

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA STAFF REPORT

DATE: October 5, 2022
TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
FROM: Jon Kennedy, Interim City Manager
MEETING: October 12, 2022
SUBJECT: Review of Municipal Services Review for Eastern Plumas Fire Agencies

Background

The council is to receive a review of the Eastern Plumas Fire Municipal Service before the LAFCo public hearing that is to be held later this month.

Recommendation:

Council is recommended to allow City staff to provide comments on the City of Portola Fire Service Determinations during the LAFCo public hearing to be held on October 17, 2022.

Attachments:

Eastern Plumas Fire MSR presentation 8-8-22

Municipal Service Review

Fire Protection Agencies in Eastern Plumas County

Prepared for Plumas LAFCo
by
Policy Consulting Associates, LLC

August 8, 2022

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What is a Municipal Service Review?

In order to prepare and update spheres of influence in accordance with Section 56425, the Commission shall conduct a service review of the municipal services provided in the county or other appropriate area designated by the commission.- Government Code §56430

AB 1744 requires LAFCo to make certain determinations:

- ❖ Present and planned capacity of public facilities and adequacy of public services, including infrastructure needs or deficiencies
- ❖ The Location and Characteristics of Disadvantaged Unincorporated Communities Within or Contiguous to the Agency's SOI
- ❖ Growth and population projections for the affected area
- ❖ Financial ability of agencies to provide services
- ❖ Status of, and opportunities for, shared facilities
- ❖ Accountability for community service needs, including governmental structure and operational efficiencies
- ❖ Any other matter related to effective or efficient service delivery, as required by commission policy.

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MSR Process

- ❖ Update of relevant data by agency staff
- ❖ Review and update of consistent sections by LAFCo staff
- ❖ Compilation of overview and Governance Structure Options
- ❖ Presentation to LAFCo
- ❖ Release of public review draft
- ❖ Review period for public comments thru Sept. 14
- ❖ Release of draft final with edits based on comments received
- ❖ Public hearing and potential adoption of determinations by LAFCo

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Agency Profile Outline

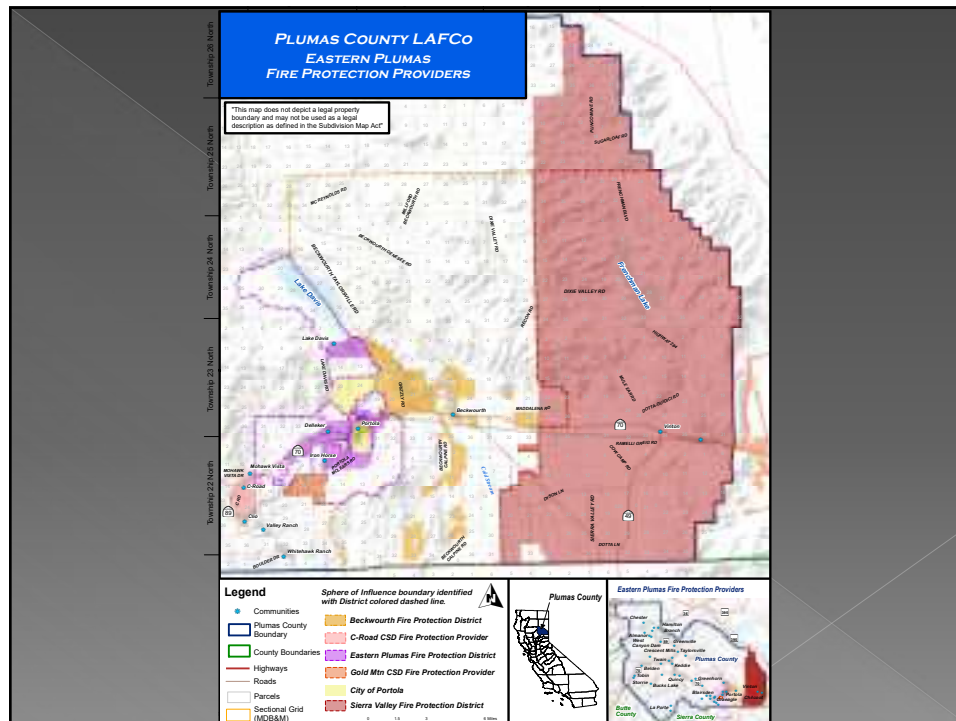
- ❖ Agency Overview
- ❖ Map of Agency
- ❖ Accountability & Governance
- ❖ Planning & Management
- ❖ Existing Demand & Growth Projections
- ❖ Financing
- ❖ Service Specific Sections
- ❖ Determinations

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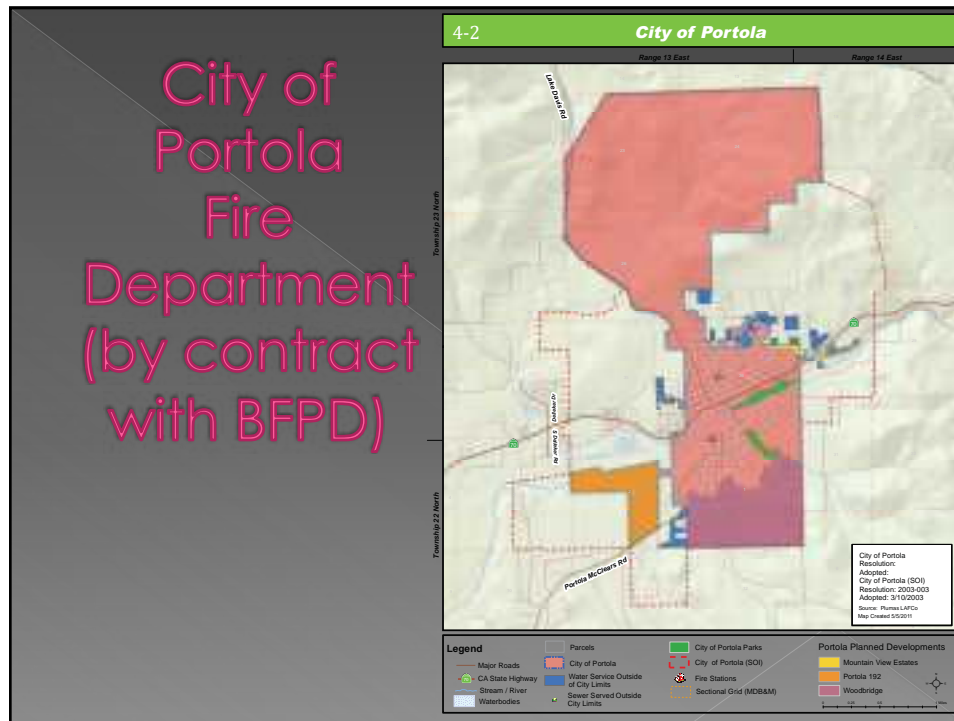
Agencies Reviewed

- ❖ City of Portola
- ❖ Beckwourth Fire Protection District
- ❖ Eastern Plumas Rural Fire Protection District
- ❖ Gold Mountain Community Services District
- ❖ Sierra Valley Fire Protection District

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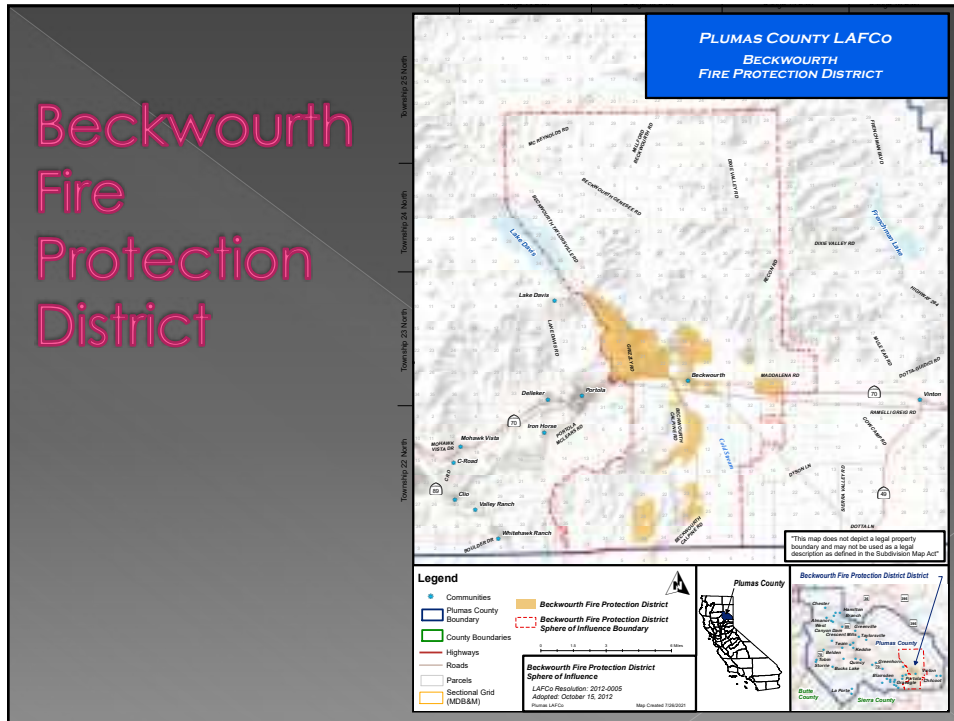


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City of Portola FD Significant Findings

- ❖ Fire department services have been plagued with many concerns and challenges.
- ❖ Operational deficiencies were the impetus to ceasing FD operations and seeking service structure options.
- ❖ Master and capital planning for fire services has been deficient.
- ❖ Beckwourth FPD is providing outstanding protection for City's area of responsibility.
- ❖ Consistent response time data is necessary for all reviewed agencies.

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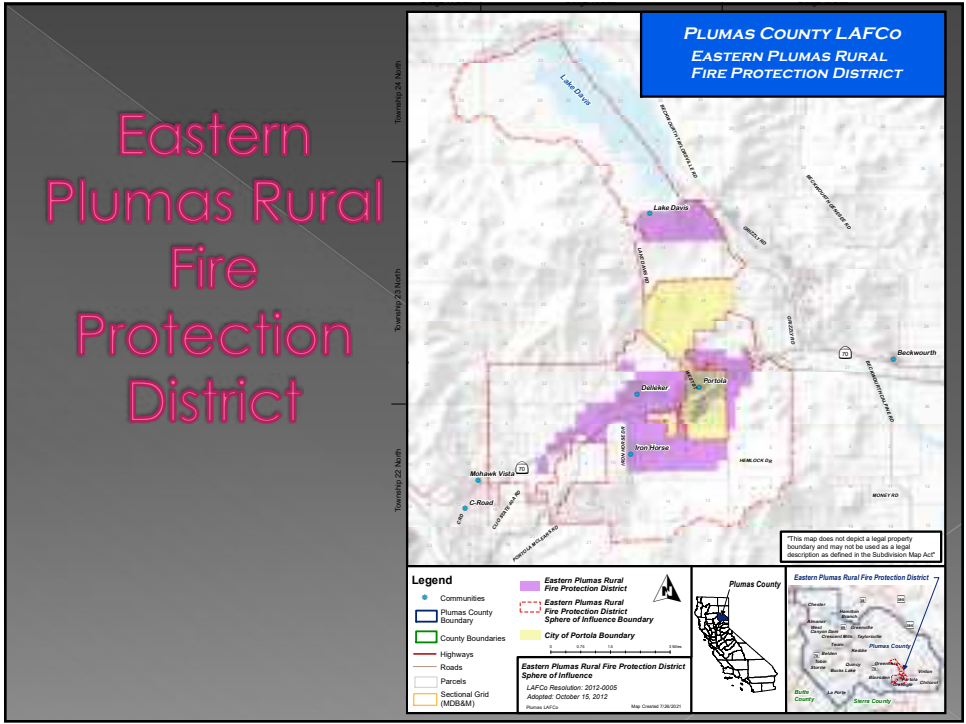


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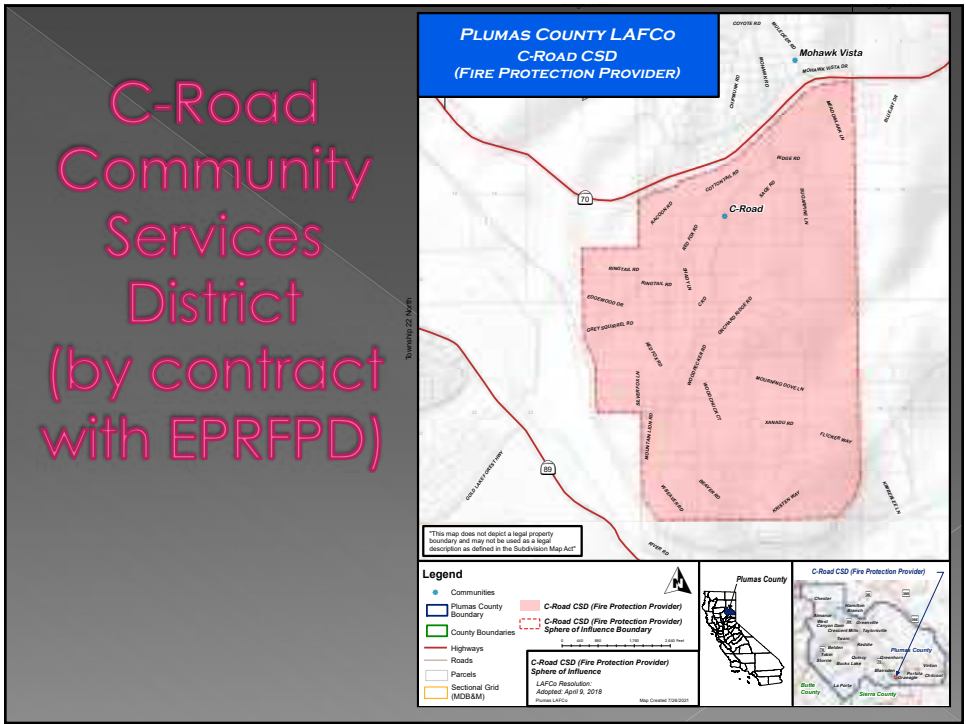
Beckwourth Fire Protection District Significant Findings

- While financing levels are adequate, there is a shortfall in the capital and repair and replacement programs.
- Continues to pursue and lead efforts for other funding mechanisms.
- Identified need for improved dispatch protocols.
- Portola reports that it is satisfied with the contract services provided.
- Need for accurate tracking of response times for all incidents.

