	Reserves
15-16	\$	\$	\$	(\$)	\$
16-17	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
17-18	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
18-19*	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$

\* Reflects budgeted or projected.

Monte Rio FPD faces several challenges related to sustainable funding:

- Costs are increasing at a rate higher than revenues.
- The District is not able to consistently provide "2/0" staffing coverage, but plans to use recently-approved tax revenue to augment staffing.
- The District has ongoing vehicle and equipment replacement needs.
- While a facility "master plan" is clearly needed, the District has no funding to improve or reconstruct facilities.

#### Reserves

Monte Rio FPD maintains cash reserves and manages them per a board-adopted Financial Reserve Policy.

Current reserves amount to approximately \$600,000, and are intended for general operating expenditures.

The District does not have a capital plan for vehicles and equipment, or a facility upgrade/reconstruction plan.

#### Financial Policies

Monte Rio FPD has adopted financial policies to help ensure the proper fiscal management, including:

- Purchasing
- Financial Reserve
- Capital Assets

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

## **FINANCIAL OPTIONS**

Appendix 4 describes options for subject agencies to increase revenues and decrease costs, either as stand-alone agencies or through a regional consolidation program.

### **Revenue Source Options**

The District was formed in 1920, well before the passage of Proposition 13. Property tax allocations for the Monte Rio FPD were determined at formation, and, as shown in Appendix 4, the District has a healthy property tax allocation, of 12.56%, compared to the average for fire districts in the County of 7.89%.

Monte Rio FPD recently sought and received voter approval for a parcel tax that features rate classes based on “units of risk” – different rates are charged depending on a number of factors including building type and size. The parcel tax does feature an escalation factor for cost of living adjustments.

Monte Rio’s parcel tax, at \$200 for a single-family residence, effectively doubled the revenue for the District to about \$1 million.

### **Potential Cost Savings from Consolidation**

It is generally assumed that district consolidations might generate increased efficiencies that would result in cost savings. For consolidations of fire and emergency service agencies, these efficiencies could include elimination of redundant staffing, streamlined administrative support, vehicle fleet reductions, and reduced facilities costs (if there are facility redundancies).

For Monte Rio FPD, some of these efficiencies are possible. The District houses a small fleet of vintage fire engines in its facilities; if reduced in number, there might be an opportunity to close the auxiliary station in Monte Rio, or otherwise put the property “in play” for a potential land swap with the County as part of a headquarters reconstruction. Alternatively, if the existing headquarters station can be remodeled, sale of the auxiliary station site could provide some funding for the project.

Operationally, it is unclear if a regional district would result in changes to station locations or staffing of those stations that would result in cost savings. However, leadership of a regional district would have the potential opportunity to re-evaluate station staffing levels.

A regional district would certainly have the opportunity to re-evaluate equipment needs, as it is often the case that districts own and operate specialty vehicles that could be shared over a wider region.

Monte Rio FPD has recently entered into an arrangement with Russian River FPD for administrative services. Though this program is unlikely to result in direct cost savings, it has dramatically improved the provision of administrative services to the District.

*Resources:*

- Audited financial statements, approved current budgets, and budget projections for the District are on file with LAFCO.

**DETERMINATION 4. SHARED SERVICES AND FACILITIES**

Status of, and opportunities for, shared facilities.	Evaluation
a. Are subject agencies currently sharing services or facilities with other organizations? If so, describe the status of such efforts.	Yes
b. Are there any opportunities for the organizations 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?	Yes
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?	Yes

**Determinations**

- Were Monte Rio FPD to join a regional consolidation of fire and emergency service agencies there would likely only be modest reductions in total administrative and leadership costs.
- Although not analyzed in this report, a consolidated agency might realize modest reductions in fleet costs by eliminating duplicative equipment.

**Discussion**

Monte Rio manages operations cooperatively with neighboring agencies, notably through mutual response agreements, and a contractual service arrangement to provide support to Cazadero Community Service District. They also participate 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 Agency is insured through the Fire Agencies Insurance Risk Authority (FAIRA).

A summary of best practices for fire district coordination with other agencies for the District is presented in Table 21.

**Table 21: Coordination Best Practices – Monte Rio Fire Protection District**

<b>Best Practice</b>	<b>Observation and findings</b>
The District participates in the Redwood Empire Dispatch Communications Authority (REDCOM)	Yes
The District has mutual aid agreements with other agencies.	Yes
The District contracts for accounting and audit services with other districts or the County.	No
The District participates with other districts or the County for equipment purchasing or leasing.	No
The District participates in joint insurance programs.	Yes
The District has an "Amador Contract" with CalFire.	No
The District participates in joint training with other districts or the County.	Joint training opportunities in the Russian River area have been sporadic.
The District participates with another district or the County for joint administration services.	Yes, with Russian River FPD
The District shares facilities with other districts.	No
The District shares a fire chief or other staff with another District.	No
The District participates in joint recruitment with other districts.	No

*REGIONAL AGENCY CONSOLIDATION**POTENTIAL COST SAVINGS FROM CONSOLIDATION*

Should the District join a regional consolidation in the future, modest cost savings might accrue from sharing of leadership and administration personnel and potentially from vehicle fleet reduction.

While the District does not have any active redundant vehicles or other equipment, there may be a modest opportunity to reduce inventories, particularly of specialized vehicles and equipment, if it joined a regional consolidation program. The District might also consider reducing its inventory of vintage equipment, particularly as part of a potential facility master planning process.

**DETERMINATION 5. ACCOUNTABILITY, STRUCTURE AND EFFICIENCIES**

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

**Determinations**

- The 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.
- Monte Rio FPD 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 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 District is in compliance with all public noticing requirements for board meetings. There have been no noted Brown Act violations by the district directors. Board members file financial interest statements and comply with State training requirements for public officials.

The District board has experienced some turnover recently, and has had some apparent difficulty in attracting candidates for office.

The District makes files available to the general public when requested, and pertinent files are available on the district web site.

Monte Rio FPD undergoes annual financial audits and change auditors regularly.

District staff and board members have supported discussions regarding operational and governance options in Region 5, up to and including a West County-wide reorganization and consolidation of fire and emergency service agencies.

## MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW: RUSSIAN RIVER FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

### SUMMARY DETERMINATIONS

- **Russian River FPD has already transitioned to what is effectively a fully paid-career staffing model, but will find its existing service levels increasingly difficult to support, as the District faces fiscal unsustainability.**
- **The District provides emergency medical/ambulance coverage throughout the Russian River-area, and is experiencing service coverage issues due to a lack of internal redundancy and backup support that has relatively poor response capabilities.**
- **Neighboring agencies, which rely on Russian River FOPD emergency medical/ambulance services, do not financially contribute to the District for that service. A consolidated regional agency would likely be best-suited to address service and financing options for fire service in general and emergency medical/ambulance service in particular.**
- **The District's facility in Guerneville is in dire need of replacement; Russian River does not have any funding to embark on a building program.**

### OVERVIEW

The Russian River Fire Protection District ("Russian River" or "Russian River FPD") serves the unincorporated communities of Guerneville and Rio Nido, with Forestville FPD to the east, Monte Rio FPD to the south and west, and County Service Area 40 – Fire Services area to the north.

The District's territory is similar to Monte Rio FPD's in land use, and includes some territory with extremely difficult access issues.

The District provides fire and emergency services to the communities within the 18 square miles of its service area, but also provides emergency medical service/ambulance coverage throughout much of the Russian River-area in West County. The ambulance service coverage area is just over ten times the District territory at 181 square miles.

Russian River FPD is staffed almost wholly by career professionals, with very limited volunteer support. The District is funded with property tax revenue, and from a parcel tax.

The District has a "2/0" staffing model, but would like to move to "3/0" staffing in compliance with national standards, and to provide a higher level of service to the community.

Given the demands for ambulance services, it would be prudent to evaluate whether the River area would benefit from a staffing model similar to the one contemplated by Bodega Bay FPD: a "2/0" ambulance and a "2/0" paramedic engine providing backup coverage.

**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.	Evaluation
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 to agency service boundaries?	No

**Determinations**

- The regions served by Russian River FPD 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.

*Resident Population*

The District serves about 5,000 residents but reports that summer season population is roughly double that. Russian River also fields calls for ambulance service to another 4,500 residents in the River area.

*Development*

The County of Sonoma have jurisdiction over land use and planning for the areas served by the District. The County General Plan does not anticipate significant development in the areas served by the District.

**DETERMINATION 2. CAPACITY AND ADEQUACY OF PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

Present and planned capacity of public facilities, adequacy of public services, and infrastructure needs or deficiencies.	Evaluation
a. Are there any deficiencies in agency capacity to meet service needs of existing development within its existing territory?	Maybe
b. Are there any issues regarding the agency's capacity to meet the service demand of reasonably foreseeable future growth?	Maybe
c. Are there any concerns regarding public services provided by the agency being considered adequate?	Maybe
d. Are there any significant infrastructure needs or deficiencies to be addressed?	Yes
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 structural fire protection within or contiguous to the agency's sphere of influence?	No

**Determinations**

- The District has experienced call volume growth commensurate with population and development growth. The District has been able to meet response time standards.
- The District effectively provides fire and emergency services within its existing service area and is expected to be able to serve population and development growth for the foreseeable future. However, without an increase in funding the District would likely implement reductions in crew staffing that could impair service quality, or would be forced to consider limiting emergency medical/ambulance coverage to neighboring agencies.

**Discussion**

**Service Volumes**

Russian River FPD provides fire and emergency services within its boundaries, and provides mutual aid support to neighboring agencies. The District also provides emergency medical/ambulance coverage throughout much of the Russian River-area.

Table 22 indicates the historical frequency of calls generated within Russian River's territory. (The District responds to many more calls through mutual aid and provision of advanced life support/ambulance service throughout the River area.).

**Table 22: Historical Call for Service Volumes – Russian River Fire Protection District**

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Calls Generated Within District	1023	897	1038	1142	1014

**Response Standards**

A discussion of response time standards is included in Appendix 3 of this report.

Russian River FPD serves a territory with **rural** demands and currently operates crews with "2/0" staffing (two-member crews are dispatched to all calls). The District would like to transition to "3/0" staffing.

**Table 23: Response Time Statistics – Russian River Fire Protection District**

Year	Average Response Times (Dispatched to "Arrived On Scene")
2015	4 minutes 58 seconds
2016	4 minutes 19 seconds
2017	4 minutes 54 seconds
2018	4 minutes 46 seconds

These statistics indicate that Russian River meets NFPA response time standards for rural areas for calls that are generated from within the Agency territory.

**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.

Russian River's headquarters facility is suitably located to serve District residents, as well as to provide ALS ambulance coverage throughout the River region. **The station is in dire need of replacement due to a poor foundation and unreinforced masonry walls.**

**Staffing**

Russian River is essentially staffed solely with twelve paid career firefighter and EMTs. (The District has had volunteers in the past, but the program is largely moribund.)

The District reports that it does have challenges recruiting and maintaining its career professional workforce. Career staff generally do not live in the District.

Russian River has not filled a vacant chief position for some time, relying on three captains to manage the agency. The District is now entering into a contract with the Sonoma County Fire District for leadership (chief) and administrative support.

**DETERMINATION 3. FINANCIAL CONDITION**

Financial ability of agencies to provide services	Evaluation
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?	Maybe
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?	Yes
d. Is the organization unable to fund necessary infrastructure maintenance, replacement and/or any needed expansion?	Yes
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 District has been meeting its expenses without difficulty and has been able to provide funding for infrastructure needs (primarily vehicle and equipment replacement). However, projections indicate that Russian River will not be able to cover expenses very soon and will face difficult service cuts.
- Russian River will require additional, sustained revenue to support its current operations, which includes a "2/0" staffing program for engine companies and the ambulance. The District would ideally be staffed at a "3/0" level.
- Financial management of Russian River is sound and is independently audited on an annual basis.

**Discussion**

*Budgeting*

The District 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 residents are able to comment, in successive board meetings prior to budget approval.

*Finances*

Russian River career staff are enrolled in the CalPERS retirement system. The District is making regular annual contributions to the plan and is also paying an amortized amount to pay off an unfunded account balance.

Table 24 shows historical and projected budgets for Russian River.

**Table 24: Russian River Fire Protection District Budget Review**

Fiscal Year	Revenue	Salaries and Benefits	Operating and Capital Expenditures	Surplus / (Deficit)	Reserves
15-16	\$	\$	\$	(\$)	\$
16-17	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
17-18	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
18-19*	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$

\* Reflects budgeted or projected.

Russian River faces several challenges related to sustainable funding:

- Costs are increasing at a rate higher than revenues. (This is especially true for ambulance unit medical supplies.)
- The District has inadequate staffing when compared current NFPA standards. (While existing “2/0” staffing levels may be deemed adequate, the District would ideally have a “3/0” staffing model, particularly given the coverage of its emergency medical/ambulance service.)
- The District has ongoing vehicle and equipment replacement needs, and is sorely in need of a facility upgrade program (likely a completely new facility).
- While the District is currently financially stable, there is essentially no headroom to absorb higher costs, and reserves are not at all adequate to fund future vehicle, equipment, or facility capital costs.

#### *Reserves*

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

Current reserves amount to approximately \$350,000, and are unassigned (available for and expenditure category).

#### *Financial Policies*

Russian River has adopted financial policies to help ensure the proper fiscal management, including:

- Purchasing
- Financial Reserve
- Capital Assets

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

### **FINANCIAL OPTIONS**

Appendix 4 describes options for subject agencies to increase revenues and decrease costs, either as stand-alone agencies or through a regional consolidation program.

#### **Revenue Source Options**

The District was formed in 1922 as the Guerneville Fire Protection District, and was renamed as the Russian River Fire Protection District in 1998. The District has a healthy average property tax allocation, of 12.23%, compared to the average for fire districts in the County of 7.89%.

The District has two voter-approved special taxes. The first is a “flat” parcel tax of \$40 per year; the second is based on “units of risk”, featuring varied rates depending on parcel and structure types. For a typical single-family home, the combined parcel tax rate is \$140.

The parcel taxes do not feature an escalation factor for cost of living adjustments, and therefore does not provide increases over time.

Given this revenue structure, the Agency might best raise additional revenue through a modest parcel tax increase, and potentially from a Melo-Roos tax to finance construction of a new headquarters fire station.

### **Potential Cost Savings from Consolidation**

It is generally assumed that district consolidations might generate increased efficiencies that would result in cost savings. For consolidations of fire and emergency service agencies, these efficiencies could include elimination of redundant staffing, streamlined administrative support, vehicle fleet reductions, and reduced facilities costs (if there are facility redundancies).

For Russian River FPD, some of these efficiencies are possible, but are unlikely to deliver anything but modest cost savings.

Operationally, it is unlikely that a regional district would result in changes to the Russian River station location or staffing levels – if changes were made it would likely mean an increase in staffing levels.

A regional district would have the opportunity to re-evaluate equipment needs, though it is not apparent that Russian River has any extraneous equipment or equipment that could be shared with neighboring agencies.

#### *Resources:*

- Audited financial statements, approved current budgets, and budget projections for the District are on file with LAFCO.

**Determination 4. Shared Services and Facilities**

Status of, and opportunities for, shared facilities.	Evaluation
a. Are subject agencies currently sharing services or facilities with other organizations? If so, describe the status of such efforts.	Yes
b. Are there any opportunities for the organizations to share services or facilities with neighboring or overlapping organizations that are not currently being utilized?	Yes
c. Are there any governance options that may produce economies of scale and/or improve buying power in order to reduce costs?	Yes
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**

- Were Russian River to join a regional consolidation of fire and emergency service agencies there would likely only be modest reductions in total administrative and leadership costs.
- Although not analyzed in this report, a consolidated agency might realize modest reductions in fleet costs by eliminating duplicative equipment.

**Discussion**

Russian River FPD manages operations cooperatively with neighboring agencies, notably through mutual response agreements. They also participate 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 has entered into arrangements with a number of other Russian River-area Districts whereby the agencies are sharing an administrative staff (two members). While this has not directly driven lower costs, the quality and consistency of administrative activities has been widely acknowledged as greatly improved for the agencies that are participating.

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 for the Russian River FPD is presented in Table 25.

**Table 25: Coordination Best Practices – Russian River Fire Protection District**

<b>Best Practice</b>	<b>Observation and findings</b>
The District participates in the Redwood Empire Dispatch Communications Authority (REDCOM)	Yes
The District has mutual aid agreements with other agencies.	Yes
The District contracts for accounting and audit services with other districts or the County.	The District's administrative staff are now providing services to several neighboring agencies.
The District participates with other districts or the County for equipment purchasing or leasing.	No
The District participates in joint insurance programs.	Yes
The District has an "Amador Contract" with CalFire.	No
The District participates in joint training with other districts or the County.	Nominally yes, but rarely in practice
The District participates with another district or the County for joint administration services.	See above
The District shares facilities with other districts.	No
The District shares a fire chief or other staff with another District.	No
The District participates in joint recruitment with other districts.	No

*REGIONAL AGENCY CONSOLIDATION*

*POTENTIAL COST SAVINGS FROM CONSOLIDATION*

Should the District join a regional consolidation in the future, modest cost savings might accrue from sharing of leadership and administration personnel and potentially from vehicle fleet reduction.

While the District does not have redundant vehicles or other equipment, there may be a modest opportunity to reduce inventories, particularly of specialized vehicles and equipment, if it joined a regional consolidation program.

**DETERMINATION 5. ACCOUNTABILITY, STRUCTURE AND EFFICIENCIES**

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

**Determinations**

- The 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.
- Russian River 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 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 District is in compliance with all public noticing requirements for board meetings. There have been no noted Brown Act violations by the District directors. Board members file financial interest statements and comply with State training requirements for public officials.

The District has had board vacancies, resulting in both contested and uncontested elections, in recent years. The current board has a majority of relatively newly-elected members.

The District makes files available to the general public when requested, and pertinent files are available on the district web site.

Russian River undergoes annual financial audits and change auditors regularly.

District staff and board members have supported discussions regarding operational and governance options in Region 5, up to and including a West County-wide reorganization and consolidation of fire and emergency service agencies.

Russian River has held discussions with the newly-formed Sonoma County Fire District to either provide leadership and administrative services or to consider consolidation.

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**MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW: TIMBER COVE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT**
**SUMMARY DETERMINATIONS**

- **Timber Cove Fire Protection District is a wholly volunteer operation that responds to over two-hundred calls generated primarily by visitors or travelers through the region, and for downed trees and other roadway hazards.**
- **Although the District has a fairly stable roster of a dozen volunteers (with ten active volunteers), many volunteers are “aging out” of service. There is not a younger or growing population in the area to draw new volunteers from.**
- **The only likely paid career staffing model for the District would likely be a contract with CalFire, though the District does not have sufficient funding to consider that option, and CalFire does not have a facility proximate to the District territory.**

**OVERVIEW**

The Timber Cove Fire Protection District (“Timber Cove” or “Timber Cove FPD”) serves the unincorporated community of Timber Cove and 48 square miles of territory on the north Sonoma Coast.

The District is bordered to the north by the North Sonoma Coast Fire Protection District, to the east by County Service Area 40 (Ft. Ross Volunteer Fire Company), to the south by Monte Rio FPD, and to the west by the Pacific Ocean. Almost half (45%) of the territory of the District is comprised of State and County parkland that does not contribute financially to the District, but does generate significant call volumes.

The area features steep coastal cliffs and mountainous timberland. Other than service calls to about 350 residents, the District primarily responds to vehicle incidents on fifteen miles of Highway 1.

The District serves full and part-time residents within district boundaries, to visitors to the beaches and other amenities located within its service area, and to travelers on Highway 1. The District estimates that ninety percent of medical and accident calls are generated by non-residents.

During storms, the District responds to road clearance issues (“fallen tree” calls represent almost forty percent of call volumes), and often provides “escort” service for ambulances operated by the Coast Life Support District on the northern coast.

The District also notes that ranger staffing levels at State parks drive call volumes: higher staffing levels lower call volumes, but when staffing levels are reduced, the District is called upon more frequently.

District staff relies Caltrans (which maintains Highway 1), the California Highway Patrol, and Pacific Gas and Electric Company (often involved in downed tree incidents) to

respond to many incidents. When responses are slow, District staff often take on responsibility for issues such as roadway clearing and traffic management.

The District is wholly staffed by volunteers and funded solely with property tax revenue.

Timber Cove is rarely involved in mutual aid support. Timber Cove crews sometimes respond to calls in the northern portion of the Fort Ross Volunteer Fire Company area and to North Sonoma Coast FPD.

**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.	Evaluation
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 to agency service boundaries?	No

**Determinations**

- The regions served by District 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), and the California Coastal Commission.

**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.

*Resident Population*

The District serves a very small local population of 350 residents, with some seasonal variation.

*Transient Population*

Fire and emergency services agencies respond to “transient” populations as well as resident populations within their service areas. For Timber Cove, transient population service needs are dominated by travelers on Highway 1, and by visitors to regional parks, beaches, and other amenities.

*Development*

The County of Sonoma and the Coastal Commission have jurisdiction over land use and planning for the areas served by the District.

The County General Plan does not anticipate significant development in the areas served by the District, and the Coastal Commission, as the land use planning agency for essentially all of Timber Cove’s area, strictly limits new development.

**DETERMINATION 2. CAPACITY AND ADEQUACY OF PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

Present and planned capacity of public facilities, adequacy of public services, and infrastructure needs or deficiencies.	Evaluation
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 structural fire protection within or contiguous to the agency’s sphere of influence?	No

**Determinations**

- The District has experienced steady call volume growth. Ten years ago the District responded to about 100 calls per year; in 2018 they responded to 230 calls. The District has been able to meet response time standards.
- The District effectively provides fire and emergency services within its existing service area and is expected to be able to serve population and development growth for the foreseeable future. (Emergency medical services are supported by the Coast Life Support District for most of the District's territory, with Russian River FPD providing coverage in the southernmost area of the District. Bodega Bay FPD often provides coverage as well.)

**Discussion**

**Service Volumes**

Timber Cove provides fire and emergency services within its boundaries, and provides mutual aid support to neighboring agencies. Table 26 indicates the historical frequency of calls generated within Timber Cove's territory.

**Table 26: Historical Call for Service Volumes – Timber Cove Fire Protection District**

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Calls Generated Within District	129	114	167	169	128

**Response Standards**

A discussion of response time standards is included in Appendix 3 of this report.

Timber Cove serves a territory with **rural** demands and strives to roll crews with “2/0” staffing (two-member crews are dispatched to all calls).

**Table 27: Response Time Statistics – Timber Cove Fire Protection District**

Year	Average Response Times (Dispatched to “Arrived On Scene”)
2015	9 minutes 57 seconds
2016	11 minutes 16 seconds
2017	10 minutes 56 seconds
2018	11 minutes 25 seconds

These statistics indicate that Timber Cove meets NFPA response time standards for remote areas for calls that are generated from within the District territory.

**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.

Timber Cove has one fire station/headquarters, which is well-situated to respond to calls throughout the area.

**Staffing**

Timber Cove FPD is a volunteer department, with wholly volunteer firefighter and EMT staffing.

The District's pool of volunteers is limited by a small local population, housing costs, an aging local population and a decrease in local residents who are employed in the area. District staff report that a recently-instituted stipend program has helped to stabilize the volunteer roster.

If a volunteer program proves unsustainable, the District has very limited options. It would be very difficult to support a paid program given the isolated location, and CalFire does not have a facility within the District territory (the nearest CalFire stations are in Cazadero and Sea Ranch.)

**DETERMINATION 3. FINANCIAL CONDITION**

Financial ability of agencies to provide services	Evaluation
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?	Yes
d. Is the organization unable to fund necessary infrastructure maintenance, replacement and/or any needed expansion?	Yes

Financial ability of agencies to provide services		Evaluation
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 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 Timber Cove is sound and is independently audited on an annual basis.

**Discussion**

*Budgeting*

The District 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 residents are able to comment, in successive board meetings prior to budget approval.

*Finances*

Table 28 shows historical and projected budgets for Timber Cove FPD.

**Table 28: Timber Cove Fire Protection District Budget Review**

Fiscal Year	Revenue	Salaries and Benefits	Operating and Capital Expenditures	Surplus / (Deficit)	Reserves
15-16	\$	\$	\$	(\$)	\$
16-17	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
17-18*	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
18-19*	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$

\* Reflects budgeted or projected.

Timber Cove faces several challenges related to sustainable funding:

- Costs are increasing at a rate higher than revenues.
- The District has ongoing vehicle and equipment replacement needs.

#### *Reserves*

Timber Cove maintains cash reserves and manages them per a board-adopted Financial Reserve Policy.

Current reserves amount to approximately \$XXXXXX, and are intended for general operating expenditures. The District has a policy of maintaining at least two months of operating expenses in reserve.

#### *Financial Policies*

Timber Cove has adopted financial policies to help ensure the proper fiscal management, including:

- Purchasing
- Financial Reserve
- Capital Assets

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

### **FINANCIAL OPTIONS**

Appendix 4 describes options for subject agencies to increase revenues and decrease costs, either as stand-alone agencies or through a regional consolidation program.

#### **Revenue Source Options**

The District was initially formed as a Volunteer Company in 1975, and was subsequently “converted” into a “community facilities district” in 1988 to raise funding from a parcel tax.

The Fire Protection District was then formed in 1996, after the passage of Proposition 13. The District has a healthy average property tax allocation, of 10.41%, compared to the average for fire districts in the County of 7.89%.

Timber Cove does not have any special taxes, and seeking voter approval for a parcel tax based on “units of risk” and featuring a cost of living adjustment clause would be the best option for securing additional revenue.

The District only has a relatively small number of parcels (likely less than the 530 parcels in the District given the prevalence of publicly-owned land) that would be subject to a parcel tax, so at a nominal \$200 rate a tax would raise less than \$100,000.

District representatives note that passing a parcel tax measure would be difficult given that property owners face taxes for Coast Life Support, pay homeowners association fees in the Timber Cove development, and pay very high water service rates.

**Potential Cost Savings from Consolidation**

It is generally assumed that district consolidations might generate increased efficiencies that would result in cost savings. For consolidations of fire and emergency service agencies, these efficiencies could include elimination of redundant staffing, streamlined administrative support, vehicle fleet reductions, and reduced facilities costs (if there are facility redundancies).

For Timber Cove, none of these efficiency gains are likely, given that the District is relatively isolated and staffed almost solely with volunteers. (The District pays a modest hourly wage for administrative services.)

Resources:

- Audited financial statements, approved current budgets, and budget projections for the Timber Cove are on file with LAFCO.

**DETERMINATION 4. SHARED SERVICES AND FACILITIES**

Status of, and opportunities for, shared facilities.	Evaluation
a. Are subject agencies currently sharing services or facilities with other organizations? If so, describe the status of such efforts.	No
b. Are there any opportunities for the organizations to share services or facilities with neighboring or overlapping organizations that are not currently being utilized?	Yes
c. Are there any governance options that may produce economies of scale and/or improve buying power in order to reduce costs?	Yes
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**

- Were Timber Cove to join a regional consolidation of fire and emergency service agencies there would likely be no cost savings.

**Discussion**

Timber Cove 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 for the Timber Cove FPD is presented in Table 29.