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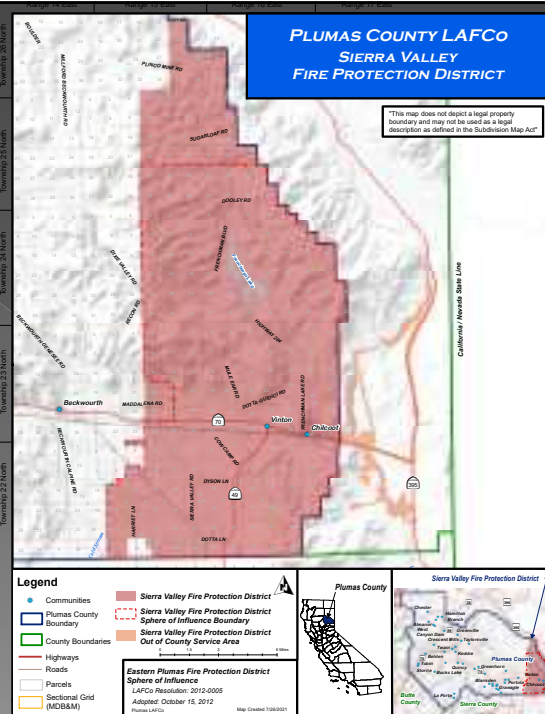
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Gold Mountain CSD Significant Findings

- While the District has faced financial difficulties, and anticipates underfunded infrastructure needs, it has conducted solid financial planning and initiated a cost of service rate study.
- Contractor did not meet several contractual obligations in 2021.
- The primary infrastructure constraint is a lack of sufficient fire flow through the District's pressurized water system.
- Assessed several governance alternatives for fire services over the last 10 years.

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Sierra Valley Fire Protection District



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Sierra Valley FPD Significant Findings

- Most expansive service area of the agencies.
- Severely financially constrained relying on property taxes and donations.
- Several unfunded capital improvement and apparatus needs.
- Staffing levels continue to decline requiring constant recruiting efforts.
- Provides services to Hallelujah Junction FPD in Lassen County.

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Fire and EMS Service Challenges

- Irregular boundaries
- Serving outside of boundaries without revenue
- Lack of sufficient funding with increased costs
- Meeting expanding standards and requirements
- Disjointed services with lack of consistency
- Duplication of services (i.e., administration)
- Divided voices limiting influence
- Lack of regional planning
- Reliance almost entirely on volunteers with declining volunteerism
- Larger and more frequent wildfires

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Governance Structure Options

- Status quo or other contract services
- Joint powers authority/agreement for some or all services
- Annexation/dissolution
- Full consolidation
- Formation of a new regional fire district

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Benefits to Reorganization

- Centralized fire planning and provision
- Better leveraging of resources
- Consistency in policies and practices
- Cost savings/efficiencies – elimination of duplications
- Improved training standards, performance, and incident oversight

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Challenges to Reorganization

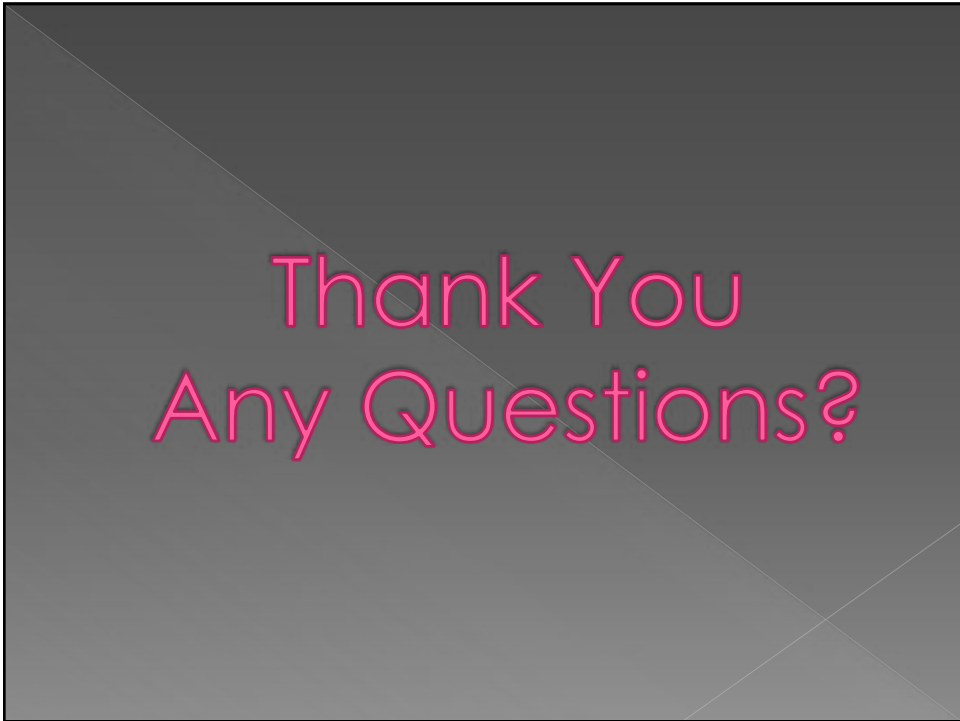
- ◉ Financial differences
- ◉ Ensuring sufficient funding for enhanced services
- ◉ Choosing a successor agency (if consolidation is chosen)
- ◉ Consensus on staffing structure/organization

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Next Steps

- ❖ Feasibility study is ongoing
- ❖ SOI update will be necessary prior to consideration of application
- ❖ Will require all stakeholder agencies to adopt similar resolutions
- ❖ Application to LAFCo
- ❖ Consideration by LAFCo
- ❖ Election

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EASTERN PLUMAS FIRE MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT

September 19, 2022

Prepared for the
Plumas Local Agency Formation Commission
by Policy Consulting Associates, LLC.

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ACRONYMS

ADWF:	Average dry weather flow
af:	Acre-feet
afa:	Acre-feet per annum
BLS:	Basic Life Support
BOD:	Biological oxygen demands
BOE	California Board of Equalization
CAL FIRE:	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
ccf:	Hundreds of cubic feet
CC&R	Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions
CEO:	Chief Executive Officer
CEQA:	California Environmental Quality Act
cfs:	Cubic feet per second
CHP:	California Highway Patrol
CIWMB:	California Integrated Waste Management Board
CIP:	Capital improvement plan
CSA:	County Service Area
CSD:	Community Services District
CSDA:	California Special District Association
CY:	Calendar year
DFG:	California Department of Fish and Game
DME:	Durable Medical Equipment
DOF:	California Department of Finance
DPH:	California Department of Public Health
DWR:	California Department of Water Resources
EMS:	Emergency Medical Services
EMT:	Emergency Medical Technician
EPA:	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
ERAF:	Educational Revenue Augmentation Fund
FDAC-FASIS:	Fire District Association of California- Fire Agency Self-Insurance System
FEERAM:	Fire Engine Equipment Replacement and Maintenance
FEMA:	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FD:	Fire District
FF:	Firefighter
FPD:	Fire Protection District
FRA:	Federal Responsibility Area
FTE:	Full-Time Equivalent
FY:	Fiscal year
GIS:	Geographic Information Systems
GM:	General Manger
gpd:	Gallons per day
gpm:	Gallons per minute
GP:	General Plan
I/I:	Infiltration and inflow
ISO:	Insurance Services Organization

IRWMP:	Integrated Regional Water Management Plan
JHA:	Jurisdiction having authority
JPA:	Joint Powers Authority
LAFCo:	Local Agency Formation Commission
LEMSA:	Local Emergency Medical Service Agency
LRA:	Local responsibility area
MCL:	Maximum Contaminant Level
mg:	Millions of gallons
mgd:	Millions of gallons per day
MSR:	Municipal services review
MS4:	Municipal separate storm sewer systems
NA:	Not applicable
NFPA:	National Fire Protection Association
NP:	Not provided
NPDES:	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
OASA:	Out-of-Area Service Agreement
OES:	Office of Emergency Services
OIT:	Operator in training
OPR:	Governor's Office of Planning and Research
PSAP:	Public Safety Answering Point
PWWF:	Peak wet weather flow
RWQCB:	Regional Water Quality Control Board
SCADA:	Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition
SDMRA:	Special District Risk Management Authority
SDWA:	Safe Drinking Water Act
SOI:	Sphere of influence
SSMP:	Sewer System Management Plan
SSO:	Sewer System Overflow
SWP:	State Water Project
SR:	State Route
SRA:	State Responsibility Area
SWRCB:	State Water Resources Control Board
TDS:	Total dissolvable solids
TMDL:	Total maximum daily load
TSS:	Total suspended solids
USDA:	United States Department of Agriculture
USFS:	United States Forest Service
UWMP:	Urban Water Management Plan
WWTP:	Wastewater treatment plant
WTP:	Water treatment plant

PREFACE

Prepared for the Plumas Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo), this report is a regional service specific municipal services review—a State-required comprehensive study of certain municipal services within a designated geographic area. This MSR focuses on local agencies in the eastern region of Plumas County that provide fire protection services. Some of the districts reviewed here are multi-service districts and provide some services in addition to fire services, including water, wastewater, parks and recreation, and street lighting services. These additional services will be covered where appropriate in each agency’s upcoming MSR.

CONTEXT

Plumas LAFCo is required to prepare this MSR by the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000 (Government Code §56000, et seq.), which took effect on January 1, 2001. The MSR reviews services provided by public agencies whose boundaries and governance are subject to LAFCo. Those agencies providing fire services in the eastern region of Plumas County are the focus of this review.

CREDITS

The authors extend their appreciation to those individuals at many agencies that provided planning and financial information and documents used in this report. Representatives at each of the agencies put in substantial effort and time updating the data and information from the previous Eastern Plumas Regional MSR (2010). They provided a substantial portion of the information included in this document. Each local agency provided budgets, financial statements, various plans, and comprehensively provided updated information.

Plumas LAFCo Executive Officer, Jennifer Stephenson, provided project direction and review. Dennis Miller prepared maps and provided GIS analysis. This report was prepared by Policy Consulting Associates, LLC, and was authored by Jennifer Stephenson with substantial support from the respective agencies.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is a Municipal Service Review (MSR) report on fire services provided in Eastern Plumas County prepared for the Plumas Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo). An MSR is a State-required comprehensive study of services within a designated geographic area, in this case, Eastern Plumas County. The MSR requirement is codified in the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000 (Government Code §56000 et seq.). After MSR findings are adopted, the Commission will begin the process of updating the spheres of influence (SOIs) of the agencies covered in this report.

SERVICE PROVIDERS

This report focuses on fire service providers in Eastern Plumas County. Five agencies were reviewed as part of this Municipal Service Review consisting of the following:

- ❖ City of Portola
- ❖ Beckwourth Fire Protection District (FPD)
- ❖ Eastern Plumas Rural Fire Protection District
- ❖ Gold Mountain Community Services District (CSD)
- ❖ Sierra Valley Fire Protection District

In total, there are 20 fire protection providers in Plumas County. Two of the agencies reviewed during this cycle provide multiple services—City of Portola and Gold Mountain Community Services District (CSD). Other services provided are water, wastewater, park and recreation, and road maintenance. While other services are mentioned, the focus of this review is fire protection and EMS services.

SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

Following the adoption of the MSR, LAFCo will update the Sphere of Influence (SOI) for each agency. The existing SOI for each agency covered in this MSR is shown in Figure 1-1. A coterminous SOI is the same as the agency’s bounds. An annexable SOI means that the SOI extends beyond the district’s bounds where LAFCo previously anticipated annexations may occur. A detachable SOI is smaller than the agency’s bounds, meaning the territory extending outside the SOI is anticipated to be detached at some point.

Figure 1-1: Existing Sphere of Influences

Agency	Boundary Area (square miles)	SOI Area (square miles)	SOI Description
City of Portola	5.5	10	Annexable
Beckwourth Fire Protection District	14	190	Annexable
Eastern Plumas Rural Fire Protection District	8	22.5	Annexable
Gold Mounity Community Services District	2	2	Coterminous
Sierra Valley Fire Protection District	220	191	Detachable

GROWTH

Over the last 10 years, the County has experienced overall negative growth of 5.8 percent, as a result of a decline in available jobs and migration to more urban areas. This slow/negative growth and unstable economy pose a challenge for agencies to adequately plan for future needs and anticipate demand.

Projections for future growth made by the California Department of Finance conservatively anticipate negative population growth over the next two decades of -0.27 percent average annual growth.

There are several constraints to growth that are identified in this report, including the lack of a designated fire provider in several areas and a heavy reliance on volunteer personnel.

PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

There are several areas of planning and management practices where providers could make improvements. Specifically, there is a general lack of tracking of demand and other service indicators, which inform remaining capacity and level of services, in particular for fire services. A majority of the fire agencies do not track their response times for each incident. Response times are the primary indicator of an agency's ability to provide emergency services, and as such, each of the fire agencies should make efforts to track their response times and analyze the results to identify where improvements can be made.

Pre-planning for future capital improvement needs is considered a best management practice, which is recommended for all public agencies regardless of size. All of the agencies reviewed here either entirely lacked a capital improvement plan (CIP) or the plans were lacking in some manner. CIPs can be tailored to the needs of the agency but should include a list of anticipated replacement and improvement needs with an anticipated timeline for completion and a financial plan for achieving those goals. It is recommended that a CIP have a planning horizon of at least five years and be updated annually to reflect current conditions. An adequate CIP can minimize deferred maintenance, ensure that rates are set to cover anticipated costs, and curtail the need for indebtedness.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Of the five agencies reviewed, four maintain websites where documents and information are made available to the public— City of Portola, Beckwourth FPD, Eastern Plumas Rural FPD, and Gold Mountain CSD. It is a recommended practice and legally required that public agencies maintain a website where all district information is readily available to constituents.

Generally, the districts in the region face a lack of public interest in district activities as demonstrated by little to no attendance at board meetings, vacancies on boards, and a lack of contested elections. Many boards face challenges in maintaining a full governing body and are plagued with fairly high turnover and frequent vacancies. This struggle is amplified in areas with very low populations. Generally, the fire districts have been challenged in maintaining full and legally-seated governing bodies. Over the last decade, the districts have failed to appropriately renew terms for already seated members, have appointed board

members that do not meet the legal requirements to sit on the board, and have failed to inform the County Clerk regarding any changes to their board members. At present, it appears that the agencies reviewed have corrected any such errors in their governing body composition.