**Table 29: Coordination Best Practices – Timber Cove Fire Protection District**

Best Practice	Observation and findings
The District participates in the Redwood Empire Dispatch Communications Authority (REDCOM)	Yes
The District has mutual aid agreements with other agencies.	Yes
The District contracts for accounting and audit services with other districts or the County.	No
The District participates with other districts or the County for equipment purchasing or leasing.	No
The District participates in joint insurance programs.	Yes
The District has an "Amador Contract" with CalFire.	No
The District participates in joint training with other districts or the County.	No
The District participates with another district or the County for joint administration services.	No
The District shares facilities with other districts.	No
The District shares a fire chief or other staff with another District.	No
The District participates in joint recruitment with other districts.	No

*REGIONAL AGENCY CONSOLIDATION*

*POTENTIAL COST SAVINGS FROM CONSOLIDATION*

Because Timber Cove is solely a volunteer agency, and is relatively isolated from neighboring Districts, there is very little likelihood of realizing cost savings through a regional consolidation effort.

Timber Cove may be positioned to provide contracted services to the upper portion of the Ft. Ross Volunteer Fire Company area of CSA 40, thereby realizing modest revenues for service that it now provides as mutual aid without recompense.

**DETERMINATION 5. ACCOUNTABILITY, STRUCTURE AND EFFICIENCIES**

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

## Determinations

- The 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.
- Timber Cove does not ensure that board members have filed appropriate disclosures with the Fair Political Practices Commission, and should consider overseeing this function.
- Timber Cove 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 regarding opportunities for coordinating service provision with neighboring agencies.

## Discussion

The District is in compliance with all public noticing requirements for board meetings. There have been no noted Brown Act violations by the district directors. The District **does not** ensure that board members file financial interest statements and comply with State training requirements for public officials.

The District makes files available to the general public when requested, and pertinent files are available on the district web site.

Timber Cove undergoes annual financial audits and change auditors regularly.

District staff and board members have supported discussions regarding operational and governance options with Ft. Ross VFC (CSA 40), North Sonoma Coast FPD, and Cazadero CSD. To date, those discussions have not lead to reorganizations proposals or agreements.

Timber Cove provides critical mutual aid coverage to the northern portion of the CSA 40 territory served by the Ft. Ross VFC. The District should consider entering into an agency reorganization or contractual arrangement to formalize that support.

## **MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW: CAZADERO COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT (FIRE AND EMS)**

### **SUMMARY DETERMINATIONS**

- **The Cazadero Community Service District has difficulty providing fire and emergency service responses with an appropriate staffing level, and the County has interceded by contracting with CalFire to provide winter-season daytime response. This contract is slated to end at the beginning of fire season in 2019, leaving the District with no identified coverage beginning at the end of fire season in 2019.**
- **The District is contemplating seeking funding support from District residents in order to directly enter into a contract for services with CalFire.**
- **The District relies on the Russian River FPD for EMS/ambulance support, but does not contribute financially for that service. Barring a reform of EMS/ambulance service provision in the region, including equitable financial support, District residents would likely see a significant degradation in EMS/ambulance service.**
- **The District should consider ceding its parks and street lighting services to other agencies to enable it to participate in an anticipated regional or county-wide consolidation of fire and emergency service agencies.**

### **OVERVIEW**

The Cazadero Community Service District ("Cazadero" or "Cazadero CSD") serves the unincorporated community of Cazadero and full- and part-time residents living primarily along Austin Creek. There are approximately 400 residents within the District.

Cazadero is bordered to the north by the Ft. Ross portion of County Service Area 40 – Fire Services, to the west by Timber Cove FPD, to the south by Monte Rio FPD, and to the north and east by the Sotoyome portion of County Service Area 40 – Fire Services.

Cazadero receives mutual aid coverage primarily from CalFire and Monte Rio FPD, and sometimes provides coverage to the Ft. Ross Volunteer Fire Company.

The District's fire and emergency services operation is wholly staffed by volunteers. The District also owns a park across from its main fire station, and operates a modest street lighting system in the Cazadero village area.

### **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.	Evaluation
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 to agency service boundaries?	No

**Determinations**

- The region served by Cazadero CSD 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).
- The region experiences minimal impacts from transient populations.

**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.

*Resident Population*

The District serves a very small local population of around 400 residents, with a fair amount of seasonal and transient rental residency.

*Transient Population*

Fire and emergency services agencies respond to "transient" populations as well as resident populations within their service areas. Although Cazadero reports some seasonal use of housing in its area, and the roads in the area are frequented by cyclists, transient use is not a large factor in service call volume.

*Development*

The County of Sonoma has jurisdiction over land use and planning for the areas served by the District. The County General Plan does not anticipate significant development in the areas served by the District.

**DETERMINATION 2. CAPACITY AND ADEQUACY OF PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

Present and planned capacity of public facilities, adequacy of public services, and infrastructure needs or deficiencies.	Evaluation
g. Are there any deficiencies in agency capacity to meet service needs of existing development within its existing territory?	Yes
h. Are there any issues regarding the agency's capacity to meet the service demand of reasonably foreseeable future growth?	Maybe
i. Are there any concerns regarding public services provided by the agency being considered adequate?	Yes
j. Are there any significant infrastructure needs or deficiencies to be addressed?	Yes
k. Are there changes in state regulations on the horizon that will require significant facility and/or infrastructure upgrades?	No
l. Are there any service needs or deficiencies for disadvantaged unincorporated communities related structural fire protection within or contiguous to the agency's sphere of influence?	No

**Determinations**

- The District has experienced call volume growth higher than would be expected due to population and development growth. The District has been able to meet response time standards, in part through a contractual agreement with CalFire FPD for weekday daytime response support.
- The District struggles to effectively provide fire and emergency services within its existing service area at acceptable staffing levels.

**Discussion**

**Service Volumes**

Cazadero provides fire and emergency services within its boundaries, and provides mutual aid support to neighboring agencies. Table 30 indicates the historical frequency of calls generated within Cazadero's territory.

**Table 30: Historical Call for Service Volumes – Cazadero Community Services District**

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Calls Generated Within District	98	92	95	91	102

**Response Standards**

A discussion of response time standards is included in Appendix 3 of this report.

Cazadero CSD serves a territory with **remote** demands and currently strives to operate crews with “2/0” staffing (two-member crews are dispatched to all calls).

**Table 31: Response Time Statistics – Cazadero Community Services District**

Year	Average Response Times (Dispatched to “Arrived On Scene”)
2015	8 minutes 56 seconds
2016	8 minutes 33 seconds
2017	8 minutes 26 seconds
2018	8 minutes 30 seconds

These statistics indicate that Cazadero meets NFPA response time standards for remote areas for calls that are generated from within the District's territory.

**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.

Cazadero has two stations, located on either side of Austin Creek. Due to regular roadway closures due to storms, flooding, and land movement, the District considers it crucially important to have equipment and vehicles staged on both sides of the creek. (During storms at the end of February 2019, access to most of Cazadero was blocked for several days, leaving the community wholly self-reliant.)

The District's primary station features unreinforced masonry construction, and would likely require complete replacement to meet safety and access requirements. The

second station was constructed more recently, features modest living quarters, and is not ADA-compliant.

**Staffing**

Cazadero CSD is a wholly volunteer department. The District's pool of volunteers is limited by an aging, small local population.

**DETERMINATION 3. FINANCIAL CONDITION**

Financial ability of agencies to provide services	Evaluation
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?	Yes
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?	Yes
d. Is the organization unable to fund necessary infrastructure maintenance, replacement and/or any needed expansion?	Yes
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 District has been meeting its expenses without difficulty and has been able to provide funding for some infrastructure needs (primarily vehicle and equipment replacement).
- Cazadero will require additional, sustained revenue to ensure an adequate staffing program that would include a contract with CalFire.
- Financial management of the District is sound and is independently audited on an annual basis.

**Discussion**

*Budgeting*

The District 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 residents are able to comment, in successive board meetings prior to budget approval.

*Finances*

Table 32 shows historical and projected budgets for Agency.

**Table 32: Cazadero Community Services District Budget Review**

Fiscal Year	Revenue	Salaries and Benefits	Operating and Capital Expenditures	Surplus / (Deficit)	Reserves
15-16	\$	\$	\$	(\$)	\$
16-17	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
17-18	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
18-19*	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$

\* Reflects budgeted or projected.

Cazadero CSD faces several challenges related to sustainable funding:

- Costs are increasing at a rate higher than revenues.
- The District is unable to staff responses at an acceptable level ("2/0" staffing).
- The District has ongoing vehicle and equipment replacement needs, and an acute need to fortify or outright replace its primary fire station.

*Reserves*

Cazadero CSD maintains cash reserves and manages them per a board-adopted Financial Reserve Policy.

Current reserves amount to approximately \$140,000, and are intended for general operating expenditures.

### *Financial Policies*

Cazadero CSD has adopted financial policies to help ensure the proper fiscal management, including:

- Purchasing
- Financial Reserve
- Capital Assets

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

### **FINANCIAL OPTIONS**

Appendix 4 describes options for subject agencies to increase revenues and decrease costs, either as stand-alone agencies or through a regional consolidation program.

#### **Revenue Source Options**

The District was formed in 1963, before the passage of Proposition 13. Property tax allocations for the District were determined at formation, and, as shown in Appendix 4, the District has a very low average property tax allocation, of 3.8%, compared to the average for fire districts in the County of 7.89%.

Cazadero CSD has not yet sought voter approval for a parcel tax, but may consider that in the future, particularly if a contract for fire service is sought from CalFire. The District is uncertain that local residents would approve a parcel tax, and a tax at a nominal \$200 rate would raise less than half of the funding needed for a contract with CalFire.

#### **Potential Cost Savings from Consolidation**

It is generally assumed that district consolidations might generate increased efficiencies that would result in cost savings. For consolidations of fire and emergency service agencies, these efficiencies could include elimination of redundant staffing, streamlined administrative support, vehicle fleet reductions, and reduced facilities costs (if there are facility redundancies).

For Cazadero, some of these efficiencies are possible, but are unlikely to deliver anything but modest cost savings.

Operationally, it is unclear if a regional district would result in changes to station locations or staffing of those stations that would result in cost savings. However, leadership of a regional district would have the potential opportunity to re-evaluate station staffing levels. For example, the Monte Rio FPD station at Duncans Mills is at the southernmost boundary of the District; the CalFire station is just a short distance south of the District's main station, west of Austin Creek.

Lastly, a regional district would certainly have the opportunity to re-evaluate equipment needs, as it is often the case that districts own and operate specialty vehicles that could be shared over a wider region.

Resources:

- Audited financial statements, approved current budgets, and budget projections for the Agency are on file with LAFCO.

**DETERMINATION 4. SHARED SERVICES AND FACILITIES**

Status of, and opportunities for, shared facilities.	Evaluation
a. Are subject agencies currently sharing services or facilities with other organizations?	Yes
b. Are there any opportunities for the organizations to share services or facilities with neighboring or overlapping organizations that are not currently being utilized?	Yes
c. Are there any governance options that may produce economies of scale and/or improve buying power in order to reduce costs?	Yes
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**

- Were Cazadero CSD to join a regional consolidation of fire and emergency service agencies there would likely only be modest reductions in total administrative and leadership costs.
- Although not analyzed in this report, a consolidated agency might realize modest reductions in fleet costs by eliminating duplicative equipment.
- Cazadero CSD might consider ceding its street lighting and parks functions to other agencies, focusing solely on fire and emergency service provision.

**Discussion**

Cazadero CSD manages operations cooperatively with neighboring agencies, notably through mutual response agreements and a service arrangement with CalFire (a short-term contract paid for by the County) for weekday daytime response.

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 Agency 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 for the District is presented in Table 33.

**Table 33: Coordination Best Practices – Cazadero Community Services District**

Best Practice	Observation and findings
The District participates in the Redwood Empire Dispatch Communications Authority (REDCOM)	Yes
The District has mutual aid agreements with other agencies.	Yes
The District contracts for accounting and audit services with other districts or the County.	No
The District participates with other districts or the County for equipment purchasing or leasing.	No
The District participates in joint insurance programs.	Yes
The District has an "Amador Contract" with CalFire.	Yes – though ending in May 2019, and funded by the County.
The District participates in joint training with other districts or the County.	Yes (limited)
The District participates with another district or the County for joint administration services.	No
The District shares facilities with other districts.	No
The District shares a fire chief or other staff with another District.	No
The District participates in joint recruitment with other districts.	No

## **REGIONAL AGENCY CONSOLIDATION**

### **Potential Cost Savings From Consolidation**

Should the District join a regional consolidation in the future, modest cost savings might accrue from sharing of leadership and administration personnel and potentially from vehicle fleet reduction.

While the District does not have redundant vehicles or other equipment, there may be a modest opportunity to reduce inventories, particularly of specialized vehicles and equipment, if it joined a regional consolidation program.

### **BARRIERS TO CONSOLIDATION**

Cazadero CSD manages two other functions other than fire and emergency service provision: street lighting and ownership and management of a small park across the road from the primary fire station. Continuing to manage these two functions within a regional fire and emergency services agency would be problematic.

There are a number of options that the District might consider if ceding these services became necessary as part of a regional consolidation effort.

County Service Area 41- Multi-Services ("CSA 41") was created in 1993 as a dependent District of the County of Sonoma, with authority to provide any services that a Community Services District is authorized to provide. CSA 41 already operates almost all street lighting systems in unincorporated areas of the County, and Cazadero's street light operation could easily be transferred to the County Service Area.

(Provision of street light service is wholly an administrative function involving the collection of fees from residents through the County's property tax collection system, and paying street light maintenance and operation costs to Pacific Gas and Electric Company or an independent operator. Cazadero CSD does not maintain street lighting.)