Overall, all agencies reviewed demonstrated accountability by performing outreach activities beyond what is required and having a system in place to address customers' complaints. In addition, all five agencies cooperated with Plums LAFCo's municipal service review process and requests for information.

SERVICE CHALLENGES

All fire protection and EMS providers in the region have identified significant challenges to providing adequate service levels, thus the impetus to analyzing alternate services structures at a regional level. Challenges to service include, but are not limited to, the following:

- ❖ Irregular boundaries,
- ❖ Serving outside of boundaries without revenue,
- ❖ Lack of sufficient funding with increased costs,
- ❖ Meeting expanding standards and requirements,
- ❖ Disjointed services with lack of consistency,
- ❖ Duplication of services (i.e., administration),
- ❖ Divided voices limiting influence,
- ❖ Lack of regional planning,
- ❖ Reliance almost entirely on volunteers with declining volunteerism, and
- ❖ Larger and more frequent wildfires.

While not all territory within the County has a designated local fire protection provider, all territory within the County has a determined first responder for dispatch and response as staffing resources allow. These fire agencies have agreed to respond outside of their LAFCo-approved boundary to provide fire and medical emergency response when an incident is not within the purview of the U.S. Forest Service. Providers do not receive compensation for these responses outside of their bounds unless the agency has a fee system in place to charge the caller for the response.

Each of the fire service providers reviewed here has a service area larger than its boundaries. Agencies have had little success in charging for services provided outside of boundaries. Consequently, the providers only charge when responding to fires in State Responsibility Areas or Federal Responsibility Areas.

It is recommended that these areas be annexed or included in any fire reorganization option considered by the agencies. To encourage annexation and thus countywide fire service coverage, the County should adopt a master tax sharing agreement with fire districts. Currently, when a fire district annexes territory the tax sharing agreement is negotiated on a case-by-case basis. A master tax sharing agreement would promote efficiency by

eliminating the need for multiple negotiations. In addition, it would encourage annexation of unserved areas, as the agreement would provide certainty in the process and the shared tax amount.

A majority of the agencies reviewed reported that financing was a challenge to providing effective fire and emergency medical services. People are moving out of the County in search of jobs and most planned or proposed developments are on hold. In an effort to cut or minimize costs many agencies are deferring any significant capital purchases or improvements. Financing constraints are occurring the face of ever-expanding requirements and costs. Most recently, gas prices have been at an all-time high and inflation has reached rates not seen since 1979, which impacts the cost to provide all services, including fire services.

Irregular boundaries and the number of fire providers in a small area, contribute to challenges in coordination, consistency in training and response, and planning. Consequently, the region, and the County is plagued by disjointed local fire services. This structure also lends itself to duplication of efforts and expenses. For example, each of the fire districts maintains staff for administrative purposes.

This lack of coordination and collaboration limits the agencies' ability to plan at a regional level and leverage resources and influence, particularly with regard to grant writing and contract negotiations.

Overall, many agencies demonstrated a heavy reliance on volunteers, which allows them to provide services at a minimal cost. The fire departments are comprised largely of volunteer firefighters, most of them with minimal or no paid staff. There are several challenges to relying heavily on volunteers to provide services, including 1) heavy volunteerism among board members can lead to burn out or a lack of interest in serving on the board, which may lead to heavy turnover rates among board members, 2) should long-term volunteers choose to stop offering their time, the agencies will need to find a means to cover the additional expenditures to pay competitive prices to personnel, 3) fire departments are struggling to find dependable volunteer firefighters and retain them long enough to capitalize on the time intensive training. Due to a struggling economy, volunteerism is on the decline as people leave the County or are working more at paid jobs.

Finally, last year with the Dixie Fire, Plumas County felt the severe impact of the recent trend of larger and more frequent wildfires. Along the west coast, in recent years, dryer summers have led to more catastrophic wildfires that are some of the largest experienced modern history. These wildfires require well-organized, well-equipped, and reliable fire protection to prevent, combat, and contain.

GOVERNANCE OPTIONS

Over the course of this MSR and many discussions with regional fire providers, the challenge above were discussed and provided an impetus to discussions of reorganization to best address these issues and better serve the residents of eastern Plumas. Governance options identified included the following:

- ❖ Service structure to remain as is or status quo, with the possibility of changes in contract services,

- ❖ Formation of a joint powers authority for some or all fire-related services,
- ❖ Annexation of the territory within one or many fire providers by another fire provider, and the subsequent dissolution of those annexed districts, or divestiture of fire protection powers by the City or CSD, ultimately forming a single fire agency,
- ❖ Full consolidation of all fire providers, essentially forming a new district with the combined existing boundaries of all of the agencies,
- ❖ Formation of a new regional fire protection district with boundaries defined by the applicant.

In response to the options presented, the affected agencies, consisting of the City of Portola, Beckwourth FPD, Eastern Plumas Rural FPD, Gold Mountain CSD, and Sierra Valley FPD designed a memorandum of understanding to form the Local Emergency Services Study Group (LESSG). The LESSG is a framework for cooperative and collaborative action to explore ways to strengthen and improve the provision of fire and emergency services throughout the Five Agencies' service areas. In October of 2020, following ten months of meetings with numerous stakeholders, the decision of the Five Agencies was unanimous to create a new single fire district that will provide fire and emergency medical response services, thus dissolving the existing Districts or relinquishing their fire and EMS authority, as the most effective, efficient, and economical choice available. As of October 2021, EPRFPD's Board chose to remove the District from participation in the feasibility study. The feasibility study was conducted by independent contractors and ultimately determined that formation of a new fire district is a practical and affordable solution to many of the challenges faced by fire providers in the region.

2. LAFCo AND MUNICIPAL SERVICES REVIEWS

This report is prepared pursuant to legislation enacted in 2000 that requires LAFCo to conduct a comprehensive review of municipal service delivery and update the spheres of influence (SOIs) of all agencies under LAFCo's jurisdiction. This chapter provides an overview of LAFCo's history, powers and responsibilities. It discusses the origins and legal requirements for preparation of the municipal services review (MSR). Finally, the chapter reviews the process for MSR review, MSR approval and SOI updates.

LAFCo OVERVIEW

After World War II, California experienced dramatic growth in population and economic development. With this boom came a demand for housing, jobs and public services. To accommodate this demand, many new local government agencies were formed, often with little forethought as to the ultimate governance structures in a given region, and existing agencies often competed for expansion areas. The lack of coordination and adequate planning led to a multitude of overlapping, inefficient jurisdictional and service boundaries, and the premature conversion of California's agricultural and open-space lands.

Recognizing this problem, in 1959, Governor Edmund G. Brown, Sr. appointed the Commission on Metropolitan Area Problems. The Commission's charge was to study and make recommendations on the "misuse of land resources" and the growing complexity of local governmental jurisdictions. The Commission's recommendations on local governmental reorganization were introduced in the Legislature in 1963, resulting in the creation of a Local Agency Formation Commission, or "LAFCo," operating in every county.

Plumas LAFCo was first staffed by the County Planning Department, which undertook the first Spheres of Influence in 1974. The Department had more pressing priorities and as a result LAFCo was maintained at a minimally acceptable level for the time.

LAFCo was formed by the Legislature as a countywide agency to discourage urban sprawl and encourage the orderly formation and development of local government agencies. LAFCo is responsible for coordinating logical and timely changes in local governmental boundaries, including annexations and detachments of territory, incorporations of cities, formations of special districts, and consolidations, mergers and dissolutions of districts, as well as reviewing ways to reorganize, simplify, and streamline governmental structure. The Commission's efforts are focused on ensuring that services are provided efficiently and economically while agricultural and open-space lands are protected. To better inform itself and the community as it seeks to exercise its charge, LAFCo conducts service reviews to evaluate the provision of municipal services within the County.

LAFCo regulates, through approval, denial, conditions and modification, boundary changes proposed by public agencies or individuals. It also regulates the extension of public services by cities and special districts outside their jurisdictional boundaries. LAFCo is empowered to initiate updates to the SOIs and proposals involving the dissolution or consolidation of special districts, mergers, establishment of subsidiary districts, and any

reorganization including such actions. Otherwise, LAFCo actions must originate as petitions or resolutions from affected voters, landowners, cities or districts.

Plumas LAFCo consists of five regular members: two members from the Plumas County Board of Supervisors, two city council members, and one public member who is appointed by the other members of the Commission. There is an alternate in each category. All Commissioners are appointed to four-year terms. Any member appointed on behalf of local government shall represent the interests of the public as a whole and not solely the interest of the appointing authority Government Code Section 56325.1

Figure 2-1: Commission Members, 2022

Appointing Agency	Members	Alternate Members
Two members from the Board of Supervisors appointed by the Board of Supervisors.	Kevin Goss Sharon Thrall	Jeff Engel
Two members representing the cities in the County. Must be city officer and appointed by the City Selection Committee.	Tom Cooley Bill Powers	Pat Morton
One member from the general public appointed by the other four commissioners.	Matthew Haesche	Terrell Swofford

MUNICIPAL SERVICES REVIEW ORIGINS

The MSR requirement was enacted by the Legislature months after the release of two studies recommending that LAFCOs conduct reviews of local agencies. The “Little Hoover Commission” focused on the need for oversight and consolidation of special districts, whereas the “Commission on Local Governance for the 21st Century” focused on the need for regional planning to ensure adequate and efficient local governmental services as the California population continues to grow.

Little Hoover Commission

In May 2000, the Little Hoover Commission released a report entitled *Special Districts: Relics of the Past or Resources for the Future?* This report focused on governance and financial challenges among special districts, and the barriers to LAFCo’s pursuit of district consolidation and dissolution. The report raised the concern that “the underlying patchwork of special district governments has become unnecessarily redundant, inefficient and unaccountable.”

In particular, the report raised concern about a lack of visibility and accountability among some independent special districts. The report indicated that many special districts hold excessive reserve funds and some receive questionable property tax revenue. The report

expressed concern about the lack of financial oversight of the districts. It asserted that financial reporting by special districts is inadequate, that districts are not required to submit financial information to local elected officials, and concluded that district financial information is “largely meaningless as a tool to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of services provided by districts, or to make comparisons with neighboring districts or services provided through a city or county.”¹

The report questioned the accountability and relevance of certain special districts with uncontested elections and without adequate notice of public meetings. In addition to concerns about the accountability and visibility of special districts, the report raised concerns about special districts with outdated boundaries and outdated missions. The report questioned the public benefit provided by healthcare districts that have sold, leased or closed their hospitals, and asserted that LAFCOs consistently fail to examine whether they should be eliminated. The report pointed to service improvements and cost reductions associated with special district consolidations, but asserted that LAFCOs have generally failed to pursue special district reorganizations.

The report called on the Legislature to increase the oversight of special districts by mandating that LAFCOs identify service duplications and study reorganization alternatives when service duplications are identified, when a district appears insolvent, when district reserves are excessive, when rate inequities surface, when a district’s mission changes, when a new city incorporates and when service levels are unsatisfactory. To accomplish this, the report recommended that the State strengthen the independence and funding of LAFCOs, require districts to report to their respective LAFCOs, and require LAFCOs to study service duplications.

Commission on Local Governance for the 21st Century

The Legislature formed the Commission on Local Governance for the 21st Century (“21st Century Commission”) in 1997 to review statutes on the policies, criteria, procedures and precedents for city, county and special district boundary changes. After conducting extensive research and holding 25 days of public hearings throughout the State at which it heard from over 160 organizations and individuals, the 21st Century Commission released its final report, *Growth Within Bounds: Planning California Governance for the 21st Century*, in January 2000.² The report examines the way that government is organized and operates, and establishes a vision of how the State will grow by “making better use of the often invisible LAFCOs in each county.”

The report points to the expectation that California’s population will double over the first four decades of the 21st Century, and raises concern that our government institutions were designed when our population was much smaller and our society was less complex. The report warns that without a strategy open spaces will be swallowed up, expensive freeway extensions will be needed, job centers will become farther removed from housing, and this will lead to longer commutes, increased pollution and more stressful lives. Growth Within

¹ Little Hoover Commission, 2000, page 24.

² The Commission on Local Governance for the 21st Century ceased to exist on July 1, 2000, pursuant to a statutory sunset provision.

Bounds acknowledges that local governments face unprecedented challenges in their ability to finance service delivery since voters cut property tax revenues in 1978 and the Legislature shifted property tax revenues from local government to schools in 1993. The report asserts that these financial strains have created governmental entrepreneurialism in which agencies compete for sales tax revenue and market share.

The 21st Century Commission recommended that effective, efficient and easily understandable government be encouraged. In accomplishing this, the 21st Century Commission recommended consolidation of small, inefficient or overlapping providers, transparency of municipal service delivery to the people, and accountability of municipal service providers. The sheer number of special districts, the report asserts, “has provoked controversy, including several legislative attempts to initiate district consolidations,”³ but cautions LAFCOs that decisions to consolidate districts should focus on the adequacy of services, not on the number of districts.

Growth Within Bounds stated that LAFCOs cannot achieve their fundamental purposes without a comprehensive knowledge of the services available within its county, the current efficiency of providing service within various areas of the county, future needs for each service, and expansion capacity of each service provider. Comprehensive knowledge of water and sanitary providers, the report argued, would promote consolidations of water and sanitary districts, reduce water costs and promote a more comprehensive approach to the use of water resources. Further, the report asserted that many LAFCOs lack such knowledge and should be required to conduct such a review to ensure that municipal services are logically extended to meet California’s future growth and development.

MSRs would require LAFCOs to look broadly at all agencies within a geographic region that provide a particular municipal service and to examine consolidation or reorganization of service providers. The 21st Century Commission recommended that the review include water, wastewater, and other municipal services that LAFCo judges to be important to future growth. The Commission recommended that the service review be followed by consolidation studies and be performed in conjunction with updates of SOIs. The recommendation was that service reviews be designed to make nine determinations, each of which was incorporated verbatim in the subsequently adopted legislation. The Legislature since consolidated the determinations into six, and most recently seven required findings.

MUNICIPAL SERVICES REVIEW LEGISLATION

The Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000 requires LAFCo review and update SOIs not less than every five years and to review municipal services before updating SOIs. The requirement for service reviews arises from the identified need for a more coordinated and efficient public service structure to support California’s anticipated growth. The service review provides LAFCo with a tool to study existing and future public service conditions comprehensively and to evaluate organizational options for accommodating growth, preventing urban sprawl, and ensuring that critical services are provided efficiently.

³ Commission on Local Governance for the 21st Century, 2000, page 70.

Effective January 1, 2008, Government Code §56430 requires LAFCo to conduct a review of municipal services provided in the county by region, sub-region or other designated geographic area, as appropriate, for the service or services to be reviewed, and prepare a written statement of determination with respect to each of the following topics:

- ❖ Growth and population projections for the affected area;
- ❖ Present and planned capacity of public facilities and adequacy of public services, including infrastructure needs or deficiencies;
- ❖ Financial ability of agencies to provide services;
- ❖ Status of, and opportunities for shared facilities;
- ❖ Accountability for community service needs, including governmental structure and operational efficiencies; and
- ❖ Any other matter related to effective or efficient service delivery, as required by commission policy.

As of July 1st, 2012, SB 244 signed by the governor on October 7, 2011 requires an additional written statement of determination to be included in a municipal service review regarding:

- ❖ The location and characteristics of disadvantaged unincorporated communities within or contiguous to the agency's SOI.

In addition, for those agencies that provide water wastewater and/or structural fire protection the new law mandates the determination on the present and planned capacity of public facilities, adequacy of public services and infrastructure needs or deficiencies to include needs or deficiencies related to sewers, municipal and industrial water, and structural fire protection in any disadvantaged unincorporated community within or contiguous to the sphere of influence.

MUNICIPAL SERVICES REVIEW PROCESS

For local agencies, the MSR process involves the following steps:

- ❖ Outreach: LAFCo outreach and explanation of the project
- ❖ Data Discovery: provide documents and respond to LAFCo questions
- ❖ Map Review: review and comment on LAFCo draft map of the agency's boundary and sphere of influence
- ❖ Profile Review: internal review and comment on LAFCo draft profile of the agency
- ❖ Public Review Draft MSR: review and comment on LAFCo draft MSR
- ❖ LAFCo Hearing: attend and provide public comments on MSR

MSRs are exempt from California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to §15262 (feasibility or planning studies) or §15306 (information collection) of the CEQA Guidelines. LAFCo's actions to adopt MSR determinations are not considered "projects" subject to CEQA.

The MSR process does not require LAFCo to initiate changes of organization based on service review findings, only that LAFCo identify potential government structure options.

However, LAFCo, other local agencies, and the public may subsequently use the determinations to analyze prospective changes of organization or reorganization or to establish or amend SOIs. Within its legal authorization, LAFCo may act with respect to a recommended change of organization or reorganization on its own initiative (e.g., certain types of consolidations), or in response to a proposal (i.e., initiated by resolution or petition by landowners or registered voters).

Once LAFCo has adopted the MSR determinations, it must update the SOIs for the agencies reviewed here. The LAFCo Commission determines and adopts the spheres of influence for each agency. A CEQA determination is made by LAFCo on a case-by-case basis for each sphere of influence action and each change of organization, once the proposed project characteristics are sufficiently identified to assess environmental impacts.

SPHERE OF INFLUENCE UPDATES

The Commission is charged with developing and updating the Sphere of Influence (SOI) for each city and special district within the county.⁴

An SOI is a LAFCo-approved plan that designates an agency's probable future boundary and service area. Spheres are planning tools used to provide guidance for individual boundary change proposals and are intended to encourage efficient provision of organized community services and prevent duplication of service delivery. Territory cannot be annexed by LAFCo to a city or district unless it is within that agency's sphere.

The purposes of the SOI include the following: to ensure the efficient provision of services, discourage urban sprawl and premature conversion of agricultural and open space lands, and prevent overlapping jurisdictions and duplication of services.

LAFCo cannot directly regulate land use, dictate internal operations or administration of any local agency, or set rates. LAFCo is empowered to enact policies that indirectly affect land use decisions. On a regional level, LAFCo promotes logical and orderly development of communities as it considers and decides individual proposals. LAFCo has a role in reconciling differences between agency plans so that the most efficient urban service arrangements are created for the benefit of current and future area residents and property owners.

The Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg (CKH) Act requires to develop and determine the SOI of each local governmental agency within the county and to review and update the SOI every five years. LAFCos are empowered to adopt, update and amend the SOI. They may do so with or without an application and any interested person may submit an application proposing an SOI amendment.

While SOIs are required to be updated every five years, as necessary, this does not necessarily define the planning horizon of the SOI. The term or horizon of the SOI is determined by each LAFCo. In the case of Plumas LAFCo, the Commission's policies state that an agency's near term SOI shall generally include land that is anticipated to be annexed within the next five years, while the agency's long-term SOI shall include land that is within

⁴ The initial statutory mandate, in 1971, imposed no deadline for completing sphere designations. When most LAFCos failed to act, 1984 legislation required all LAFCos to establish spheres of influence by 1985.

the probable growth boundary of an agency and therefore anticipated to be annexed in the next 20 years.

LAFCo may recommend government reorganizations to particular agencies in the county, using the SOIs as the basis for those recommendations.

In determining the SOI, LAFCo is required to complete an MSR and adopt the six determinations previously discussed.

In addition, in adopting or amending an SOI, LAFCo must make the following determinations:

- ❖ Present and planned land uses in the area, including agricultural and open-space lands;
- ❖ Present and probable need for public facilities and services in the area;
- ❖ Present capacity of public facilities and adequacy of public service that the agency provides or is authorized to provide;
- ❖ Existence of any social or economic communities of interest in the area if the Commission determines these are relevant to the agency; and
- ❖ Present and probable need for public facilities and services of any disadvantaged unincorporated communities within the existing Sphere of Influence for those agencies that provide water, wastewater and/or structural fire protection.

The CKH Act stipulates several procedural requirements in updating SOIs. It requires that special districts file written statements on the class of services provided and that LAFCo clearly establish the location, nature and extent of services provided by special districts.

By statute, LAFCo must notify affected agencies 21 days before holding the public hearing to consider the SOI and may not update the SOI until after that hearing. The LAFCo Executive Officer must issue a report including recommendations on the SOI amendments and updates under consideration at least five days before the public hearing.

DISADVANTAGED UNINCORPORATED COMMUNITIES

LAFCo is required to evaluate disadvantaged unincorporated communities as part of this service review, including the location and characteristics of any such communities.

Senate Bill (SB) 244 (Wolk) was adopted into law in 2011 and took effect on January 1, 2012. Now codified as Government Code §56425(e)5, its purpose is to begin to address the complex legal, financial, and political barriers that contribute to regional inequity and infrastructure deficits within disadvantaged unincorporated communities (DUCs). Identifying and including these communities in the long-range planning of a city or a special district which provides water, wastewater or fire protection services, is required by Government Codes §56425(e)5.

Government Code §56033.5 defines a DUC as 1) all or a portion of a “disadvantaged community” as defined by §79505.5 of the Water Code, and as 2) “inhabited territory” (12 or more registered voters), as defined by §56046, or as determined by Commission policy.

The Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act (CKH) requires LAFCo to make determinations regarding DUCs when considering a change of organization,

reorganization, SOI expansion, and when conducting Municipal Service Reviews. For any updates to an SOI of a local agency (city or special district) that provides public facilities or services related to sewer, municipal and industrial water, or structural fire protection, LAFCO shall consider and prepare written determinations regarding the present and planned capacity of public facilities and adequacy of public services, and infrastructure needs or deficiencies for any disadvantaged unincorporated community within or contiguous to the SOI of a city or special district providing sewers, municipal and industrial water, or structural fire protection.⁵

CKH prohibits LAFCO from approving an annexation to a city of any territory greater than 10 acres if a DUC is contiguous to the proposed annexation, unless an application to annex the DUC has been filed with LAFCO. An application to annex a contiguous DUC shall not be required if a prior application for annexation of the same DUC has been made in the preceding five years or if the Commission finds, based upon written evidence, that a majority of the registered voters within the affected territory are opposed to annexation.⁶

Based on American Community Survey 2016-2020 Census Tract information, the entirety of the study area and the boundaries within and immediately adjacent to each of the five reviewed fire providers is defined as disadvantaged. While the City of Portola is incorporated, the remainder of the territory meets the definition of a disadvantaged unincorporated community as defined in Water Code §79505.5. Census Tract 000300 encompasses the entirety of the service area and has a population of 4,484 comprising 2,051 households with a median income of \$48,238.

⁵ Government Codes §56425(e)5, Present and Probable need; disadvantaged unincorporated communities

⁶ (California Government Codes section 56375 (a) (8) (A)) (LAFCO GIS, 2020)

3. GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE OPTIONS

This chapter identifies and analyzes governance structure options for fire protection and EMS services in eastern Plumas County.

As part of this MSR, LAFCO is required to identify potential governmental structure options and operational efficiencies upon which the agencies may be able to capitalize. Amongst those options are reorganizations in multiple forms and other boundary or SOI changes to address some inconsistencies.

Over the course of this review several forms of collaboration and reorganization were recognized that may benefit the fire providers. Options include functional consolidation alternatives where fire providers consolidate a portion of the fire functions or full consolidation of two or more agencies. Examples of functional consolidation include 1) a joint powers authority between two or more agencies to conduct specific types of services (i.e., administration) or all functions and operations related to fire services, and 2) contracting for services from another provider. These options are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

BENEFITS OF CONSOLIDATION/REORGANIZATION

Generally, consolidation/reorganization of fire providers promotes efficiency, cost savings, and public safety. The primary benefit is economies of scale, which may be achieved in several areas. Larger fire providers can more efficiently coordinate deployment of fire personnel when multiple incidents occur simultaneously or large incidents occur, as they can automatically implement a move up in coverage to provide a better back up of engines and personnel. Reorganization may offer opportunities to share and/or reconfigure fire station locations and apparatus. This may apply to training facilities as well. Restructuring of staff could result in a more efficient fire service organization.

Newly reorganized districts reported observing cost savings from reduced management personnel and insurance costs.⁷ Other cost savings opportunities may be the closing of redundant stations and the elimination of surplus administrative staff. Combining resources may allow districts to sell surplus vehicles, reducing the overall age of fleet.

In addition to enhanced efficiency, cost savings, and public safety, the reorganization has the potential to bring about several unquantifiable improvements. A larger agency with dedicated administrative staff could also allow for more allocated time towards implementing best management practices, such as strategic plans, and improved accountability to the public through more dedicated time to address inquiries and public concerns, as well as conduct outreach efforts. Larger professionally run agencies have greater public visibility and invite greater public interest in their operations, as well as the potential for augmented funding sources. Furthermore, reorganization in any form would support regionalization of information gathering and sharing. As mentioned, the agencies

⁷ Marin LAFCO.

could benefit from standardization of response time gathering throughout the study area and sharing of this information, which would be a critical step in identifying potential efficiency enhancements.

According to multiple FEMA studies, a more regionalized fire protection agency increases coordination and unified leadership by eliminating the fragmentation of government. In areas of the United States with more fragmented government, economic decline and stagnation has been more prevalent. Fragmentation takes place when there is an absence of a single government with the ability to look out for what is best for the whole region.

Opportunities are created simply by the larger size of an organization. Reorganization would allow staff to respond in a larger geographical area such as the jurisdiction in which they work, in addition to where they live. This may be particularly beneficial where volunteer fire districts struggle to maintain daytime staffing because of local residents commuting for their jobs.

Reorganization of government entities makes them more socially and fiscally balanced by improved citizen participation, a more equitable distribution of taxes and services, and the potential for better economic development opportunities.

FUNCTIONAL CONSOLIDATION

Functional consolidation and other cooperative service agreements have the potential to improve the overall efficiency and effectiveness of emergency services, which can be achieved by a more efficient use of scarce resources and a reduction in equipment needs and duplicate efforts, and at the same time promote greater flexibility. Operational and political challenges can be overcome through functional consolidation. Boundary disputes can be minimized with the closest and most appropriate resources being dispatched. This will foster rational service response zones and the likelihood of faster response. A functional consolidation would allow each agency to retain its identity while at the same time combining resources or specialty assets.

A consolidation will likely require one or both organizations to relinquish their names. Consolidations can create animosity by and between firefighters, fire officers and elected officials. Although a long-term goal may well be a full consolidation, a functional consolidation may be better suited within fire agencies or as an initial step in the process. This arrangement may also allow each party the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of the relationship, while at the same time preventing any loss of autonomy and local control.

There are two basic types of agreements that fire providers can enter into that constitute functional consolidations—contracts and joint powers agreements. Contracts are used when jurisdictions agree to provide a service to another for a set fee. Joint agreements include the fire service standard of mutual aid as well as joint power agreements. A joint power agreement is a partial consolidation of functions among two or more jurisdictions. It can be further expanded to create a joint power authority agreement where a completely separate organization is established to provide a service on behalf of the participating jurisdictions.

Joint Powers Authority

Joint powers are exercised when the public officials of two or more agencies agree to create another legal entity or establish a joint approach to work on a common problem, fund a project, or act as a representative body for a specific activity.

A joint powers agreement is a formal legal agreement between two or more public agencies that share a common power and want to jointly implement programs, build facilities, or deliver services. Officials from those public agencies formally approve a cooperative arrangement. A joint powers agreement is like a confederation of governments that works together and shares resources for mutual support or common actions. The government agencies that participate in joint powers agreements are called member agencies. With a joint powers agreement, a member agency agrees to be responsible for delivering a service on behalf of the other member agencies. Each joint powers agreement is unique as there is no set formula for how governments should use their joint powers. One agency will administer the terms of the agreement, which may be a short-term, long-term, or perpetual service agreement.

A joint powers authority (JPA) is a new separate government organization created by the member agencies, but is legally independent from them. Like a joint powers agreement (in which an agency administers the terms of the agreement) a JPA shares powers common to the member agencies and those powers are outlined in the JPA agreement. Agencies create JPAs to deliver more cost-effective services, eliminate duplicative efforts, and consolidate services into a single agency.

A joint powers authority offers the advantages of a more ephemeral and potentially more limited consolidation (e.g., training), continued accountability and local control, and a potential structure to overcome inherent financial incompatibilities among the providers towards future consolidation.