The small park owned by the District is undeniably a community amenity, but otherwise has no potential use as a site for a rebuilt primary fire station due to site topography. If the District decided to cede ownership and maintenance of the site as a park, it could potentially be transferred to either County Parks and Recreation or the neighboring Monte Rio Park and Recreation District.

**DETERMINATION 5. ACCOUNTABILITY, STRUCTURE AND EFFICIENCIES**

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

**Determinations**

- The 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.
- Cazadero CSD 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 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 District is in compliance with all public noticing requirements for board meetings.

There have been no noted Brown Act violations by the district directors. Board members file financial interest statements and comply with State training requirements for public officials.

The District makes files available to the general public when requested, and pertinent files are available on the District web site.

Cazadero CSD undergoes annual financial audits and change auditors regularly.

District staff and board members have supported discussions regarding operational and governance options in Region 5, up to and including a West County-wide reorganization and consolidation of fire and emergency service agencies.

Cazadero has submitted a request to Sonoma LAFCO seeking a sphere of influence amendment to add approximately two thirds or potentially all of the territory served by the Fort Ross Volunteer Fire Company (County Service Area 40 – Fire Services).

While the District has entered into negotiations with the County to provide administrative services to Fort Ross through a contract, there is some thought that an outright annexation may prove more feasible as it would obviate some provisions of a contractual agreement that are proving nettlesome.

A plan to have Timber Cove FPD seek annexation of one-third of the Fort Ross VFC territory, or to enter into a three-agency reorganization (Cazadero, Ft. Ross, and Timber Cove), has been rejected by the Timber Cove FPD board for the time being.

## **MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW: OCCIDENTAL COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT (FIRE AND EMS)**

### **SUMMARY DETERMINATIONS**

- **Occidental Community Services District is increasingly unable to provide fire and emergency service response levels at generally-accepted minimum standards due to volunteer staffing challenges. In particular, the District is sometimes unable to respond to incident calls with “2/0” staffing (two firefighter/medics), especially during weekday daytime hours.**
- **The District is otherwise well-equipped and well-managed, but does not currently have the resources to address the aforementioned staffing challenges.**
- **As a Community Services District that provides water utility, landscaping, and street lighting services, it will be difficult to reorganize the District in a regional agency focused solely on fire and EMS service. The District might consider ceding these services to other agencies to enable it to participate in a regional or county-wide consolidation of fire and emergency service agencies.**

### **OVERVIEW**

The Occidental Community Services District (“Occidental” or “Occidental CSD”) provides fire and emergency services to the unincorporated community of Occidental and environs. (The District also provides water service in Occidental, and street lighting and landscaping services; these services are not subject to this review.)

The District serves full and part-time residents within district boundaries, in territory that is primarily devoted to rural residential uses and some agricultural activities. The District is bordered by Bodega Bay FPD to the west; Monte Rio FPD and Camp Meeker VFC to the north; Graton FPD to the east, and Gold Ridge FPD and Bodega VFC to the south.

The District is staffed entirely by volunteers, with a roster of almost two-dozen, with about half of the volunteers serving on an active basis. The District’s provision of fire and emergency services is funded with property tax revenue. The District does have an active Mello-Roos tax that was devoted to capital expenditures.

### **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.	Evaluation
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 to agency service boundaries?	No

**Determinations**

- The regions served by Occidental 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.

*Resident Population*

Although population growth in the areas served by Occidental has been modest, and is expected to remain so, the District does believe that many residences that were formerly used seasonally are now being occupied year-round.

*Transient Population*

Fire and emergency services agencies respond to "transient" populations as well as resident populations within their service areas. Although Occidental does experience some transient traffic on the Bohemian Highway, as well as some seasonal population increases (primarily visitors to several camps in the area), the impact on call volumes from these populations is relatively modest.

*Development*

The County of Sonoma has jurisdiction over land use and planning for the areas served by the District. The County General Plan does not anticipate significant development in the areas served by the District.

Recent County land use planning regulation changes will likely permit more accessory dwelling units, which may lead to a modest increase in resident population.

**DETERMINATION 2. CAPACITY AND ADEQUACY OF PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

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

**Determinations**

- The District has experienced call volume growth that exceeds what would be expected from population and development growth. The District has been able to meet response time standards.
- The District has difficulty meeting generally-accepted levels of fire and emergency service due to staffing challenges. Some combination of an enhanced stipend program for volunteers, paid staffing, or consolidation with neighboring agencies is necessary to improve staffing and service levels.

**Discussion**

**Service Volumes**

Occidental provides fire and emergency services within its boundaries, and provides mutual aid support to neighboring agencies. Table 34 indicates the historical frequency of call generated within the District territory.

**Table 34: Historical Call for Service Volumes – Occidental Community Services District**

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Calls Generated Within District	181	179	213	233	246

**Response Standards**

A discussion of response time standards is included in Appendix 3 of this report.

Occidental CSD serves a territory with **rural** demands and strives to dispatch crews with “2/0” staffing (two-member crews are dispatched to all calls). The District notes that during weekday daytime hours, it is rarely able to meet this goal.

**Table 35: Response Time Statistics – Occidental Community Service District**

Year	Average Response Times (Dispatched to “Arrived On Scene”)
2015	7 minutes 56 seconds
2016	8 minutes 14 seconds
2017	8 minutes 57 seconds
2018	8 minutes 18 seconds

These statistics indicate that Occidental meets NFPA response time standards for rural areas for calls that are generated from within the District territory.

**Facilities**

A critical factor in providing effective and efficient fire and emergency medical service is the location 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 has only the headquarters fire station in Occidental, which is optimally located to serve the District territory. The station is in very good condition, with suitable engine bays, offices, and crew quarters. The facility is not ADA compliant, and has not been evaluated for seismic stability.

**Staffing**

Occidental CSD is a wholly volunteer department. The Chief indicates that high local housing costs and an aging population is hampering recruitment and retention efforts. The District board has considered whether to invest in housing to provide to staff.

**DETERMINATION 3. FINANCIAL CONDITION**

Financial ability of agencies to provide services	Evaluation
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?	Yes
d. Is the organization unable to fund necessary infrastructure maintenance, replacement and/or any needed expansion?	Yes
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 District has been meeting its expenses without difficulty and has been able to provide funding for infrastructure needs (primarily vehicle and equipment replacement). However, the District has no capacity to fund a paid-career workforce.
- Financial management of the District is sound and is independently audited on an annual basis.

**Discussion**

*Budgeting*

The District 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 residents are able to comment, in successive board meetings prior to budget approval.

*Finances*

Table 36 shows historical and projected budgets for Agency.

**Table 36: Occidental Community Services District Budget Review**

Fiscal Year	Revenue	Salaries and Benefits	Operating and Capital Expenditures	Surplus / (Deficit)	Reserves
15-16	\$	\$	\$	(\$)	\$
16-17	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
17-18	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
18-19*	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$

\* Reflects budgeted or projected.

Occidental CSD faces several challenges related to sustainable funding for their fire and emergency services operation:

- Costs are increasing at a rate higher than revenues.
- The District is not able to consistently staff engines for incident responses at acceptable levels.
- The District has ongoing vehicle and equipment replacement needs.
- Occidental CSD has limited financial reserve accounts to the extent that there is little funding available for equipment purchases or unexpected facility maintenance.

## Reserves

Occidental CSD maintains cash reserves and manages them per a board-adopted Financial Reserve Policy.

Current reserves amount to approximately \$800,000, and are intended for capital expenditures such as vehicle replacement and facility maintenance and upgrades.

## Financial Policies

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

- Purchasing
- Financial Reserve
- Capital Assets

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

## FINANCIAL OPTIONS

Appendix 4 describes options for subject agencies to increase revenues and decrease costs, either as stand-alone agencies or through a regional consolidation program.

### Revenue Source Options

The District was formed in 1964, before the passage of Proposition 13. Property tax allocations for Occidental CSD were determined at formation, and, as shown in Appendix 4, the District has a very low average property tax allocation, of 3.8%, compared to the average for fire districts in the County of 7.89%.

Occidental CSD did seek and secure voter approval for a Mello-Roos tax. The funds were used to support capital expenditures including a station remodel and vehicle purchases.

Given this revenue structure, the District might best raise additional revenue by seeking approval of a parcel tax, ideally structured on a "units of risk" basis and featuring an annual escalation rate.

### Potential Cost Savings from Consolidation

It is generally assumed that district consolidations might generate increased efficiencies that would result in cost savings. For consolidations of fire and emergency service agencies, these efficiencies could include elimination of redundant staffing, streamlined administrative support, vehicle fleet reductions, and reduced facilities costs (if there are facility redundancies).

For Occidental CSD, some of these efficiencies are possible, particularly with regard to "right sizing" its vehicle fleet.

Operationally, it is unclear if a regional district would result in changes to station locations or staffing of those stations that would result in cost savings. However, leadership of a regional district would have the potential opportunity to re-evaluate station staffing levels.

Occidental CSD has retained administrative service support in partnership with Russian River FPD and other area agencies. While this arrangement has resulted in high-quality and efficient provision of administrative services, it has not generated any direct cost savings.

The staff at the District allow that it owns and maintains a surplus of apparatus (vehicles).

Resources:

- Audited financial statements, approved current budgets, and budget projections for the District are on file with LAFCO.

**DETERMINATION 4. SHARED SERVICES AND FACILITIES**

Status of, and opportunities for, shared facilities.	Evaluation
a. Are subject agencies currently sharing services or facilities with other organizations? If so, describe the status of such efforts.	No
b. Are there any opportunities for the organizations to share services or facilities with neighboring or overlapping organizations that are not currently being utilized?	Yes
c. Are there any governance options that may produce economies of scale and/or improve buying power in order to reduce costs?	Yes
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**

- Were Occidental CSD to join a regional consolidation of fire and emergency service agencies there would likely only be modest reductions in total administrative and leadership costs.
- Although not analyzed in this report, a consolidated agency might realize modest reductions in fleet costs by eliminating duplicative equipment.

**Discussion**

Occidental CSD manages operations cooperatively with neighboring agencies, notably through mutual response agreements. (The District both receives and provides support most often to/from Graton FPD.)

They also participate 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 Agency 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 for the Agency is presented in Table 37.

**Table 37: Coordination Best Practices – Occidental Community Services District (Fire)**

Best Practice	Observation and findings
The District participates in the Redwood Empire Dispatch Communications Authority (REDCOM)	Yes
The District has mutual aid agreements with other agencies.	Yes
The District contracts for accounting and audit services with other districts or the County.	No
The District participates with other districts or the County for equipment purchasing or leasing.	No
The District participates in joint insurance programs.	Yes
The District has an "Amador Contract" with CalFire.	No
The District participates in joint training with other districts or the County.	Yes

<b>Best Practice</b>	<b>Observation and findings</b>
The District participates with another district or the County for joint administration services.	No – The District shares administrative personnel with other agencies, but operations are managed separately.
The District shares facilities with other districts.	No
The District shares a fire chief or other staff with another District.	No
The District participates in joint recruitment with other districts.	No

*REGIONAL AGENCY CONSOLIDATION*

*POTENTIAL COST SAVINGS FROM CONSOLIDATION*

Should the District join a regional consolidation in the future, modest cost savings might accrue from sharing of leadership and administration personnel and potentially from vehicle fleet reduction.

The District has a surfeit of vehicles, and would benefit from an assessment of needs and reductions in fleet as indicated.

**DETERMINATION 5. ACCOUNTABILITY, STRUCTURE AND EFFICIENCIES**

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

**Determinations**

- The 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.
- Occidental CSD undertakes annual independent financial and business practice audits and is in compliance with financial regulations and recommended practices.
- The District does not have an official web site, and should direct administrative staff to remedy this situation in order to provide information to the public.
- The District is encouraged to continue discussions regarding opportunities for coordinating service provision to produce efficiencies and cost savings, up to and including potential consolidation of operations in the future.
- The District should consider ceding responsibility for the water utility and street lighting services it provides to other agencies, enabling it to participate in a regional or county-wide consolidation of fire and emergency service providers.

## Discussion

The District is in compliance with all public noticing requirements for board meetings. There have been no noted Brown Act violations by the district directors. Board members file financial interest statements and comply with State training requirements for public officials.

The District makes files available to the general public when requested, however, the District does not have a dedicated web presence where information can be accessed directly by the public.

Occidental CSD undergoes annual financial audits and change auditors regularly.

District staff and board members have supported discussions regarding operational and governance options in Region 5, up to and including a West County-wide reorganization and consolidation of fire and emergency service agencies. In particular, it has held discussions at numerous times with Camp Meeker Volunteer Fire Company, but these discussions have not yet led to a plan for consolidating services on a contractual basis or through a LAFCO process.

The District operates a water utility system for 70 customers in Occidental. The system has an intertie with the Camp Meeker water system, which is operated by the Camp Meeker Recreation and Park District. Occidental CSD should consider ceding control of the water utility to another agency to allow a sole focus on fire and emergency service provision in a regionally-consolidated agency.

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**MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW: CITY OF SEBASTOPOL (FIRE AND EMS)**
**SUMMARY DETERMINATIONS**

- **The City of Sebastopol is often unable to provide appropriately-staffed responses to service calls, particularly during weekday daytime hours when volunteer availability is limited.**
- **The City proposes to address staffing shortfalls within its fire department by adding two paid professional positions and increasing stipend payments to volunteers. The City can afford to fund this proposal due to an extension of a sales tax measure approved by City residents.**
- **Sebastopol should consider ceding its fire and emergency services responsibilities to a regionally-consolidated agency, which would be better positioned to provide coverage to City residents. As a first step, the City could contract for services with a neighboring agency such as the Gold Ridge or Graton Fire Protection Districts.**

**OVERVIEW**

The City of Sebastopol operates a volunteer fire and emergency services department utilizing both paid staff for leadership and administrative activities, and volunteers for firefighter/EMT work. Although the Department has a roster of over thirty volunteers, the department is often unable to provide “2/0” staffing on calls, particularly during weekday daytime hours.

The Department relies heavily on neighboring agencies (primarily Gold Ridge and Graton Fire Protection Districts) to provide mutual aid coverage, but is rarely able to reciprocate due to staffing availability.

The 7,700 residents of the City generated 1,071 service calls in 2015 – a rate that has been increasing even though population has plateaued.

The City funds the department from general fund revenue, which is primarily raised through property and sales taxes. The Department is seeking Council approval to add two paid career positions and to increase volunteer stipend rates to improve staffing availability.

**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.	Evaluation
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 to agency service boundaries?	No

**Determinations**

- The City does not project significant growth in population or development that would result in the need for increased fire and emergency service capabilities, but is experiencing the same trends as other West County agencies that is driving an increase in service calls.

**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.

*Resident Population*

The City does not anticipate significant population growth. The City's current population of 7,666 is only a few residents higher than in 2000, and population actually declined slightly during the interim period.

*Transient Population*

Fire and emergency services agencies respond to "transient" populations as well as resident populations within their service areas. Although many visitors to West County amenities may travel through the City, or use lodging and dining facilities within City boundaries, transient population levels are likely "moderate" compared to other areas of the County.

*Development*

The City does anticipate some moderate development in the future, but land use policies and regulations, including a voter-approved Urban Growth Boundary, preclude major growth.

**DETERMINATION 2. CAPACITY AND ADEQUACY OF PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

Present and planned capacity of public facilities, adequacy of public services, and infrastructure needs or deficiencies.	Evaluation
a. Are there any deficiencies in agency capacity to meet service needs of existing development within its existing territory?	Yes
b. Are there any issues regarding the agency's capacity to meet the service demand of reasonably foreseeable future growth?	Maybe
c. Are there any concerns regarding public services provided by the agency being considered adequate?	Yes
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 structural fire protection within or contiguous to the agency's sphere of influence?	No

**Determinations**

- The City has experienced call volume growth that exceeds what would be expected based on population and development growth. The City has been able to meet response time standards, though has experienced a degradation in response times during weekday daylight hours.
- Sebastopol struggles to effectively provide fire and emergency services at an appropriate level ("2/0" staffing), and is largely reliant on mutual aid partners for support. The City is rarely able to provide mutual aid support to neighboring agencies.

## Discussion

### Service Volumes

Sebastopol provides fire and emergency services within its boundaries, and, rarely, provides mutual aid support to neighboring agencies. Table 38 indicates the historical frequency of calls generated within the City.

**Table 38: Historical Call for Service Volumes – City of Sebastopol**

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Calls Generated Within District	959	952	970	996	1053

### Response Standards

A discussion of response time standards is included in Appendix 3 of this report.

Sebastopol serves a territory with **suburban** demands and currently strives to operate crews with “2/0” staffing (two-member crews are dispatched to all calls).

**Table 39: Response Time Statistics – City of Sebastopol**

Year	Average Response Times (Dispatched to “Arrived On Scene”)
2015	4 minutes 14 seconds
2016	4 minutes 24 seconds
2017	4 minutes 21 seconds
2018	4 minutes 16 seconds

These statistics indicate that the City meets NFPA response time standards for suburban areas for calls that are generated from within the City. However, the Department notes that response times for incidents during weekday daytime hours has increased from around four minutes to over six minutes.

### 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 City operates one fire station proximate to the downtown area, which is well-situated for service provision. The station has three bays, and the City has so far set aside \$25,000 in a reserve account for addition of a fourth bay. (The Council approved building a \$100,000 reserve for this project.)

**Staffing**

The City operates essentially a “volunteer” department, with career leadership and administrative staff, and volunteer firefighter and EMT staffing. In 2019 the department expects to add one paid firefighter position.

The City’s pool of volunteers is limited by housing costs, an aging population, and a workforce that is not available for volunteer service during weekday daytime hours. The department has a current roster of around twenty-five volunteers.

**DETERMINATION 3. FINANCIAL CONDITION**

Financial ability of agencies to provide services	Evaluation
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?	Yes
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?	Not Evaluated

## Determinations

- The City has been funding existing staffing levels from General Fund revenues, and could be reasonably expected to fund future vehicles and equipment needs.
- The Fire Department has requested a budget increase that would support the addition of two full-time equivalent fire fighters in the next fiscal year, as well as funding to increase stipend payments to volunteers. These actions are intended to improve staffing availability, allowing the department to meet a "2/0" staffing standard.
- Financial management of the City has not been evaluated in the context of this study.

## Discussion

### *Budgeting*

The City's staff prepares annual budgets in the spring for consideration and approval by the City Council prior to the upcoming fiscal year (July through June). The staff seeks guidance from the Council, and City residents are able to comment, in successive Council meetings prior to budget approval.

The Fire Department had a budget of \$875,000 for the current fiscal year, representing almost eleven percent of the City's overall budget of just over \$8 million.

### *Finances*

The City's career staff are enrolled in the CalPERS retirement system. The City is making regular annual contributions to the plan and is also paying an amortized amount to pay off an unfunded account balance.

The City's Fire Department faces several challenges related to sustainable funding:

- Costs are increasing at a rate higher than revenues.
- The City has inadequate staffing when compared current NFPA standards.
- The City has ongoing vehicle and equipment replacement needs.

### *Reserves*

The City maintains cash reserves, though has no allocated amount specifically for the Fire Department.

The City allocates funds to an assigned capital replacement reserve and maintains a five-year "capital replacement plan", which anticipates major expenditures such as vehicle and equipment replacements.

### *Financial Policies*

The City's financial policies and procedures were not evaluated as part of this study.

## FINANCIAL OPTIONS

Appendix 4 describes options for subject agencies to increase revenues and decrease costs, either as stand-alone agencies or through a regional consolidation program.

### Revenue Source Options

The City was formed in 1902, and receives revenue from a variety of sources, including:

- Property taxes. Sebastopol's property tax revenue has declined somewhat in recent years due to a complicated shift in allocations mandated by the State.
- Sales taxes. The City receives a general sales tax apportionment and has two special sales taxes that were approved by City residents.
- Transient Occupancy Tax ("TOT"). Revenues in this category have been essentially flat in recent years.
- Utility Users Tax and Franchise Fees.
- Miscellaneous License Fees, Interest and Rents, and Grant revenue.

If the City determined a need for additional revenue support specifically for the Fire Department it could seek voter approval of a special tax, ideally based on a "units of risk" basis.

Alternatively, the City could consider whether participation in a regional fire and emergency service agency consolidation effort might result in improved service levels at similar or marginally higher costs. As an interim step, the City could consider undertaking a contractual arrangement with a neighboring agency that might yield similar results.

### Potential Cost Savings from Consolidation

It is generally assumed that district consolidations might generate increased efficiencies that would result in cost savings. For consolidations of fire and emergency service agencies, these efficiencies could include elimination of redundant staffing, streamlined administrative support, vehicle fleet reductions, and reduced facilities costs (if there are facility redundancies).

For Sebastopol, some of these efficiencies are possible, but are unlikely to deliver anything but modest cost savings.

Operationally, it is clear that a regional district would retain the fire station in Sebastopol, given its location in the center of the City. However, leadership of a regional district would have the potential opportunity to re-evaluate station staffing levels.

Lastly, a regional district would certainly have the opportunity to re-evaluate equipment needs, as it is often the case that districts own and operate specialty vehicles that could be shared over a wider region.

*Resources:*

- Audited financial statements, approved current budgets, and budget projections for the City are on file with LAFCO.

**DETERMINATION 4. SHARED SERVICES AND FACILITIES**

Status of, and opportunities for, shared facilities.	Evaluation
a. Are subject agencies currently sharing services or facilities with other organizations? If so, describe the status of such efforts.	Yes
b. Are there any opportunities for the organizations to share services or facilities with neighboring or overlapping organizations that are not currently being utilized?	Yes
c. Are there any governance options that may produce economies of scale and/or improve buying power in order to reduce costs?	Yes
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**

- Were Sebastopol to join a regional consolidation of fire and emergency service agencies there would likely only be modest reductions in total administrative and leadership costs, but potential improvements in volunteer staffing levels.
- Although not analyzed in this report, a consolidated agency might realize modest reductions in fleet costs by eliminating duplicative equipment.

**Discussion**

The City's Fire Department manages operations cooperatively with neighboring agencies, notably through mutual response agreements. They also participate 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.

A summary of best practices for fire agency coordination for the City is presented in Table 40.

**Table 40: Coordination Best Practices – City of Sebastopol (Fire Department)**

Best Practice	Observation and findings
The Department participates in the Redwood Empire Dispatch Communications Authority (REDCOM)	Yes
The Department has mutual aid agreements with other agencies.	Yes
The Department contracts for accounting and audit services with other districts or the County.	No
The Department participates with other districts or the County for equipment purchasing or leasing.	No
The Department participates in joint insurance programs.	Yes
The Department has an "Amador Contract" with CalFire.	No
The Department participates in joint training with other districts or the County.	No
The Department participates with another district or the County for joint administration services.	No
The Department shares facilities with other districts.	No
The Department shares a fire chief or other staff with another District.	No
The Department participates in joint recruitment with other districts.	No

*REGIONAL AGENCY CONSOLIDATION*

*POTENTIAL COST SAVINGS FROM CONSOLIDATION*

Should the City's Fire Department join a regional consolidation in the future, modest cost savings might accrue from sharing of leadership and administration personnel and potentially from vehicle fleet reduction.

While the City does not have redundant vehicles or other equipment, there may be a modest opportunity to reduce inventories, particularly of specialized vehicles and equipment, if it joined a regional consolidation program.

**DETERMINATION 5. ACCOUNTABILITY, STRUCTURE AND EFFICIENCIES**

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

**Determinations**

- The City 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.
- Sebastopol undertakes annual independent financial and business practice audits and is in compliance with financial regulations and recommended practices.
- The City is encouraged to entertain discussions 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 City is in compliance with all public noticing requirements for Council meetings. There have been no noted Brown Act violations by the Council members. Council members file financial interest statements and comply with State training requirements for public officials.

The City makes files available to the general public when requested, and pertinent files are available on the City's web site.

Sebastopol undergoes annual financial audits and change auditors regularly.

City staff and Council members have not been involved in discussions regarding potential consolidation opportunities in the region, and should be encouraged to do so.

**MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW: BLOOMFIELD VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY (CSA 40)****SUMMARY DETERMINATIONS**

- **The Bloomfield Volunteer Fire Company has not been operational since 2016, though there are efforts underway in the community to restore operational capability. The portion of County Service Area 40 that the Company nominally serves is now covered by the Two Rock Volunteer Fire Company.**
- **Although the Bloomfield area will be supported by the County's contract with North Bay Fire, and through North Bay Fire's contract with Gold Ridge FPD, it is crucial that service provision for the area is re-established in a sustainable fashion. This would best be achieved through a reorganization involving annexation of the area by a neighboring agency or incorporation of the area into a regional agency.**

**OVERVIEW**

The Bloomfield Volunteer Fire Company ("Bloomfield" or "Bloomfield VFC") nominally serves a portion of County Service Area 40 – Fire Services, which is a dependent District of the County of Sonoma. The VFC provided service to just over twelve square miles of unincorporated area centered on the community of Bloomfield. There are just over 450 residents in the area.

The VFC is bounded by the Gold Ridge Fire Protection District to the north and east, Two Rock Volunteer Fire Company and Marin County to the south, and the Valley Ford Volunteer Fire Company to the west. Bodega Bay FPD provides the majority of mutual aid responses to the VFC, particularly as the District covers the area for advanced life support/ambulance service.

Bloomfield has had grave difficulty maintaining operational capability in recent years; in 2016, the Fire Company was effectively closed, and the County made an arrangement to have the Two Rock Volunteer Fire Company take on service coverage for the area.

The VFC has retained ownership of its facility and engine, allowing Two Rock to access them as needed. There is an active effort to resurrect the Bloomfield Company.

Bloomfield VFC, along with the remaining VFCs serving territory within County Service Area 40, have formed the North Bay Fire organization, a 501 (c)(3). North Bay Fire has been provided funding from the County for a two-year period; the organization will contract with Gold Ridge Fire Protection District to provide leadership and administrative support. The VFCs are expected to seek reorganizations with neighboring agencies during that timeframe.

**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.	Evaluation
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 to agency service boundaries?	No

**Determinations**

- The Bloomfield area has not experienced significant growth and is not expected to do so.

**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.

*Resident Population*

Although in the late 1850s Bloomfield was the second largest town in Sonoma County, the area has since been reliant on agriculture and has not grown significantly.

*Transient Population*

Fire and emergency services agencies respond to “transient” populations as well as resident populations within their service areas. For Bloomfield VFC, response to vehicle accidents on Valley Ford Road, which is a primary route from Petaluma to the Coast, represents the primary provision of service to transients.

*Development*

The County of Sonoma has jurisdiction over land use and planning for the areas served by the Company.

The County General Plan does not anticipate significant development in the areas served by the District.