Collaboration by the means of JPAs does not currently exist among the eastern Plumas County providers. As mentioned earlier, creation of a JPA would be a significant step towards full consolidation (if this is a goal) for both districts and fire departments.

Contracting for Services

Contracting for certain services from other agencies offers an opportunity to test a service structure prior to committing to full reorganization and may also offer cost efficiencies depending on the structure and participating agencies. Contracts for services are a way to build closer ties between agencies. At present, the agencies review already share resources through extensive contract service provision, with EPRFPD providing contract services to C-Road CSD and Gold Mountain CSD and Beckwourth FPD providing contract services to the City of Portola. This contract service structure has improved efficiency of services and prompted greater collaboration amongst the agencies at a regional level.

FORMATION OF A NEW FIRE DISTRICT

A governance option specific to the conditions in eastern Plumas is formation of a new fire protection district and dissolution or divestiture of fire powers by the multi-service agencies.

Formation of a new district would allow for the territory currently not within a fire district to be included upon formation, as opposed to attempting to address those areas through a series of multiple annexations. Thus, the new district could start fresh by creating new logical boundaries from the outset.

A new district would eliminate any former history or power struggles between existing agencies and ensure that there is no debate regarding which agency would be the successor, as would be the case in the annexation and dissolution scenario.

A new agency could address funding needs for an improved level of services with a new tax measure on the election ballot that includes all served properties.

Similar to consolidation and the annexation/dissolution options, formation of a new district would 1) better leverage resources, 2) improve consistency of policies and practices, and 3) ensure regional planning and implementation.

NEXT STEPS

There are five fire agencies (Beckwourth Fire Department (Beckwourth), City of Portola (City), Eastern Plumas Rural Fire Protection District (EPRFPD), Gold Mountain Community Services District (GMCSO), and Sierra Valley Fire Protection District (Sierra Valley), (collectively the Five Agencies)) facing similar issues in recruiting volunteers, financing, training, and administrative compliance. These concerns led to the execution of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) regarding the reorganization of fire and emergency services including the Five Agencies. The parties executed the MOU in January 2020. It created the Local Emergency Services Study Group (LESSG), a framework for cooperative and collaborative action to explore ways to strengthen and improve the provision of fire and emergency services throughout the Five Agencies' service areas.

In October of 2020, following ten (10) months of meetings with the Plumas Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo), CAL FIRE, Plumas National Forest Service, Plumas County officials, legal counsels, and the surrounding area fire departments, the LESSG along with the new Plumas County District 1 Supervisor Dwight Ceresola arrived at a consensus. The decision of the Five Agencies was unanimous to creating a new single fire district that will provide fire and emergency medical response services (New District), thus dissolving the existing Districts or relinquishing their fire and EMS authority, is the most effective, efficient, and economical choice available.

The City, on behalf of the LESSG, sought proposals from qualified professional consulting firms. The Five Agencies ultimately chose Planwest Partners, Inc. to conduct the feasibility study that determines if formation of a New District to replace the fire and emergency medical response services provided by the Five Agencies will improve services and related costs to the community. Prior to initiation of the feasibility study, EPRFPD's Board chose to remove the District from participation in the feasibility study.

The feasibility study was conducted and ultimately determined that formation of a New District is a practical and affordable solution to many of the challenges faced by fire providers in the region. The governing bodies of each of the member agencies will now be asked to confirm their intent to take part in the reorganization process, which will include the following general steps:

- 1) All agency Spheres of Influence will be updated prior to consideration of application to ensure consistency,
- 2) All affected agencies must adopt similar resolutions of application,
- 3) Application compiled and submitted to LAFCo,
- 4) Consideration by LAFCo at a public hearing, and
- 5) Election by registered voters to approve formation.

LAFCo has indicated support of these efforts by approving a reduced application cost of up to \$12,000 for the reorganization efforts.

4. CITY OF PORTOLA

The City of Portola provides general government services in the form of city administration, finance, building inspection, public works, and community development. In addition to these services, the City provides water treatment and distribution, wastewater collection and treatment, storm drainage, park and recreation, road maintenance and snow removal services. The City provides some services outside corporate boundaries, including water and wastewater, as detailed in the Extraterritorial Services section of this chapter. The City contracts with Plumas County for law enforcement and animal control services. City codes are enforced by a contract code enforcement officer. The City contracts with Beckwourth Fire Protection District for fire protection and Emergency Medical Services (EMS). Solid waste collection is provided by Intermountain Disposal by franchise agreement. The library is a branch of the Plumas County Library and is funded entirely by the County. Liberty Energy provides electric power to Portola by ordinance granting franchise. An MSR covering all services offered by the City was last completed in 2010. This MSR focuses solely on fire services offered by the City.

AGENCY OVERVIEW

Background

The City of Portola, incorporated on May 14, 1946, was formed as a general law city. It is the only incorporated city in Plumas County. Since that time, there have been two efforts to disincorporate the City; neither has had LAFCo approval.

The City is located along SR 70, west of the Sierra Valley, approximately 50 miles from Reno, Nevada. The City is surrounded by the Plumas National Forest, and lies east of the crest of the Sierra Nevada mountain range. The Middle Fork Feather River, the Union Pacific Railroad, and SR 70 run parallel through the valley and divide the City in distinctly separate north and south sectors.

Boundaries

The City's existing boundaries, including annexed, undeveloped areas cover an area of 5.5 square miles or 3,490 acres.⁸ As shown in Figure 1-2, the boundaries generally extend from the edge of the Portola Highlands (formerly known as Woodbridge at Portola) development to the south, including the Portola 192 development, then continuing north crossing the Feather River, Union Pacific rail lines along the western edge of the City, continuing north along Lake Davis Road, incorporating the Teanna Ranch annexation, then along Joy Way from Lake Davis Road to Meadow Way, continuing south through Riverwalk Park, crossing the Feather River and Union Pacific rail lines to the eastern edge of the Portola Highlands development. The proposed Portola 192 subdivision (Final Map approved) has been dubbed as such since it has 192 acres and will have approximately 200 equivalent dwelling units. The Teanna Ranch annexation is 2,028-acre area is undeveloped. It is

⁸ Total agency area calculated in GIS software based on agency boundaries as of July 1, 2011. The data is not considered survey quality.

presently under a Williamson Act contract and cannot be developed unless the Williamson Act contract is cancelled.

Plumas LAFCo records date back to 1966, and the State Board of Equalization (BOE) maintains records of officially recorded boundary changes since 1948. Over this time frame, LAFCo and BOE records indicate there have been 11 modifications to the City’s boundaries—all of which were annexations. Three of the annexations (Reed Territory, Dayton Property and Joy Property) were not recorded by the Board of Equalization, and therefore the City and LAFCo should work together to determine whether these annexations were satisfactorily completed and submitted for recording by the State and ensure that the City’s Tax Rate Area is consistent with BOE records. Refer to Figure 4-1 for list of the boundary changes.

Figure 4-1: City of Portola Boundary History

<i>Project Name</i>	<i>Type of Action</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Source</i>
Holsinger	Annexation	1979	LAFCo, BOE
Lake Davis Road	Annexation	1983	LAFCo, BOE
North Area, Lake Davis Road	Annexation	1984	LAFCo, BOE
Reed Territory	Annexation	1984	LAFCo
Joy Way	Annexation	1984	LAFCo, BOE
Francisco Territory	Annexation	1995	LAFCo, BOE
Portola 192	Annexation	1999	LAFCo, BOE
North Joy Way	Annexation	2003	LAFCo, BOE
Teanna Ranch	Annexation	2003	LAFCo, BOE
Dayton Property	Annexation	2007	LAFCo
Joy Property	Annexation	2008	LAFCo

Sphere of Influence

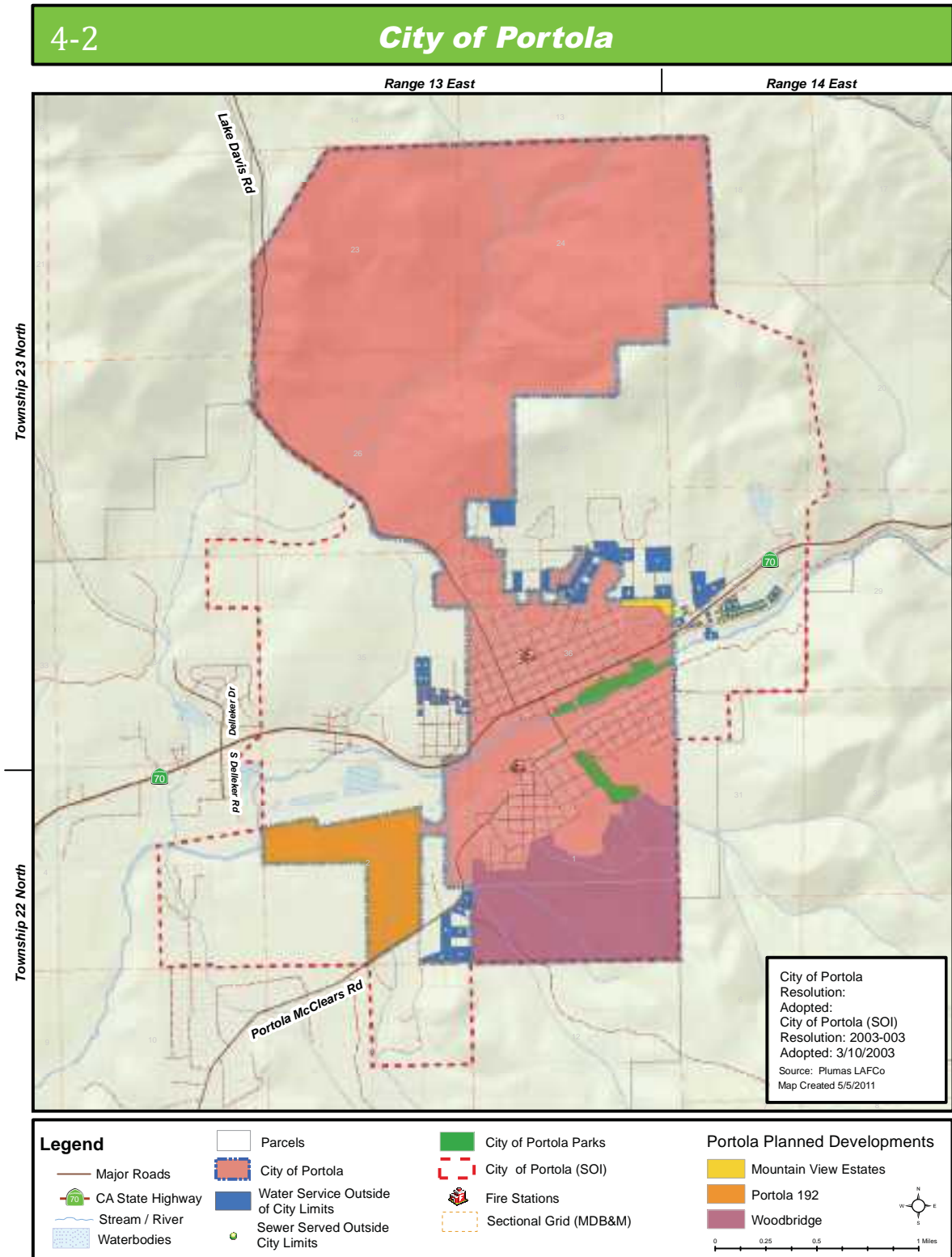
The City’s SOI is presently ten square miles or 6,438 acres, which is approximately twice the area within the City’s boundary. The SOI encompasses the City’s boundaries in their entirety and extends beyond the boundaries to the east and west.

The SOI was first adopted in 1982, amended in 2003, and reconfirmed in 2011.⁹ During the 2003 update, the SOI was amended by LAFCo to indicate the anticipated five-year annexable area of the City.¹⁰

⁹ LAFCo Resolution 2003-09.

¹⁰ Plumas LAFCo, City of Portola MSR 2003-2008, p. 3.

Figure 4-2: City of Portola Boundaries and SOI



Extraterritorial Services

While the City does not directly provide extra-territorial fire services, the City's contract fire service provider (BFPD) provides mutual and automatic aid response throughout the region.

Areas of Interest

The Portola Planning Commission has identified several areas outside of the city limits and SOI as areas of mutual interest for Portola and Plumas County. The communities include Lake Davis to the north, Grizzly Ranch to the east, Iron Horse and Gold Mountain to the south, and Delleker to the west. The City reports that these areas impact the City and City services, particularly related to fire, safety, traffic, aesthetics, and the environment.¹¹ The City contends that it may not be appropriate to include these areas within the City's SOI, but that some form of cooperative planning may be a valuable approach for areas with development potential at a city/county boundary. The City has produced a white paper regarding options for joint planning in these areas of mutual interest and the advantages and disadvantages of each.

The Portola and Plumas County Planning Commissions have discussed developing a joint planning area. In December 2010, the Portola Planning Commission was tasked with representing the areas in question on a map. As of the drafting of this report, Portola had not received feedback from the Plumas Planning Commission on the proposed joint planning areas. Plumas County is in the process of updating its General Plan. The County reported that a policy to promote joint planning will likely be incorporated into the General Plan Update; however, development of a joint planning area and process will be a long-term endeavor.¹² The County's General Plan 2035, adopted in 2013, includes Land Use Goal 1.3 "Coordinate with the City of Portola in land use planning and development within their sphere of influence and joint planning areas. Plan towards compatibility and coordination of land use designations." There are also four adopted policies to aid in working towards this goal, consisting of:

LU 1.3.1 Working with the City of Portola: The County shall work closely with the City of Portola concerning planning and development of land within the City's adopted sphere of influence. In addition to the City's sphere of influence there may be other areas under the County's jurisdiction that are of planning interest for the City.

LU 1.3.2 County and City of Portola's General Plan Consistency: While recognizing its own responsibilities and obligations, the County will cooperate, to the extent feasible, in the development and/or revision of the City of Portola's General Plan. The County may amend its General Plan within the City of Portola's sphere of influence to reflect said updates and/or revisions, unless there is a compelling land use conflict.

LU 1.3.3 Development and Design in the City of Portola's Sphere of Influence: Within the City of Portola's sphere of influence, discretionary projects will coordinate design, development standards and funding programs.

¹¹ Karen Downs, City of Portola Planner, Letter to the Plumas County Planning Commission, January 19, 2011.