**DETERMINATION 2. CAPACITY AND ADEQUACY OF PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

Present and planned capacity of public facilities, adequacy of public services, and infrastructure needs or deficiencies.	Evaluation
a. Are there any deficiencies in agency capacity to meet service needs of existing development within its existing territory?	Yes
b. Are there any issues regarding the agency's capacity to meet the service demand of reasonably foreseeable future growth?	Yes
c. Are there any concerns regarding public services provided by the agency being considered adequate?	Yes
d. Are there any significant infrastructure needs or deficiencies to be addressed?	Unknown
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 structural fire protection within or contiguous to the agency's sphere of influence?	No

**Determinations**

- The Bloomfield area generates about 25 service calls per year.
- The territory now receives primary coverage from the Two Rock Volunteer Fire Company, and emergency medical/ambulance service from Bodega Bay Fire Protection District.
- Bodega Bay FPD faces significant financial and service challenges that may affect its ability to provide emergency medical/ambulance service in the future, partially because territories outside of the District but within the ambulance service area do not provide financial support to the District. The three CSA 40 areas served by Volunteer Companies in the northern part of the "Corridor" should consider options not only for sustainable fire service provision, but also emergency medical/ambulance service.

**Discussion**

**Service Volumes**

Table 41 indicates the historical call volumes generated within the Bloomfield VFC territory.

**Table 41: Historical Call for Service Volumes – Bloomfield Volunteer Fire Company**

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Calls Generated Within District	42	34	44	48	45

**Response Standards**

Because Bloomfield VFC is not staffing service responses, response times have not been evaluated for this report.

**Facilities**

Bloomfield VFC has a modest facility in the community of Bloomfield.

**Staffing**

Bloomfield VFC has not been able to maintain a roster of volunteers and is therefore unable to respond to service calls.

**DETERMINATION 3. FINANCIAL CONDITION**

**Determinations**

- As part of County Service Area 40 – Fire Services, Bloomfield VFC was eligible for financial and administrative support from the County of Sonoma. However, the County is preparing to cede a direct administrative support role to North Bay Fire, a new non-profit organization representing the remaining Volunteer Fire Companies in Sonoma County. North Bay Fire will in turn enter into a contract with Gold Ridge Fire Protection District to provide leadership and administrative services. The contract will include provision of stipends for volunteers, and may include funding for paid professional positions if required to maintain or improve service levels. The County is funding North Bay Fire for a two-year period, with an expectation that the Volunteer Fire Companies will participate in regional consolidations within that time frame.

**Discussion**

Bloomfield VFC exists as a 501(c)(3) organization, so does not receive tax revenue and has no taxation authority.

A portion of property tax revenue in the Bloomfield territory is directed to County Service Area 40, as shown in Table 42:

**Table 42: Financial Data for Bloomfield Volunteer Fire Company Territory**

Factor	Value
Parcel Count	179
Total Assessed Value	\$55,507,535
Average AB8 Rate	4.1%
Net Property Tax to CSA 40	\$29,152

**FINANCIAL OPTIONS**

Appendix 4 describes options for subject agencies to increase revenues and decrease costs, either as stand-alone agencies or through a regional consolidation program.

**Revenue Source Options**

The Bloomfield VFC does not have taxation authority, but County Service Area 40, which is a dependent district of the County of Sonoma, could seek approval from the voters within the entire district for special taxes. Another possibility is that a neighboring fire protection district could seek a sphere of influence amendment from LAFCO encompassing the territory of Bloomfield, subsequently annexing the territory and extending an existing special tax over the area.

At a typical parcel tax rate of \$200 per year, a special tax would nominally generate \$35,800 in the Bloomfield area; at \$300 per year, \$53,700 would be generated.

It should be noted that this additional revenue, combined with property tax allocations, would not support anything other than a volunteer program, and would be unlikely to provide sustainable funding that would address vehicle, equipment, and facility needs.

**DETERMINATION 4. SHARED SERVICES AND FACILITIES**

Status of, and opportunities for, shared facilities.	Evaluation
a. Are subject agencies currently sharing services or facilities with other organizations? If so, describe the status of such efforts.	Yes
b. Are there any opportunities for the organizations to share services or facilities with neighboring or overlapping organizations that are not currently being utilized?	Yes
c. Are there any governance options that may produce economies of scale and/or improve buying power in order to reduce costs?	Yes
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**

- Due to low call volumes, the Bloomfield area is likely best-served with a volunteer company that is part of a regional agency that provides leadership, administrative support, and mutual aid. The volunteer operation would provide “quick response”, likely with a single responder, with “2/0” (or even “3/0”) staffed response coming from the regional agency out of another location.

**Discussion**

Bloomfield VFC is already relying on a neighboring agency, Two Rock VFC, to provide call responses, though Bloomfield is trying to restart their program.

Additionally, as noted previously, the Volunteer Fire Companies providing service in CSA 40 territory will be receiving support from Gold Ridge Fire Protection District for the next two years under contract.

It is clear that Bloomfield (and the other VFCs providing service in CSA 40) will require support, both operationally and organizationally, and that this support will have to come from an agency other than the County, given the County's decision to reorganize its Fire and Emergency Services department.

Although support services can be provided under contract, as the Gold Ridge FPD contract illustrates, the County has indicated that the VFCs must consider reorganization with neighboring agencies, with a two-year timeframe.

**DETERMINATION 5. ACCOUNTABILITY, STRUCTURE AND EFFICIENCIES**

**Determinations**

- The County of Sonoma, which runs County Service Area 40 as a dependent district, meets all requirements for proper governance.
- Volunteer Fire Companies are not government agencies, and are therefore not subject to review of governance strictures.
- The County has established a two-year timeframe for Bloomfield VFC (and the other VFCs in the County) to seek reorganization opportunities with other fire and emergency service agencies.

**Discussion**

The County of Sonoma, as part of its management of Board of Supervisors meetings, fully meets governance requirements, and therefore does so for governance of County Service Area 40, a dependent district.

Volunteer Fire Companies are not government agencies, but are organized as 501 (c)(3) entities, so are not subject to governance regulations.

As noted in the previous section, the County has indicated a two-year timeframe during which Volunteer Fire Companies must seek reorganizations with neighboring fire and emergency service agencies.

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**MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW: BODEGA VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY (CSA 40)**
**SUMMARY DETERMINATIONS**

- **The Bodega Volunteer Fire Company continues to provide a solid volunteer-based fire service, and notably has added committed volunteers to their longer-standing volunteer roster recently.**
- **Although Bodega VFC will be financially and administratively supported by the County’s contract with North Bay Fire, and through North Bay Fire’s contract with Gold Ridge FPD, it is crucial to note that that funding and service support is intended to cover a two-year period only. It is critical that Bodega-area residents consider sustainable service options, which would best be achieved through a reorganization involving annexation of the area by a neighboring agency or incorporation of the area into a regional agency.**

**OVERVIEW**

The Bodega Volunteer Fire Company (“Bodega” or “Bodega VFC”; not to be confused with the Bodega Bay Fire Protection District) serves a portion of County Service Area 40 – Fire Services, which is a dependent District of the County of Sonoma. The VFC provides service to just under sixteen square miles of unincorporated area centered on the community of Bodega. There are just over 600 residents in the area.

The VFC is bounded by the Occidental Community Services District to the north, Gold Ridge Fire Protection District and Valley Ford Volunteer Fire Company to the east, Marin County to the south, and the Bodega Bay Fire Protection District to the west. Bodega Bay FPD provides the majority of mutual aid responses to the VFC, particularly as the District covers the area for emergency medical/ambulance service.

Bodega maintains a station that was constructed in 2013, has a reasonably new vehicle fleet featuring two engines, a tender, and a utility vehicle, and a recently-reinvigorated roster of over a dozen volunteer firefighters.

Bodega VFC, along with the remaining VFCs serving territory within County Service Area 40, have formed the North Bay Fire organization, a 501 (c)(3). North Bay Fire has been provided funding from the County for a two-year period; the organization will contract with Gold Ridge Fire Protection District to provide leadership and administrative support. The VFCs are expected to seek reorganizations with neighboring agencies during that timeframe.

**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.	Evaluation
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 to agency service boundaries?	No

**Determinations**

- The Bodega area has not experienced significant population growth and is not expected to do so.

**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.

*Resident Population*

The Bodega area has had very minimal growth in recent decades and is not expected to experience significant growth in the future. Company staff note that some properties have transitioned from occasional or seasonal use to year-round use, and that some residences are now used for short-term rentals.

*Transient Population*

Fire and emergency services agencies respond to “transient” populations as well as resident populations within their service areas. For Bodega VFC, response to vehicle accidents on the Bodega Highway and Highway 1, represents the primary provision of service to transients.

The VFC notes that call volumes have almost doubled over the past ten years, and attributes this growth primarily to service calls from transients.

*Development*

The County of Sonoma has jurisdiction over land use and planning for the areas served by the Company.

The County General Plan does not anticipate significant development in the areas served by the Company.

Recent County land use planning regulation changes will likely permit more accessory dwelling units, which may lead to a modest increase in resident population.

**DETERMINATION 2. CAPACITY AND ADEQUACY OF PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

Present and planned capacity of public facilities, adequacy of public services, and infrastructure needs or deficiencies.	Evaluation
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 structural fire protection within or contiguous to the agency's sphere of influence?	No

**Determinations**

- The Bodega area generates 45 to 60 service calls per year. The VFC also responds to 125 to 150 mutual aid calls per year to neighboring agencies
- The area is provided with emergency medical/ambulance support from Bodega Bay Fire Protection District.
- Bodega Bay FPD faces significant financial and service challenges that may affect its ability to provide advanced life support (ALS) service to neighboring agencies in the future, partially because territories outside of the District but within the ambulance service area do not provide financial support to the District. The three CSA 40 areas served by Volunteer Companies in the northern part of the "Corridor", including Bodega VFC, should consider options not only for sustainable fire service provision, but for continued advanced life support service.

## Discussion

### Service Volumes

Bodega VFC responds to both in-area and mutual aid calls, and indicates mutual aid calls generally exceed in-area ones. Table 43 indicates the historical call volumes generated within Bodega's service territory.

**Table 43: Historical Call for Service Volumes – Bodega Volunteer Fire Company**

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Calls Generated Within Area	37	49	42	42	61

### Response Standards

A discussion of response time standards is included in Appendix 3 of this report.

Bodega serves a territory with **rural** demands and currently strives to operate crews with "2/0" staffing (two-member crews are dispatched to all calls).

**Table 44: Response Time Statistics – Bodega Volunteer Fire Company**

Year	Average Response Times (Dispatched to "Arrived On Scene")
2015	6 minutes 7 seconds
2016	6 minutes 10 seconds
2017	5 minutes 13 seconds
2018	7 minutes 40 seconds

These statistics indicate that the Company meets NFPA response time standards for rural areas for calls that are generated from within the VFC territory.

### Facilities

Bodega VFC has a station/headquarters located in the village of Bodega. Built in 2013, the facility is suited for regular staffing. The VFC also owns McCaughey Hall, which was the company's original station and is now used as a community center.

### Staffing

Bodega VFC has had a recent resurgence of new volunteers, and is generally able to staff calls with two firefighters, though as with many agencies studied in this report, it is challenging to respond to calls on weekday daytimes. The active roster for the Company has well over a dozen volunteers.

### **DETERMINATION 3. FINANCIAL CONDITION**

#### **Determinations**

- As part of County Service Area 40 – Fire Services, Bodega VFC was eligible for financial and administrative support from the County of Sonoma. However, the County is ceding a direct administrative support role to North Bay Fire, a new non-profit organization representing the remaining Volunteer Fire Companies in Sonoma County.
- North Bay Fire will in turn enter into a contract with Gold Ridge Fire Protection District to provide leadership and administrative services to the VFCs. The contract will include provision of stipends for volunteers, and may include funding for paid professional positions if required to maintain or improve service levels.
- The County is funding North Bay Fire for a two-year period, with an expectation that the Volunteer Fire Companies will participate in regional consolidations within that time frame.

#### **Discussion**

Bodega VFC operates using funding from two sources: community contributions and support from the County of Sonoma.

While community support has been particularly strong for Bodega VFC, County support can no longer be considered secure. Therefore, the VFC should consider funding and organizational options to ensure continued sustainability.

The County has indicated that it will no longer directly provide support through the now closed Fire and Emergency Services Department, but rather through a short-term arrangement with North Bay Fire and the Gold Ridge Fire Protection District.

The County has also indicated that longer term, it expects to see CSA 40 territories reorganized with neighboring fire protection districts in exchange for continued financial support.

Bodega VFC exists as a 501(c)(3) organization, so does not receive tax revenue directly and has no taxation authority.

A portion of property tax revenue in the Bodega territory is directed to County Service Area 40, as shown in Table 45:

**Table 45: Financial Data for Bodega Volunteer Fire Company Territory**

Factor	Value
Parcel Count	166
Total Assessed Value	\$64,897,133
Average AB8 Rate	3.9%
Net Property Tax to CSA 40	\$36,077

## FINANCIAL OPTIONS

Appendix 4 describes options for subject agencies to increase revenues and decrease costs, either as stand-alone agencies or through a regional consolidation program.

### Revenue Source Options

The Bodega VFC does not have taxation authority, but County Service Area 40, which is a dependent district of the County of Sonoma, could seek approval from the voters within the entire Service Area for special taxes.

(Bodega VFC representatives do not believe that a special tax would be well-received by landowners within its service territory, and believes that continued financial support from the County will be forthcoming, such that local financial support in the form of taxation will be unnecessary.)

Another avenue of securing local financial support for fire and emergency service provision in the area would be to annex the Bodega VFC territory to a Fire Protection District with an existing special tax.

At a typical parcel tax rate of \$200 per year, a special tax would nominally generate \$33,200 in the Bodega area; at \$300 per year, \$49,800 would be generated.

It should be noted that this additional revenue, combined with property tax allocations, would not support anything other than the existing volunteer program, and would be unlikely to provide sustainable funding that would address operational needs.

**DETERMINATION 4. SHARED SERVICES AND FACILITIES**

Status of, and opportunities for, shared facilities.	Evaluation
a. Are subject agencies currently sharing services or facilities with other organizations? If so, describe the status of such efforts.	No
b. Are there any opportunities for the organizations 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?	Yes
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**

- Bodega VFC should consider near-term opportunities for shared services, including training and administrative support in partnership with neighboring agencies.

**Discussion**

Regardless of whether the territory served by Bodega VFC is reorganized into a neighboring agency or regional entity, it should consider near-term options for sharing services, including staff training and administrative support.

New requirements for firefighter/emergency medical technician staff will require retraining and certification. Volunteers at Bodega VFC could receive training as part of a regional agency partnership.

While administrative needs of the VFC are relatively minimal compared to Fire Protection Districts with paid staff, agencies in the Russian River area have reported significant improvements in the provision of administrative services using a shared staffing model. If appropriate, Bodega VFC should consider a similar partnership arrangement with neighboring agencies.

## **DETERMINATION 5. ACCOUNTABILITY, STRUCTURE AND EFFICIENCIES**

### **Determinations**

- The County of Sonoma, which runs County Service Area 40 as a dependent district, meets all requirements for proper governance.
- Volunteer Fire Companies are not government agencies, and are therefore not subject to review of governance strictures.
- The County has established a two-year timeframe for Bodega VFC (and the other VFCs in the County) to seek reorganization opportunities with other fire and emergency service agencies.

### **Discussion**

The County of Sonoma, as part of its management of Board of Supervisors meetings, fully meets governance requirements, and therefore does so for governance of County Service Area 40, a dependent district.

Volunteer Fire Companies are not government agencies, but are organized as 501 (c)(3) entities, so are not subject to governance regulations.

As noted in the previous section, the County has indicated a two-year timeframe during which Volunteer Fire Companies must seek reorganizations with neighboring fire and emergency service agencies.

**MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW: CAMP MEEKER VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY (CSA 40)****SUMMARY DETERMINATIONS**

- **The Camp Meeker Volunteer Fire Company continues to provide a solid volunteer-based fire service.**
- **Although Camp Meeker VFC will be financially and administratively supported by the County's contract with North Bay Fire, and through North Bay Fire's contract with Gold Ridge FPD, it is crucial to note that that funding and service support is intended to cover a two-year period only. It is critical that Camp Meeker residents consider sustainable service options, which would best be achieved through a reorganization involving annexation of the area by a neighboring agency or incorporation of the area into a regional agency.**

**OVERVIEW**

The Camp Meeker Volunteer Fire Company ("Camp Meeker" or "Camp Meeker VFC") serves a portion of County Service Area 40 – Fire Services, which is a dependent District of the County of Sonoma. The VFC provided service to just under two square miles of unincorporated area centered on the community of Camp Meeker. There are just over 400 residents in the area.

The Camp Meeker village features extremely narrow roadways making emergency service access extremely difficult. Staff report that they have to access the area in a specific clockwise orientation to navigate through the development.

The VFC territory is almost completely surrounded by the Occidental Community Services District, other than the northern border which abuts the Monte Rio Fire Protection District.

A key advantage for the Company is that the Camp Meeker development does have water service, so there are hydrants throughout the area.

The Company has a modest firehouse that was built in the mid-1900s, located in the Camp's central area. The three vehicles that the Company operates are in reasonable condition, though two vehicles were built in the mid-1980s. The Company generally purchases used vehicles, and has a modest amount of savings for a down payment for a future purchase.

Camp Meeker has a roster of eleven volunteers with nine considered active. The Company is often unable to staff responses with more than one volunteer during weekday daytime hours.

**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.	Evaluation
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 to agency service boundaries?	No

**Determinations**

- The Camp Meeker area has not experienced growth and is not expected to do so.

**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.

*Resident Population*

The Camp Meeker area has not experienced significant growth in recent years and is not expected to.

*Transient Population*

Fire and emergency services agencies respond to “transient” populations as well as resident populations within their service areas. For Camp Meeker VFC, response to vehicle accidents on the Bohemian Highway, which is the primary route from Occidental to Monte Rio, represents the primary provision of service to transients.

*Development*

The County of Sonoma has jurisdiction over land use and planning for the areas served by the Company.

The County General Plan does not anticipate significant development in the areas served by the District.

**DETERMINATION 2. CAPACITY AND ADEQUACY OF PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

Present and planned capacity of public facilities, adequacy of public services, and infrastructure needs or deficiencies.	Evaluation
a. Are there any deficiencies in agency capacity to meet service needs of existing development within its existing territory?	Sometimes
b. Are there any issues regarding the agency's capacity to meet the service demand of reasonably foreseeable future growth?	Yes
c. Are there any concerns regarding public services provided by the agency being considered adequate?	Sometimes
d. Are there any significant infrastructure needs or deficiencies to be addressed?	Yes
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 structural fire protection within or contiguous to the agency's sphere of influence?	No

**Determinations**

- The Camp Meeker area generates about 50 service calls per year.
- Camp Meeker receives mutual aid coverage primarily from Occidental Community Services District and from the Monte Rio Fire Protection District.
- Emergency medical/ambulance service for the area is provided by a private provider contracted to the County; response times are, on average, quite long.

## Discussion

### Service Volumes

Camp Meeker VFC responds to both in-area and occasional mutual aid calls. Table 46 indicates the historical call volumes generated within Camp Meeker.

**Table 46: Historical Call for Service Volumes – Camp Meeker Volunteer Fire Company**

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Calls Generated Within Area	50	50	56	72	47

### Response Standards

A discussion of response time standards is included in Appendix 3 of this report.

Camp Meeker serves a territory with **rural** demands and currently strives to operate crews with “2/0” staffing (two-member crews are dispatched to all calls).

**Table 47: Response Time Statistics – Camp Meeker Volunteer Fire Company**

Year	Average Response Times (Dispatched to “Arrived On Scene”)
2015	8 minutes 26 seconds
2016	8 minutes 53 seconds
2017	8 minutes 26 seconds
2019	8 minutes

These statistics indicate that the Company meets NFPA response time standards for suburban areas for calls that are generated from within the service area.

### Facilities

Camp Meeker VFC has a modest facility well positioned to serve the community. The facility is not suitable for staffing, is not ADA compliant, and does not have a ventilation system in the vehicle bays. Because the building is of wood construction, it does not have seismic issues.

### Staffing

Camp Meeker VFC has a stable roster of almost a dozen volunteers and is generally able to staff responses with two or more firefighters except during weekday daytimes.

**DETERMINATION 3. FINANCIAL CONDITION****Determinations**

- As part of County Service Area 40 – Fire Services, Camp Meeker VFC was eligible for financial and administrative support from the County of Sonoma. However, the County is preparing to cede a direct administrative support role to North Bay Fire, a new non-profit organization representing the remaining Volunteer Fire Companies in Sonoma County. North Bay Fire will in turn enter into a contract with Gold Ridge Fire Protection District to provide leadership and administrative services. The contract will include provision of stipends for volunteers, and may include funding for paid professional positions if required to maintain or improve service levels. The County is funding North Bay Fire for a two-year period, with an expectation that the Volunteer Fire Companies will participate in regional consolidations within that time frame.

**Discussion**

Camp Meeker VFC exists as a 501(c)(3) organization, so does not receive tax revenue and has no taxation authority.

A portion of property tax revenue in the Camp Meeker territory is directed to County Service Area 40, as shown in Table 48:

**Table 48: Financial Data for Camp Meeker Volunteer Fire Company Territory**

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Value</b>
Parcel Count	686
Total Assessed Value	\$60,413,876
Average AB8 Rate	3.3%
Net Property Tax to CSA 40	\$18,946

**FINANCIAL OPTIONS**

Appendix 4 describes options for subject agencies to increase revenues and decrease costs, either as stand-alone agencies or through a regional consolidation program.

**Revenue Source Options**

The Camp Meeker VFC does not have taxation authority, but County Service Area 40, which is a dependent district of the County of Sonoma, could seek approval from the

voters within the entire district for special taxes. Another possibility is that a neighboring fire protection district could seek a sphere of influence amendment from LAFCO encompassing the territory of Camp Meeker, subsequently annexing the territory and extending an existing special tax over the area.

At a typical parcel tax rate of \$200 per year, a special tax would nominally generate \$137,200 in the Camp Meeker area; at \$300 per year, \$205,800 would be generated. The Company staff believe that passing a parcel tax would be difficult (there are approximately 125 voters within the Camp).

This additional revenue, combined with property tax allocations, would support the existing volunteer program, and could be sufficient to provide sustainable funding that would address vehicle, equipment, and facility needs, and potentially pay volunteer stipends.

**DETERMINATION 4. SHARED SERVICES AND FACILITIES**

Status of, and opportunities for, shared facilities.	Evaluation
a. Are subject agencies currently sharing services or facilities with other organizations? If so, describe the status of such efforts.	No
b. Are there any opportunities for the organizations 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?	Yes
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**

- Due to low call volumes, the Camp Meeker area is likely best-served with a volunteer company that is part of a regional agency that provides leadership, administrative support, and mutual aid. The volunteer operation would provide “quick response”, with “2/0” (or even “3/0”) staffed response coming from the regional agency out of another location.

## Discussion

Camp Meeker experiences the difficulty that many volunteer program agencies do in responding to calls with at least two firefighters, particularly during weekday daytimes. The VFC is generally able to respond with two or more volunteers at other times, and does have a stable roster of active volunteers.

The Volunteer Fire Companies providing service in CSA 40 territory will be receiving support from Gold Ridge Fire Protection District for the next two years under contract.

It is clear that Camp Meeker (and the other VFCs providing service in CSA 40) will require support, both operationally and organizationally, and that this support will have to come from an agency other than the County, given the County's decision to reorganize its Fire and Emergency Services department.

Although support services can be provided under contract, as the Gold Ridge FPD contract illustrates, the County has indicated that the VFCs must consider reorganization with neighboring agencies, with a two-year timeframe.

## **DETERMINATION 5. ACCOUNTABILITY, STRUCTURE AND EFFICIENCIES**

### **Determinations**

- The County of Sonoma, which runs County Service Area 40 as a dependent district, meets all requirements for proper governance.
- Volunteer Fire Companies are not government agencies, and are therefore not subject to review of governance strictures.
- The County has established a two-year timeframe for Camp Meeker VFC (and the other VFCs in the County) to seek reorganization opportunities with other fire and emergency service agencies.

### **Discussion**

The County of Sonoma, as part of its management of Board of Supervisors meetings, fully meets governance requirements, and therefore does so for governance of County Service Area 40, a dependent district.

Volunteer Fire Companies are not government agencies, but are organized as 501 (c)(3) entities, so are not subject to governance regulations.

As noted in the previous section, the County has indicated a two-year timeframe during which Volunteer Fire Companies must seek reorganizations with neighboring fire and emergency service agencies.

**MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW: FORT ROSS VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY (CSA 40)****SUMMARY DETERMINATIONS**

- **The Fort Ross Volunteer Fire Company is actively seeking an agency partner that will serve the County Service Area 40 that the Company is responsible for, preferably through annexation to a neighboring Fire Protection District or to a new regional agency.**
- **Fort Ross has a very small volunteer roster, and has lost the administrative support of Sonoma County Fire and Emergency Services. Although a two-year arrangement between the County and North Bay Fire will provide a “bridge” period, Fort Ross is committed to finding a partner agency in the very near term.**
- **Whatever service arrangement can be made for the Fort Ross territory, it will almost certainly require more financial resources than the modest property tax revenue that the territory generates. Seeking a voter-approved parcel tax would generate additional revenue that may be sufficient to ensure sustainable service provision in the area.**

**OVERVIEW**

The Fort Ross Volunteer Fire Company (“Fort Ross” or “Fort Ross VFC”) serves a portion of County Service Area 40 – Fire Services, which is a dependent District of the County of Sonoma. The VFC provides service to just over fifty-four square miles of lightly-populated unincorporated area that is primarily wildland. There are just over 450 residents in the area.

The CSA 40 territory that Fort Ross covers is bordered to the north by the North Sonoma Coast Fire Protection District, to the east primarily by the Cazadero Community Service District, to the south by Monte Rio Fire Protection District, and to the west by the Timber Cove Fire Protection District.

Due to topography and roadway networks, Fort Ross essentially has Timber Cove FPD and Cazadero CSD as sole mutual aid partners. CalFire can provide mutual aid coverage from its station in Cazadero during fire season.

Ambulance coverage in the area is provided by Coast Life support for the northern portion of the territory, and by Russian River Fire Protection District for the southern portion.

The Fort Ross territory has a very low population to draw volunteers from, reflected in their current roster of a dozen. The Chief of the VFC expects to retire from the position at the close of 2020.

The VFC responds primarily to medical calls like all agencies, but serves a critical role as an early response for fires that could quickly spread through the wildland areas.

**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.	Evaluation
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 to agency service boundaries?	No

**Determinations**

- The Fort Ross area has not experienced significant growth in recent times and is not expected to do so in the future.

**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.

*Resident Population*

The Fort Ross territory is very lightly populated, with about 450 residents.

*Transient Population*

Fort Ross VFC reports that they are rarely called upon to respond to service calls from transients.

*Development*

The County of Sonoma has jurisdiction over land use and planning for the areas served by the Company.

The County General Plan does not anticipate significant development in the areas served by the Company.