¹² Interview with Rebecca Herrin, Plumas County Planner, March 3, 2011.

LU 1.3.4 Annexation Revenues: Provide for a comprehensive and equitable distribution of revenues for all annexations. The County may amend master tax agreements to share annexation revenues seeking revenue neutrality for costs of providing County and City services with the City of Portola based upon the cost of providing facilities and services to the annexation area.

A governance structure option that may afford the City the planning involvement it desires may be designating the area an Area of Concern. The Plumas LAFCo Policies, Standards and Procedures define an Area of Concern as a geographic area beyond the Sphere of Influence in which land use decisions or other governmental actions of one local agency impact directly or indirectly upon another local agency. Plumas LAFCo may designate, in its discretion, a geographic area beyond the Sphere of Influence as an Area of Concern to any local agency. LAFCo will notify any Concerned Agency when the Commission receives notice of a proposal of another agency in the Area of Concern to the Concerned Agency, and will give great weight to its comments. If requested, Plumas LAFCo will seek to obtain a Joint Powers Agreement or other commitment between the agencies so that the Acting Agency provides advance notice to the Concerned Agency of any actions, or projects being considered within the area of concern, and commits to considering any comments made by the Concerned Agency.¹³

Accountability and Governance

The Portola City Council is composed of five Council members elected to staggered four-year terms. There is an election each November of even numbered years with either two or three seats up for election. In cases where a Councilmember is unable to complete a term the Council can appoint a replacement to fill the remainder of the term. The most recent contested election for a council member seat was held in 2018. Council members and their respective terms are listed in Figure 4-3. The Council selects a Mayor and Mayor Pro Tem from among its members to serve year-long terms. The mayor presides over the Council meetings.

Meetings are held on the second and fourth Wednesday of each month. Council meetings begin at 6:00 pm in the City Council Chamber, 35 Third Avenue. All City Council meetings are conducted in compliance with the Brown Act, affording the public the opportunity to participate in and observe the conduct of all business for the City. During the COVID-19 State of Emergency, meetings have been conducted virtually using the Zoom platform in accordance with then current State of California directives.

¹³ Plumas LAFCo, Policies, Standards and Procedures, Section III Part 6, p. 19.

Figure 4-3: City of Portola Governing Body

City of Portola				
<i>District Contact Information</i>				
Contact:	City Manager			
Address:	35 Third Avenue, Portola, CA 96122			
Telephone:	530-832-6800			
Email/website:	lknox@cityofportola.com			
<i>Board of Directors</i>				
Member Name	Position	Term Expiration	Manner of Selection	Length of Term
Bill Powers	Mayor	November-22	Elected	4 years
Pat Morton	Mayor Pro Tem	November-24	Elected	4 years
Phil Oels	Council Member	November-22	Elected	4 years
Stan Peiler	Council Member	November-24	Elected	4 years
Tom Cooley	Council Member	November-24	Elected	4 years
<i>Meetings</i>				
Date:	Second and fourth Wednesday of each month at 6 pm.			
Location:	City Hall			
Agenda Distribution:	The City's website, posted outside of City Hall, and email distribution by request.			
Minutes Distribution:	Minutes are available on the City's website.			

In addition to the legally required agendas and minutes, other constituent outreach efforts by the City include a website where contact information, documents, and other pertinent information are made available. Informational notices are posted in the weekly newspaper and information is disseminated through the Portola Library and the post office, as well as posted on the city hall and post office bulletin boards. Interested parties may subscribe to email distribution of meeting agendas and related supporting materials.

With regard to customer satisfaction, complaints can be submitted in writing, in person, or on the telephone to the city manager. The city manager logs and tracks all complaints to ensure proper resolution of the issue, with the exception of those complaints regarding the city manager, which are handled directly by the City Council. If a constituent is not satisfied with the outcome of a complaint, a formal complaint may be submitted at a city council meeting. Complaints are generally regarding blocking of vehicles, in driveways or on streets, after snow plowing. In 2020, the City reported that there were no formal complaints submitted.

The City demonstrated full accountability and disclosure during the MSR process by responding to questionnaire and interview requests and providing all necessary documentation.

Planning and Management Practices

The City of Portola has an elected council, appointed mayor form of local government that relies on paid professional staff to conduct the daily business and operations of the City. The City currently employs eight full-time employees, and several part-time and seasonal employees to conduct the various functions and duties of city government. The City also relies on contractors and volunteers to provide services to the City's residents. The City contracts with the following individuals or agencies for these services:

- ❖ Legal Services: City Attorney Steve Gross, a partner of Porter Simon, located in Truckee provides legal support to the City Council, City Manager and all departments in matters of law relating to the operation of the City.
- ❖ Engineering: Dan Bastian, of Bastian Engineering in Graeagle provides contract engineering services for the City.
- ❖ Financial: Susan Scarlett, located in Quincy, provides for management of the City's funds.
- ❖ Fire and Emergency Services: Beckwourth Fire Protection District
- ❖ Code Enforcement: Irma Gowin, of CSG Consultants, Inc.
- ❖ Planning: Karen Downs, of Manhard Consulting
- ❖ Solid Waste Collection and Disposal: Intermountain Disposal, Inc.
- ❖ Electric Utility: Liberty Utilities

The City Manager is appointed by the City Council to operate the day-to-day functions of the City and to implement policy as directed by the City Council. The City Manager, Planning Commission, City Attorney, City Clerk, Finance Officer and City Treasurer all report to the City Council. The Public Works Building Manager and City Engineer all report to the City Manager. All other employees report to the department heads.

The overall management efficiency of the City in providing service to the residents and property owners is best reflected in the distribution of resources in the annual operating budget, and the willingness of the part of the City Council to maintain the staffing level in response to constituent demands. By relying on contractors, volunteers and part-time positions, the City has been able to minimize the long-term cost of salaries and benefits, especially in areas that do not require a full-time employee due to low service demand.

City staff are generally evaluated whenever they are due for a wage step increase. Evaluations are completed by the employees' immediate supervisor. Employee workload is monitored through timesheets. Specific tasks are tracked through logs at the water and wastewater treatment plants. Timesheets are used to evaluate whether budgeted amounts are appropriate for the time spent on a particular project or service.

The City reported that overall city performance was evaluated during the budget process. The City uses the annual budget process to evaluate if current programs should be continued, and if new service programs and functions can be initiated. The City does not perform any kind of benchmarking with similar service providers.

The City’s central planning document is its General Plan, which links community values, vision, and objectives with decisions that affect the physical development of the City, such as subdivisions and public works projects. It includes the following required and optional Elements: Land Use; Community Design; Circulation; Economic Development; Public Services and Facilities; Safety; Conservation and Open Space; Noise, Air Quality; and Housing. The City is in the process of comprehensively updating the General Plan (General Plan 2045), with an anticipated 2021 adoption date. Other City planning documents include Master Plans for water, wastewater, and parks and recreation services.

The City’s financial planning documents include annually adopted budgets and annual audits. The City provided a copy of its audited financial statement for FY 19-20 and 20-21 to LAFCo. The City does not produce a separate capital improvement plan.

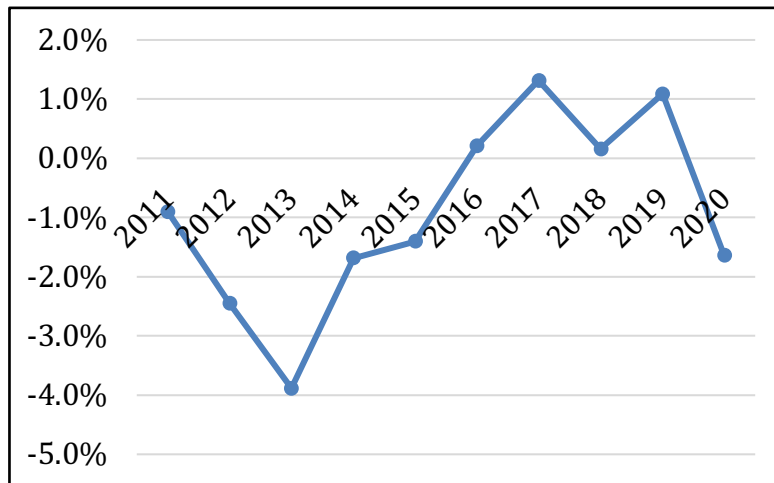
Existing Demand and Growth Projections

Existing land uses within the city limits are primarily residential and retail services. The regional services and highway commercial uses are concentrated along SR 70. Businesses serve both the local population and the regional traffic drawn by recreation opportunities. The commercial strip includes regional services such as banking, restaurants and automobile services. South of the river, the Old Town commercial area along Commercial Street provides small scale, local services and retail. The primary institutional uses are clustered along Gulling Street. These include a hospital, City Hall, a library, City Park, a Sheriff substation, a post office, schools, and a courthouse.

Population

Figure 4-4: City of Portola Population Growth (2010-2020)

Historically, the population in Portola has had periods of growth and other periods of decline. The population grew from 1910 to 1950, but declined from 1950 through 1970. Minimal growth was seen from 1970 through 2000, but did not recover to the 1950 level. The City experienced another decline in population between 2000 and 2010 with negative



annual growth rates of between zero and two percent, as shown in Figure 4-4. In the last five years (2015-2019), the City has experienced positive growth. As of January 1, 2020, the City had a population of 1,916, according to the 2020 census.

Existing Demand

Periods of peak demand for municipal services depend on the service in question and the season. As the region enjoys a high level of recreation-oriented tourism, demand for public safety services area highest during the peak tourism season in the summer when people

migrate to their vacation and retirement homes in the region. Conversely, during the winter, the City's snow removal services are in demand.

The City reported that in general the demand for municipal services has not changed over the last decade, as a result of the stable population trend.

Projected Growth and Development

The City of Portola's working version of General Plan 2045 discusses anticipated population growth in the Land Use Element. No specific predictions of future growth are made, although three possible growth scenarios are demonstrated. The General Plan demonstrates potential scenarios using one, two and three percent annual growth rates. The General Plan asserts that the basis for the uncertainty in the growth projections is that the cumulative effect of these factors is difficult to predict with such a small current population. A relatively small increase in population in the City of Portola has the potential to translate to a relatively high growth rate on a percentage basis. Since the General Plan provides no actual predictions for future growth in Portola, and prior growth rates have always been less than two percent, it is a challenge to predict growth over the next 10 to 20 years. The City's Water Master Plan from 2007 prepares for an aggressive growth pattern of five percent annual growth over the next 15 years, since the City anticipates a strong potential for significant development in the near future. The General Plan discusses the fact that population growth in Portola is likely to come from three primary sources described as follows:

(1) Population growth in California and northern Nevada will generate a spill over effect as people seek to relocate to small communities from increasing development in more urban areas.

(2) An aging population will generate an increase in retirees seeking small communities for second homes or a permanent retirement home.

(3) Economic development will generate new job growth in service and tourism industries, and growth in small businesses whose leaders can choose a location based primarily on quality of life considerations.

The State Department of Finance (DOF) and the Plumas County Transportation Commission both make countywide population projections, but no projections specific to Portola. According to the Plumas County Transportation Commission, Plumas County has experienced slow growth (population increases at less than 0.1 percent per year on the long-term average) in population and employment over the past few decades and is forecast to experience a decline in population through 2040. The Regional Transportation Plan, based on California Department of Finance projections, anticipates an annual growth rate of negative 0.027 percent countywide through 2040.

While the City's historical growth rates and countywide growth rate projections indicate minimal or negative growth in the future, there are three planned developments within the city limits, which have the potential to add an additional 1,220 dwelling units to the City, or approximately 2,440 additional residents. This would be an increase over the 2020 city population of 127 percent. The Portola 192 development, comprised of 200 dwellings on 192 acres, is located in the very western part of the City of Portola. The final map for Portola 192 has been approved; however, the development is presently on hold until the economy

recovers. The Portola Highlands development consists of 1,005 dwelling units on 398 acres and extends from the Portola High School in the north to the southern boundary of the city. The City has approved a tentative map for the Portola Highlands development and annually assesses the developer's continued interest in the project. Mountain View Estates is an eight-acre development with 14 planned dwelling units. A tentative map for the subdivision was approved in 2008, but no progress toward a final map has been made since then.

While there are presently no plans for development of the Teanna Ranch territory, the area has the potential for significant growth after the Williamson Act contract on the land is cancelled.

While the City generally has the capacity to provide adequate services to the existing level of demand, it is anticipated that if these planned developments come to fruition and build-out, the City will require significant facility capacity enhancements and additional staffing to meet dramatically increased demand. Given the amount of growth potential in the City based on planned developments, the City will need to plan for significant growth to meet future demand levels and meet urban service level expectations.

Growth Strategies

Portola's existing planning area is larger than its SOI. The City's present land use designations extend beyond its SOI to the east and west along SR 70. The planning area in the City's General Plan 2045, which is currently being processed, is the same as the defined area in the General Plan from 2000.

The primary guiding goals for land use and development in the City of Portola are outlined in the Community Design Element of the 2000 General Plan. The Community Design Element defines the characteristics of the land use and provides guidelines and standards for development with the primary goal of developing a built environment that is compatible with the natural amenities. The fundamental goal for the Community Design Element is to encourage development that is 1) economically and environmentally sustainable; relates well to the natural setting; 2) sustainable because it is well constructed of durable, quality materials appropriate to the setting, and 3) offers memorable buildings and spaces. Specific standards include limiting removal of trees to construct a building and limiting modifications to the natural land form and natural flow of water through grading. The City hopes that compliance with these fundamentals will inherently protect the natural character of the community. The companion priority is to develop the community in a manner that is compatible with and protective of the natural surroundings.

With regard to specific growth plans, the City did not propose any SOI expansion areas, but as mentioned in the Background Section, the City reported that it would like to be involved in joint planning with the County for areas such as Delleker where growth will affect the City and the services it provides, but which are not within its SOI. The City listed the following as reasons behind the need for joint planning:¹⁴

- ❖ The type and scale of development in Delleker could drain economic vitality from Portola's unique downtown and the region as a whole, to the shared disadvantage of the City and County.

¹⁴ City of Portola, Options for Cooperative Planning for the Delleker Area - Draft, March 2010, p. 1.