**DETERMINATION 2. CAPACITY AND ADEQUACY OF PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

Present and planned capacity of public facilities, adequacy of public services, and infrastructure needs or deficiencies.	Evaluation
a. Are there any deficiencies in agency capacity to meet service needs of existing development within its existing territory?	In the near future, yes.
b. Are there any issues regarding the agency's capacity to meet the service demand of reasonably foreseeable future growth?	Yes
c. Are there any concerns regarding public services provided by the agency being considered adequate?	Yes
d. Are there any significant infrastructure needs or deficiencies to be addressed?	Unknown
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 structural fire protection within or contiguous to the agency's sphere of influence?	No

**Determinations**

- The Fort Ross area generates about 30 service calls per year.
- Fort Ross receives mutual aid support primarily from Cazadero CSD and Timber Cove FPD, with CalFire available to respond from Cazadero during fire season.
- Ambulance coverage for the area is provided by Coast Life Support in the northern portion of the area, and Russian River FPD in the southern portion.

**Discussion**

**Service Volumes**

Fort Ross VFC responds to both in-area and occasional mutual aid calls. Table 49 indicates the historical call volumes generated within Fort Ross's service territory.

**Table 49: Historical Call for Service Volumes – Fort Ross Volunteer Fire Company**

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Calls Generated Within Area	31	39	24	33	28

**Response Standards**

A discussion of response time standards is included in Appendix 3 of this report.

Fort Ross VFC serves a territory with **remote** demands and currently strives to operate crews with “2/0” staffing (two-member crews are dispatched to all calls).

**Table 50: Response Time Statistics – Fort Ross Volunteer Fire Company**

Year	Average Response Times (Dispatched to “Arrived On Scene”)
2015	17 minutes
2016	12 minutes 53 seconds
2017	16 minutes 33 seconds
2018	16 minutes 50 seconds

These statistics indicate that the Company meets NFPA response time standards for remote areas for calls that are generated from within the service area.

**Facilities**

Fort Ross maintains four facilities, three solely for vehicle storage and one that is suitable for training sessions and meetings.

**Staffing**

Fort Ross VFC has a roster of sixteen volunteers, two of which are EMTs. The Chief of the VFC plans to retire at the end of 2020.

**DETERMINATION 3. FINANCIAL CONDITION****Determinations**

- As part of County Service Area 40 – Fire Services, Fort Ross VFC was eligible for financial and administrative support from the County of Sonoma. However, the County is preparing to cede a direct administrative support role to North Bay Fire, a new non-profit organization representing the remaining Volunteer Fire Companies in Sonoma County. North Bay Fire will in turn enter into a contract with Gold Ridge Fire Protection District to provide leadership and administrative

services. The contract will include provision of stipends for volunteers, and may include funding for paid professional positions if required to maintain or improve service levels. The County is funding North Bay Fire for a two-year period, with an expectation that the Volunteer Fire Companies will participate in regional consolidations within that time frame.

**Discussion**

Fort Ross VFC exists as a 501(c)(3) organization, so does not receive tax revenue and has no taxation authority.

A portion of property tax revenue in the Fort Ross territory is directed to County Service Area 40, as shown in Table 51:

**Table 51: Financial Data for Fort Ross Volunteer Fire Company Territory**

Factor	Value
Parcel Count	838
Total Assessed Value	\$86,982,510
Average AB8 Rate	3.7%
Net Property Tax to CSA 40	\$38,955

**FINANCIAL OPTIONS**

Appendix 4 describes options for subject agencies to increase revenues and decrease costs, either as stand-alone agencies or through a regional consolidation program.

**Revenue Source Options**

The Fort Ross VFC does not have taxation authority, but County Service Area 40, which is a dependent district of the County of Sonoma, could seek approval from the voters within the entire district for special taxes. Another possibility is that a neighboring fire protection district could seek a sphere of influence amendment from LAFCO encompassing the territory of Fort Ross, subsequently annexing the territory and extending an existing special tax over the area.

At a typical parcel tax rate of \$200 per year, a special tax would nominally generate \$167,600 in the Fort Ross area; at \$300 per year, \$251,400 would be generated. (It is likely

that a tax based on units of risk would generate much lower revenue, given that many parcels are undeveloped.)

This additional revenue, combined with property tax allocations, could potentially provide sustained funding for a stipend-paid volunteer program, though the dearth of volunteers in the area is likely more due to demographics than lack of interest.

**DETERMINATION 4. SHARED SERVICES AND FACILITIES**

Status of, and opportunities for, shared facilities.	Evaluation
a. Are subject agencies currently sharing services or facilities with other organizations? If so, describe the status of such efforts.	No
b. Are there any opportunities for the organizations to share services or facilities with neighboring or overlapping organizations that are not currently being utilized?	Yes
c. Are there any governance options that may produce economies of scale and/or improve buying power in order to reduce costs?	Yes
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**

- Due to low call volumes, the Fort Ross area is likely best-served with a volunteer company that is part of a regional agency that provides leadership, administrative support, and mutual aid. The volunteer operation would provide “quick response”, with “2/0” (or even “3/0”) staffed response coming from the regional agency out of another location.

**Discussion**

As noted previously, the Volunteer Fire Companies providing service in CSA 40 territory will be receiving support from Gold Ridge Fire Protection District for the next two years under contract.

It is clear that Fort Ross (and the other VFCs providing service in CSA 40) will require support, both operationally and organizationally, and that this support will have to come from an agency other than the County, given the County's decision to reorganize its Fire and Emergency Services department.

Although support services can be provided under contract, as the Gold Ridge FPD contract illustrates, the County has indicated that the VFCs must consider reorganization with neighboring agencies, with a two-year timeframe.

**DETERMINATION 5. ACCOUNTABILITY, STRUCTURE AND EFFICIENCIES**

**Determinations**

- The County of Sonoma, which runs County Service Area 40 as a dependent district, meets all requirements for proper governance.
- Volunteer Fire Companies are not government agencies, and are therefore not subject to review of governance strictures.
- The County has established a two-year timeframe for Fort Ross VFC (and the other VFCs in the County) to seek reorganization opportunities with other fire and emergency service agencies.

**Discussion**

The County of Sonoma, as part of its management of Board of Supervisors meetings, fully meets governance requirements, and therefore does so for governance of County Service Area 40, a dependent district.

Volunteer Fire Companies are not government agencies, but are organized as 501 (c)(3) entities, so are not subject to governance regulations.

As noted in the previous section, the County has indicated a two-year timeframe during which Volunteer Fire Companies must seek reorganizations with neighboring fire and emergency service agencies.

**MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW: VALLEY FORD VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY (CSA 40)****SUMMARY DETERMINATIONS**

- **The Valley Ford Volunteer Fire Company continues to provide a solid volunteer-based fire service, and notably has added committed volunteers in the last few years.**
- **Although Valley Ford VFC will be financially and administratively supported by the County's contract with North Bay Fire, and through North Bay Fire's contract with Gold Ridge FPD, it is crucial to note that that funding and service support is intended to cover a two-year period only. It is critical that Valley Ford-area residents consider sustainable service options, which would best be achieved through a reorganization involving annexation of the area by a neighboring agency or incorporation of the area into a regional agency.**

**OVERVIEW**

The Valley Ford Volunteer Fire Company ("Valley Ford" or "Valley Ford VFC") serves a portion of County Service Area 40 – Fire Services, which is a dependent District of the County of Sonoma. The VFC provides service to just over eight square miles of unincorporated area centered on the community of Valley Ford. There are about 240 residents in the area.

The territory is bordered by the Gold Ridge FPD to the north, Bloomfield VFC to the east, Marin County to the south, and Bodega VFC to the west.

The Bodega Bay Fire Protection District provides emergency medical/ambulance coverage to the Valley Ford area.

**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.	Evaluation
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 to agency service boundaries?	No

**Determinations**

- The Valley Ford area has not experienced growth and is not expected to do so in the future.

**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.

*Resident Population*

Serving a coastal region devoted predominantly to agriculture, Valley Ford VFC has not experienced significant community growth and is not expected to in the future.

*Transient Population*

Fire and emergency services agencies respond to “transient” populations as well as resident populations within their service areas. For Valley Ford VFC, response to vehicle accidents on Valley Ford Road, which is a primary route from Petaluma to the Coast, represents the primary provision of service to transients.

*Development*

The County of Sonoma has jurisdiction over land use and planning for the areas served by the Company.

The County General Plan does not anticipate significant development in the areas served by the Company.

**DETERMINATION 2. CAPACITY AND ADEQUACY OF PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

Present and planned capacity of public facilities, adequacy of public services, and infrastructure needs or deficiencies.	Evaluation
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?	Maybe
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 structural fire protection within or contiguous to the agency's sphere of influence?	No

**Determinations**

- The Valley Ford area generates about 30 service calls per year.
- The Company receives mutual aid support primarily from Bodega VFC and Gold Ridge FPD, and emergency medical/ambulance support from Bodega Bay Fire Protection District. Valley Ford is generally dispatched to about sixty-five mutual aid calls each year – double the rate of in-territory calls.

**Discussion**

**Service Volumes**

**Response Standards**

A discussion of response time standards is included in Appendix 3 of this report.

Valley Ford serves a territory with **rural** demands and currently strives to operate crews with "2/0" staffing (two-member crews are dispatched to all calls).

**Table 52: Response Time Statistics – Valley Ford Volunteer Fire Company**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Average Response Times (Dispatched to “Arrived On Scene”)</b>
2015	6 minutes 29 seconds
2016	6 minutes 23 seconds
2017	6 minutes 12 seconds
2018	6 minutes 21 seconds

These statistics indicate that the Company meets NFPA response time standards for rural areas for calls that are generated from within the service area.

### **Facilities**

The VFC has a modest facility in the community of Valley Ford. It is unsuited for staffing; the building, while not seismically sound, is of wood frame construction so likely has a low level of risk.

### **Staffing**

Valley Ford has a roster of five volunteers, with four active. One volunteer is a trained paramedic.

## **DETERMINATION 3. FINANCIAL CONDITION**

### **Determinations**

- As part of County Service Area 40 – Fire Services, Valley Ford VFC was eligible for financial and administrative support from the County of Sonoma. However, the County is preparing to cede a direct administrative support role to North Bay Fire, a new non-profit organization representing the remaining Volunteer Fire Companies in Sonoma County. North Bay Fire will in turn enter into a contract with Gold Ridge Fire Protection District to provide leadership and administrative services. The contract will include provision of stipends for volunteers, and may include funding for paid professional positions if required to maintain or improve service levels. The County is funding North Bay Fire for a two-year period, with an expectation that the Volunteer Fire Companies will participate in regional consolidations within that time frame.

### **Discussion**

Valley Ford VFC exists as a 501(c)(3) organization, so does not receive tax revenue and has no taxation authority.

A portion of property tax revenue in the Valley Ford territory is directed to County Service Area 40, as shown in Table 53:

**Table 53: Financial Data for Valley Ford Volunteer Fire Company Territory**

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Value</b>
Parcel Count	86
Total Assessed Value	\$29,920,437
Average AB8 Rate	4.2%
Net Property Tax to CSA 40	\$16,183

### **FINANCIAL OPTIONS**

Appendix 4 describes options for subject agencies to increase revenues and decrease costs, either as stand-alone agencies or through a regional consolidation program.

#### **Revenue Source Options**

The Valley Ford VFC does not have taxation authority, but County Service Area 40, which is a dependent district of the County of Sonoma, could seek approval from the voters within the entire district for special taxes. Another possibility is that a neighboring fire protection district could seek a sphere of influence amendment from LAFCO encompassing the territory of Valley Ford, subsequently annexing the territory and extending an existing special tax over the area.

At a typical parcel tax rate of \$200 per year, a special tax would nominally generate \$17,200 in the Valley Ford area; at \$300 per year, \$25,800 would be generated.

It should be noted that this additional revenue, combined with property tax allocations, would not support anything other than a volunteer program, and would be unlikely to provide sustainable funding that would address vehicle, equipment, and facility needs.

**DETERMINATION 4. SHARED SERVICES AND FACILITIES**

Status of, and opportunities for, shared facilities.	Evaluation
a. Are subject agencies currently sharing services or facilities with other organizations? If so, describe the status of such efforts.	No
b. Are there any opportunities for the organizations to share services or facilities with neighboring or overlapping organizations that are not currently being utilized?	Yes
c. Are there any governance options that may produce economies of scale and/or improve buying power in order to reduce costs?	Yes
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**

- Due to low call volumes, the Valley Ford area is likely best-served with a volunteer company that is part of a regional agency that provides leadership, administrative support, and mutual aid. The volunteer operation would provide “quick response”, with “2/0” (or even “3/0”) staffed response coming from the regional agency out of another location.

**Discussion**

As noted previously, the Volunteer Fire Companies providing service in CSA 40 territory will be receiving support from Gold Ridge Fire Protection District for the next two years under contract.

It is clear that Valley Ford (and the other VFCs providing service in CSA 40) will require support, both operationally and organizationally, and that this support will have to come from an agency other than the County, given the County's decision to reorganize its Fire and Emergency Services department.

Although support services can be provided under contract, as the Gold Ridge FPD contract illustrates, the County has indicated that the VFCs must consider reorganization with neighboring agencies, with a two-year timeframe.

## **DETERMINATION 5. ACCOUNTABILITY, STRUCTURE AND EFFICIENCIES**

### **Determinations**

- The County of Sonoma, which runs County Service Area 40 as a dependent district, meets all requirements for proper governance.
- Volunteer Fire Companies are not government agencies, and are therefore not subject to review of governance strictures.
- The County has established a two-year timeframe for Valley Ford VFC (and the other VFCs in the County) to seek reorganization opportunities with other fire and emergency service agencies.

### **Discussion**

The County of Sonoma, as part of its management of Board of Supervisors meetings, fully meets governance requirements, and therefore does so for governance of County Service Area 40, a dependent district.

Volunteer Fire Companies are not government agencies, but are organized as 501 (c)(3) entities, so are not subject to governance regulations.

As noted in the previous section, the County has indicated a two-year timeframe during which Volunteer Fire Companies must seek reorganizations with neighboring fire and emergency service agencies.