- ❖ The absence of a clearly defined, well thought out, border between rural and more “urbanized” development (at a scale appropriate for the setting) could damage the natural assets and other special characteristics of this unique location and its importance to local residents and visitors.
- ❖ Service provision that is not well coordinated by all relevant parties is likely to be inefficient and not cost effective. Infrastructure expansions should be considered in a shared vision of what the City and County see as the future for the area.

The City identified water distribution infrastructure and wastewater capacity as the most significant constraints to growth. The existing water delivery system is adequate only for the existing community. Land use development anticipated in the Land Use Element will require an increase in the expansion and upgrading of the water storage and distribution system.¹⁵ Similarly, the wastewater system is adequate for the existing community, but expansion of the collection system will be needed to accommodate the development anticipated in the Land Use Element. In addition to capital needs to extend services to new subdivisions, some older areas of the city were never fully developed and lack basic sewer, water, drainage and streets. Full development of the City will require extending the basic infrastructure to these “in-fill” areas. The City compiled Water and Wastewater Master Plans in 2007 and has adopted development impact fees for water and sewer services to address capital improvement needs for the growth of the community.

Financing

The City tracks its financial activities separately through various funds. The General Fund is the City’s main operating fund. Other major governmental funds include special revenue funds such as gas taxes, which may only be used for certain services. Wastewater, water and solid waste finances are tracked through enterprise funds. Portola finances its general government, police, fire, parks and recreation, public works, and planning/ community development operations primarily with vehicle license fees, sales taxes and property taxes. The City finances its street needs with gas tax and general revenue. The City finances its water and sewer operations with utility rates, and its water and sewer capital improvements primarily with connection fees and development impact fees and secondarily with rates

Even though the City continues to recover from past economic downturns and staffing is still at a lower level, the General Fund supports the services necessary for the residents of Portola, including fire, parks, planning, building, streets, snow removal, animal control and law enforcement through a Sheriff’s contract for services. The City currently contracts with neighboring Beckwourth Fire Protection District to perform fire related services. Through a Council approved Memorandum of Understanding with adjacent fire districts, the City is also exploring the possibilities of reorganizing fire and emergency services to strengthen and improve upon these services to the area.

With regard to the City Enterprise Funds the effects and impacts of changing state and federal government regulation is a constant challenge, but the major challenge the Enterprise Funds face is the aging infrastructure in the City. The City has set up an

¹⁵ City of Portola, General Plan, 2000, p. 6-6.

infrastructure set aside in both water and sewer in an effort to partially fund major repairs. In the FY 21-22 budget Water and Wastewater rates were not increased. The Solid Waste Fund was able to eliminate the amount owed to the General Fund for the difference between the money set aside for landfill closure and the final cost of the closure. This has enabled the Council to reduce Solid Waste Administration Fees by \$1.00 per month for a second year in a row with the hope of continuing that trend. While the landfill is closed, new requirements from the State will make it very difficult to ever decrease the fees. Now that the General Fund is repaid, the closure fee will be reserved for future needs at the landfill. The Enterprise Funds are “business-type” activities whose expenses need to be covered by the rate payers. The City Council will continue to review the need for any future rate increases each year during the budget process. Staff and the City Council are always looking for funding opportunities for infrastructure and are currently attempting to apply for a Clean Water State Revolving Fund grant.

In November 2018, the Council voted to pay down \$400,000 of the unfunded liability which has the potential to save over \$500,000 in interest over time. While CalPERS unfunded liability is a moving target, this is a major step for the City to try and manage the annual payments going forward.

Figure 4-5: City of Portola General Fund Revenues & Expenditures (FYs 20-21)

<i>Income/Expenses</i>	<i>FY 20-21 Amended Budget</i>		<i>FY 20-21 Actual</i>		<i>FY 21-22 Budgeted</i>	
Revenues						
Taxes	\$671,550	59%	\$677,335	57%	\$599,450	59%
Licenses and permits	\$87,700	8%	\$95,263	8%	\$65,400	6%
Fines, forfeitures and penalties	\$200	0%	\$283	0%	\$200	0%
Use of money and property	\$11,000	1%	\$15,772	1%	\$15,536	2%
Intergovernmental	\$353,619	31%	\$380,838	32%	\$328,000	32%
Charges for services	\$9,552	1%	\$14,040	1%	\$11,500	1%
Other revenue	\$0	0%	\$4,701	0%	\$0	0%
Total Income	\$1,133,621	100%	\$1,188,232	100%	\$1,020,086	100%
Expenses						
General Government	\$242,635	19%	\$220,554	20%	\$227,179	18%
Planning and Community Development	\$132,945	10%	\$126,302	11%	\$81,100	7%
Public Safety	\$364,102	28%	\$371,525	34%	\$343,610	28%
Public Works	\$115,584	9%	\$111,806	10%	\$104,100	8%
Parks and Recreation	\$136,350	11%	\$150,818	14%	\$164,374	13%
Transfer to Streets and Snow	\$296,471	23%	\$126,159	11%	\$315,126	26%
Total Expenses	\$1,288,087	100%	\$1,107,164	100%	\$1,235,489	100%
Net Income	-\$154,466		\$81,068		-\$215,403	

The primary revenue sources for the City’s General Fund in FY 20-21 were property taxes (21 percent), sales tax (31 percent), vehicle in-lieu fees (14 percent) and COPS funding (13 percent). With regard to the Water and Wastewater enterprise funds, rates comprised 98.6 and 98.5 percent of the revenue sources for each fund, respectively.

The City charges an assessment on each lot based on the level of risk associated with the property use to finance fire services through the General Fund. A single-family residential unit is assessed \$12.51 annually and a commercial unit is assessed \$18.77 annually. The assessment was approved by voters in 1984. The assessment does not adjust annually based on inflation. Approximately \$17,000 was collected in FY 20-21 through the assessment.

Figure 4-6: City of Portola General Fund Expenditures (FY 20-21)

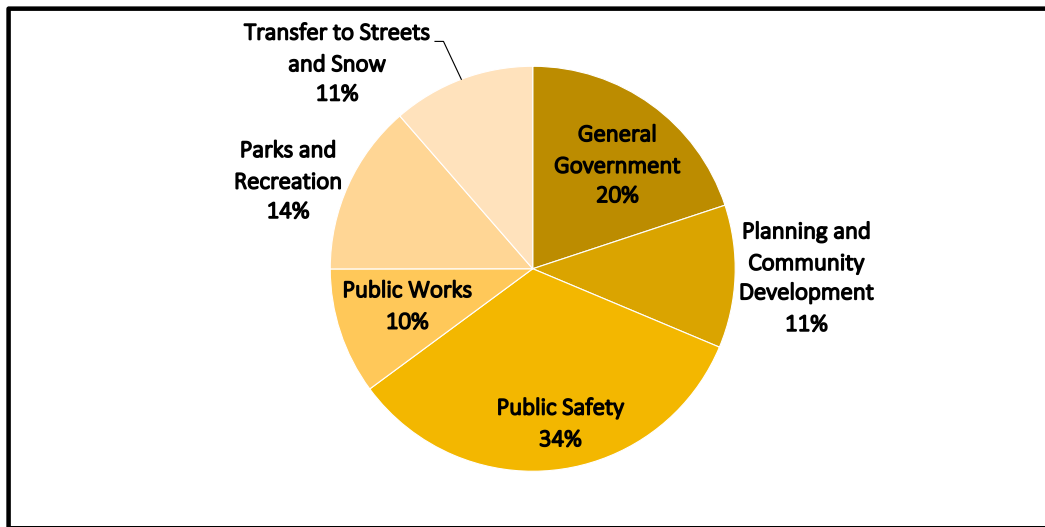


Figure 1-6 shows the City’s expenditures in FY 20-21- from the General Fund: General Government (20 percent), Planning and Community Development (11 percent), Public Safety (34 percent), Parks and Recreation (14 percent), Public Works (10 percent) and transfer to Streets and Snow Removal (11 percent) constituted the City’s general fund expenditures. The expenditure that goes to Streets and Snow Removal is usually much higher than the 20-21 figure. A low snow year and a high snow reimbursement from the prior year reduced that expenditure.

The City does not have a citywide CIP, but has outlined infrastructure needs in its Water and Wastewater Master Plans. The last Master Plans covered the time period of 2007-2027. A number of the assumptions made at the time the Master Plans were completed have changed significantly and new Master Plans will most likely be completed before 2027. Large City projects outside of the Enterprise funds are generally funded through State or Federal funding.

As of June 30, 2021, the City had long-term outstanding debt of \$742,829 in the Water Fund. This is the only long-term debt of the City as of this date.

At the end of FY 20-21, the City had an unreserved undesignated fund balance of \$2.59 million for the governmental funds, \$2.13 million in the Water utility fund, approximately \$1.56 in the Wastewater utility fund, and a negative balance of \$910,405 in the Solid Waste fund due to liability for the closure of the City’s landfill in 2005. The City has a GASB 54 policy of maintaining a full year of fund balance. At present, the City maintains approximately 2.8 years of operating costs for the City based on expenses in FY 20-21.

The City maintains an investment in the State of California Local Agency Investment Fund, which is an investment pool consisting of funds held by the State and other participating agencies. The City also participates in joint powers agreements related to liability coverage through the Small Cities Organized Risk Effort and California Joint Powers Risk Management Authority.

FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

Service Overview

The disastrous fires across California have heightened the awareness by governmental agencies and residents in the eastern region of Plumas County of the critical importance of providing adequate and economical fire and emergency services. Concerns include: recruiting and retaining qualified volunteer firefighters; uniformity in training and operation; effective command structure for allocation of personnel and equipment during significant incidents; conformance to current reporting, testing, and implementation of best practices; and adherence to regulatory directives. Additional concerns are the availability and cost of homeowners' insurance, ISO fire score, attracting and training agency board members, agencies' administrative operation, outdated district boundaries, out-of-district islands within districts, long-term affordable services, and long-range planning.

CAL FIRE includes Plumas County in its Lassen-Modoc Unit (LMU), headquartered in Susanville. However, CAL FIRE has no presence in Plumas County. The USDA Plumas National Forest Fire Unit provides Plumas County wildfire protection through agreement with CAL FIRE. Structure fire protection and emergency services are provided County-wide by 20 all-volunteer or hybrid-volunteer agencies, some via contracts with neighboring agencies.

In December of 2017, the City was alerted to significant deficiencies in its Volunteer Fire Department's operation. Recognizing it could not quickly remedy the shortcomings, the City decided to stand down its Volunteer Fire Department and entered into a contract with Eastern Plumas Rural Fire Protection District (EPRFPD) to provide Fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) to the City. Prior to its fire department's stand-down, the City was the long-term contract provider of fire and EMS to the Gold Mountain Community Services District (GMCSO). Subsequently, GMCSO also entered into a contract with EPRFPD for services.

City officials planned to evaluate the feasibility of re-establishing a stand-alone volunteer department in the future. However, due to the challenges posed by the difficulty in recruiting volunteers and the high financial costs of supporting a fire department, it was not the best choice for the City.

This stand-down action prompted the Plumas County Civil Grand Jury to investigate the City's fire and EMS coverage status. The Grand Jury also wanted to know if the City intended to re-establish its Volunteer Fire Department or pursue other long-term means of offering fire and EMS coverage to the residents of the City.

In its report released in March 2019, the Grand Jury discussed and reviewed alternatives to re-establishing the City's Fire Department, including the potential formation of a Joint Powers Authority (JPA). The formation of a JPA could also include GMCSO as it is within the Eastern Plumas Fire response area. During this same period (2019), Plumas County District 1 Supervisor Michael Sanchez initiated a series of public meetings to address the issues that all volunteer fire departments in Eastern Plumas County are experiencing.

There are five fire agencies (Beckwourth Fire Department (Beckwourth), City of Portola (City), Eastern Plumas Rural Fire Protection District (EPRFPD), Gold Mountain Community

Services District (GMCSO), and Sierra Valley Fire Protection District (Sierra Valley), (collectively the Five Agencies)) facing similar issues in recruiting volunteers, financing, training, and administrative compliance. These concerns led to the execution of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) regarding the reorganization of fire and emergency services including the Five Agencies. The parties executed the MOU in January 2020. It created the Local Emergency Services Study Group (LESSG), a framework for cooperative and collaborative action to explore ways to strengthen and improve the provision of fire and emergency services throughout the Five Agencies' service areas.

In October of 2020, following ten (10) months of meetings with the Plumas Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO), CAL FIRE, Plumas National Forest Service, Plumas County officials, legal counsels, and the surrounding area fire departments, the LESSG along with the new Plumas County District 1 Supervisor Dwight Ceresola arrived at a consensus. The decision of the Five Agencies was unanimous to creating a new single fire district that will provide fire and emergency medical response services (New District), thus dissolving the existing Districts or relinquishing their fire and EMS authority, is the most effective, efficient, and economical choice available.

The City, on behalf of the LESSG, sought proposals from qualified professional consulting firms. The Five Agencies ultimately chose Planwest Partners, Inc. to conduct the feasibility study that determines if formation of a New District to replace the fire and emergency medical response services provided by the Five Agencies will improve services and related costs to the community. The study will meet all necessary elements required by LAFCO's application and approval process to create the New District, including but not limited to a plan for Services. The report should also include potential funding mechanisms to support a New District and a public relations plan designed to educate the community to gain support for creating and funding the New District.

As of October 2021, EPRFPD's Board chose to remove the District from participation in the feasibility study.

Staffing

The City of Portola currently provides fire and emergency services by contract with the Beckwourth Fire Protection District. This contract period began on February 1, 2021, for a two- and one-half-year period. The annual fee is \$73,000 with a 3% inflation adjustment. All of the City's fire and EMS facilities and equipment may be used without restriction by the contractor, however, they remain the property of Portola. Applicable testing, code compliance, and maintenance expenses are paid by the City.

Beckwourth FD has 30 sworn personnel—one fire chief, two division chiefs, two, captains, two engineers, and firefighters. Fire chief, fire captain and an engineer, and 5 Duty Officers are part time paid personnel. The rest of the firefighters are entitled to compensation when they respond to wild land fires. The median age of the fire fighters is 50, with a range from 23 to 77. As of 2021 the staff is as follows: There are 32 members with varying positions that include division chiefs, part-time paid duty officers, captains, engineers, senior firefighters, firefighters, and auxiliary members. All members are required to be medically certified at minimum of EMR.

The District reports that its staffing levels have increased significantly since January 2021 when the City of Portola contracted BFD for fire and medical services. The District conducts weekly trainings. On the first Monday of each month there is a business meeting, on the second and third Mondays there are fire trainings, and on the fourth they conduct EMS training. The District also holds state certified classes and NWCG classes that typically take place on Saturdays and Sundays. These classes are open to any and all state fire departments. The District does not have a minimum required amount of training hours, but if a firefighter misses three months of training he or she becomes inactive.

Facilities and Capacity

The City of Portola owns and maintains two fire stations—North Side Fire Hall and South Side Fire Hall.

North Side Fire Hall, which was built in 1984, was reported to be in good condition. South Side Fire Hall, which was built in the 1940s includes a spacious meeting room suitable for area-wide training classes, was reported to be in very good condition. Extensive deferred maintenance was recently completed at both facilities.

The following City-owned equipment is staged at the fire halls; two, Type 1 fire engines; one, Type 6 fire engine; one, 3,500-gallon water tender; one, Support vehicle (old ambulance). All equipment is fully serviceable, current-tested and licensed.

Portola's stations were both renovated in early 2021 and are staffed by part time duty officers and a volunteer Beckwourth Fire, Portola Division of fire fighters.

The City's water reserves are represented by three water storage tanks that provide a combined emergency water supply of 1.75 million gallons.

The City Engineer has identified a potential fire flow deficiency within portions of the City resulting from the elevation relative to, and the distance from, the south storage tank. This will be resolved by constructing a new water storage tank at a higher elevation on the south side of the City, and construction of new water distribution lines to serve the other areas. The City has not yet scheduled these improvements.

Portola reported that its contracted fire and medical services with Beckwourth FPD is providing outstanding protection for its area of responsibility.

Infrastructure Needs

As stated above, the City Engineer has identified a potential for flow deficiency within portions of the City. The Water Master Plan identifies several improvements to rectify the fire flow deficiencies. The City did not identify any possible additional financing sources to cover the costs of improvements. The potential for flow deficiencies has been successfully managed during recent fire incidents by activating two water wells located in the downtown area. These wells add approximately 800 gpm to the system. The wells are not used regularly due to occasional water quality test results exceeding allowable arsenic limits, however, emergency use for fire suppression is permitted.

Challenges

As mentioned, all fire protection and EMS providers in the region have identified significant challenges to providing adequate service levels, thus the impetus to analyzing alternate services structures. The four participating agencies aim to mitigate these challenges to the greatest extent possible through reorganization and enhancement of financing sources.

Service Adequacy

While there are several benchmarks that may define the level of fire service provided by an agency, indicators of service adequacy discussed here include ISO ratings, response times, and level of staffing and station resources for the service area.

Fire services in the communities are classified by the Insurance Service Office (ISO), an advisory organization. This classification indicates the general adequacy of coverage. Communities with the best fire department facilities, systems for water distribution, fire alarms and communications, and equipment and personnel receive a rating of 1. The contracted fire service in the City of Portola has an ISO rating of 5 as of July 2020.

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) has issued a performance standard for volunteer and combination fire departments (NFPA 1720). This standard, among other guidelines, identifies target response time performance for structure fires. The response time is measured from the completion of the dispatch notification to the arrival time of the first-responder at the scene. Though not a legal mandate, NFPA 1720 does provide a useful benchmark against which to measure fire department performance. NFPA 1720 recommends that the response times for structure fire be nine minutes in urban demand zones at least 90 percent of the time, 10 minutes in suburban zones at least 80 percent of the time and 14 minutes in rural zones at least 80 percent of the time. Response times in remote zones are directly dependent on travel distances.¹⁶

Emergency response time standards vary by level of urbanization of an area: the more urban an area, the faster a response has to be. The California EMS Agency established the following response time guidelines: five minutes in urban areas, 15 minutes in suburban or rural areas, and as quickly as possible in wildland areas. Most of the City's response zone is considered rural by the Local EMS Agency. The City's contract fire services provider reports that response times are within guidelines.

The service area size¹⁷ for each fire station varies between fire districts. The median fire station in eastern Plumas serves approximately 20 square miles. Sierra Valley FPD serves the most expansive area, with 111 square miles served per station on average. Densely populated areas tend to have smaller service areas. For example, the average service area for the City of Portola is 3.8 square miles.

¹⁶ Urban demand zone has population density of more than 1,000 people per square mile; suburban zone—between 500 and 1,000 people per square mile, rural zone—less than 500 people per square mile, and remote zone is identified by eight or more miles of travel distance to an incident.

¹⁷ Service area refers to the area that the agency will respond to, based on a first responder map used by the Sheriff's office.

The number of firefighters serving within a particular jurisdiction is another indicator of level of service; however, it is approximate. The providers' call firefighters may have differing availability and reliability. An agency with more firefighters could have fewer resources if availability is restricted. The City of Portola has approximately 16 sworn staff per 1,000 residents through its contract with BFPD.

Figure 4-7: City of Portola Fire Department Fire Profile

Fire Service					
Facilities					
Firestation	Location	Condition	Staff per Shift	Vehicles	
North Side Fire Hall	420 North Culling St, Portola, CA	Good	Part-time Duty Officer	Type 1 Engine, Support vehicle (old ambulance)	
South Side Fire Hall	301 First Ave., Portola, CA	Good	Part-time Duty Officer	Type 1 Engine, Type 6 engine, 3,500 gallon water tender	
Facility Sharing					
Current Practices: The City's fire facilities and equipment are operated by its contract agency, Beckwourth FPD.					
Future opportunities: 2021: A study to determine the feasibility of the reorganization of fire and emergency services in Eastern Plumas County.					
Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies The City's fire facilities have recently undergone substantial maintenance and repair.					
District Resource Statistics		Service Configuration		Service Demand	
Staffing Base Year	2021	Configuration Base Year	2021	Statistical Base Year	2021
Fire Stations in District	2	Fire Suppression	Contract	Total Service Calls	Est. 300
Stations Serving District	2	EMS	Contract	% EMS	85%
Sq. Miles Served per Station ¹	3.0	Ambulance Transport	EPHCD	% Fire/Hazardous Materials	7%
Total Staff ²	32	Hazardous Materials	Contract	% False	2%
Total Full-time Firefighters	0	Air Rescue/Ambulance Helicopter	Careflight	% Misc. emergency	2%
Total Call Firefighters	30	Fire Suppression Helicopter	USPS, CalFire	% Non-emergency	4%
Total Sworn Staff per Station ³	8	Public Safety Answering Point	Sheriff	% Mutual Aid Calls	
Total Sworn Staff per 1,000	16	Fire/EMS Dispatch	Sheriff	Calls per 1,000 people	157
Service Adequacy		Service Challenges			
Response Time Base Year		2021			
Median Response Time (min)		NP			
90th Percentile Response Time (min)		NP			
ISO Rating		5/988			
Mutual & Automatic Aid Agreements					
Fire and emergency medical services are provided under contract by Beckwourth FPD.					
Notes: 1) Primary services area (square miles) per station. 2) Staff figures shown are Beckwourth Fire Department.					

CITY OF PORTOLA FIRE SERVICE DETERMINATIONS

Growth and Population Projections

- ❖ The City experienced a little to no change in population between 2010 and 2020 with negative annual growth rates of between zero and two percent. The City has a population of approximately 1,916.
- ❖ While the City's historical growth rates and countywide growth rate projections by the Department of Finance and Plumas County Transportation Commission indicate negative growth in the future, there are three planned developments within the city limits, which could add approximately 2,440 additional residents to the City, indicating the potential for significant growth.

The Location and Characteristics of Disadvantaged Unincorporated Communities Within or Contiguous to the Agency's SOI

- ❖ Based on American Community Survey 2016-2020 Census Tract information, the entirety of the study area and the boundaries within and immediately adjacent to each of the five reviewed fire providers is defined as disadvantaged. While the City of Portola is incorporated, the remainder of the territory meets the definition of a disadvantaged unincorporated community as defined in Water Code §79505.5. Census Tract 000300 encompasses the entirety of the service area and has a population of 4,484 comprising 2,051 households with a median income of \$48,238.

Present and Planned Capacity of Public Facilities and Adequacy of Public Services, Including Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies

- ❖ Both fire stations require ADA accessibility improvements, which have not been completed due to financing constraints.
- ❖ It is a recommended practice that the Fire Department track its response time for each incident.

Financial Ability of Agencies to Provide Services

- ❖ The City reported that while financing levels were generally adequate to provide services, there had been a decline in revenues which had forced the City to find ways to trim expenditures.
- ❖ The City does not have a citywide Capital Improvement Plan, but has outlined infrastructure needs in its water, wastewater and parks and recreation master plans. Capital planning is also completed annually in the budget. It is recommended that the City consider implementing a multi-year CIP to identify potential financing sources and timing for the capital improvements.

Status of, and Opportunities for, Shared Facilities

- ❖ The City practices resource sharing for fire protection and EMS services by receiving contract services from Beckwourth FPD.
- ❖ Administration for all city services is provided by the City's general government, which provides management efficiencies and cost minimization.

Accountability for Community Service Needs, Including Governmental Structure and Operational Efficiencies

- ❖ The City demonstrated full accountability through its disclosure of information as indicated by the City's cooperation in providing all requested information, meeting for interviews, and providing review and comments during the MSR process.
- ❖ Accountability is best ensured when contested elections are held for governing body seats, constituent outreach is conducted to promote accountability and ensure that constituents are informed and not disenfranchised, and public agency operations and management are transparent to the public. The City of Portola demonstrated accountability with respect to all of these factors.
- ❖ The City, Beckwourth FPD, Gold Mountain CSD, and Sierra Valley FPD are members of a Memorandum of Understanding to assess the feasibility of reorganization in an effort to address the many identified challenges of providing adequate services. The feasibility study has determined that formation of a new fire district is a practical and affordable solution to many of the challenges faced by fire providers in the region.

5. BECKWOURTH FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

Beckwourth Fire District (BFD) provides structural fire suppression, wild land fire suppression, emergency response, basic life support, rescue services and some limited fire prevention programs for the community of Beckwourth. In addition, Beckwourth FD has been contracted to provide those same emergency services for the City of Portola. The contract was executed in February of 2021 and expires in 29 months. A municipal service review was last completed for the District in 2010.

The District’s mission statement states that “the Beckwourth Fire District is committed to the protection of life and property using as our model; safety, teamwork and continuous education and training.”

AGENCY OVERVIEW

Background

Beckwourth Fire Department was formed in 1948 and turned into a special district in 1949. The District started with “one 1937 Fire Engine and a small Fire House. The original Fire House has been improved and a second Fire Station was added in 2007. Beckwourth, sometimes erroneously listed as “Beckwith” on early census reports, was named for James “Jim” P. Beckwourth, an unsung, genuine American hero of mixed ancestry who discovered a lower, safer passage across the Sierra Nevada Mountains in the mid-1800s.”

The District was formed to provide fire protection services to the residents of Beckwourth Township. Originally, its services were limited to structural fire and some brush fire. Now Beckwourth FD also has an EMS force, more equipment and provides services on a larger scale, including wild land fires, vehicle extrication, ice rescue.

The principal act that governs the District is the Fire Protection District Law of 1987. The principal act empowers fire districts to provide fire protection, rescue, emergency medical, hazardous material response, ambulance, and any other services relating to the protection of lives and property. Districts must apply and obtain LAFCo approval to exercise services authorized by the principal act but not already provided (i.e., latent powers) by the district at the end of 2000.

Beckwourth FD is located in the eastern part of Plumas County, in the high Sierra Mountains. The District is adjacent to the City of Portola and Eastern Plumas Fire Protection District (EPRFPD) in the west and Sierra Valley Fire Protection District (SVVFD) in the east.

Boundaries

The Beckwourth FD boundary is entirely within Plumas County. The District’s boundary territory that consists of six non-contiguous areas encompasses approximately 14 square miles.

Plumas LAFCo, State Board of Equalization and tax records indicate that since its formation the District undertook seven annexations. All recorded boundary changes are

shown in Figure 5-1. According to the Board of Equalization, the first annexation took place in 1954. The name of the annexation is unknown, but the annexed territory included three tracts—a large area to the southwest of the original District and two smaller areas to the north and the east. One of the most recent annexations that started in 2003 and was finalized in 2011, included Sierra Health Foundation or Grizzly Creek Ranch. This was a complicated annexation process, because the SOI of the District had to be updated first to include the territory to be annexed. The SOI update took place in 2010 and annexation process shortly after. The Plank/Brenneman annexation of 2007 and the annexation of Sierra Health Foundation have also just been recently recorded by the BOE. The last annexation completed was the Ceresola/Asst properties in 2012.

Figure 5-1: Beckwourth FD Boundary History

<i>Project Name</i>	<i>Type of Action</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Recording Agency</i>
Beckwourth Fire District	Formation	1949	SBOE
Unknown territory	Annexation	1954	SBOE
Schaffer (TRA 144)	Annexation	1994	Tax records
Grizzly Ranch	Annexation	2003	LAFCo, SBOE
Grizzly Road North/Sierra Valley	Annexation	2005	LAFCo, SBOE
Plank/Brenneman	Annexation	2007	LAFCo, SBOE
Sierra Health Foundation/Rocky Point Road	Annexation	2011	LAFCo, SBOE
Ceresola/Hartwig/Partlow	Annexation	2012	LAFCo, SBOE

Sphere of Influence

The SOI for Beckwourth FD was first adopted in 1976. In 1982 it was revised and again changed in 1983. It was then amended in 2003 after the completion of the abbreviated MSR. The second SOI update was initiated in 2008. The MSR and the SOI update were completed and adopted in 2010. The new SOI includes territory to the north in Red Clover Valley, residences in Dixie Valley, borders Sierra Valley FPD in the east, EPRFPD in the west and Sierra County in the south. The sphere contains about 190 square miles compared to 14 square miles of boundary area.

Extra-territorial Services

The District has provided services outside its boundaries through out-of-area service agreements. Currently, Beckwourth FD has four new agreements with individual customers that were approved by LAFCo in October 2021. Two are commercial and two residential, annexation has been waived for three years pending the result of creation of a new district. Annual contract fees are \$200 for commercial and \$100 for residential. Additionally, the District does provide contract fire services to the City of Portola as of February 1, 2021.

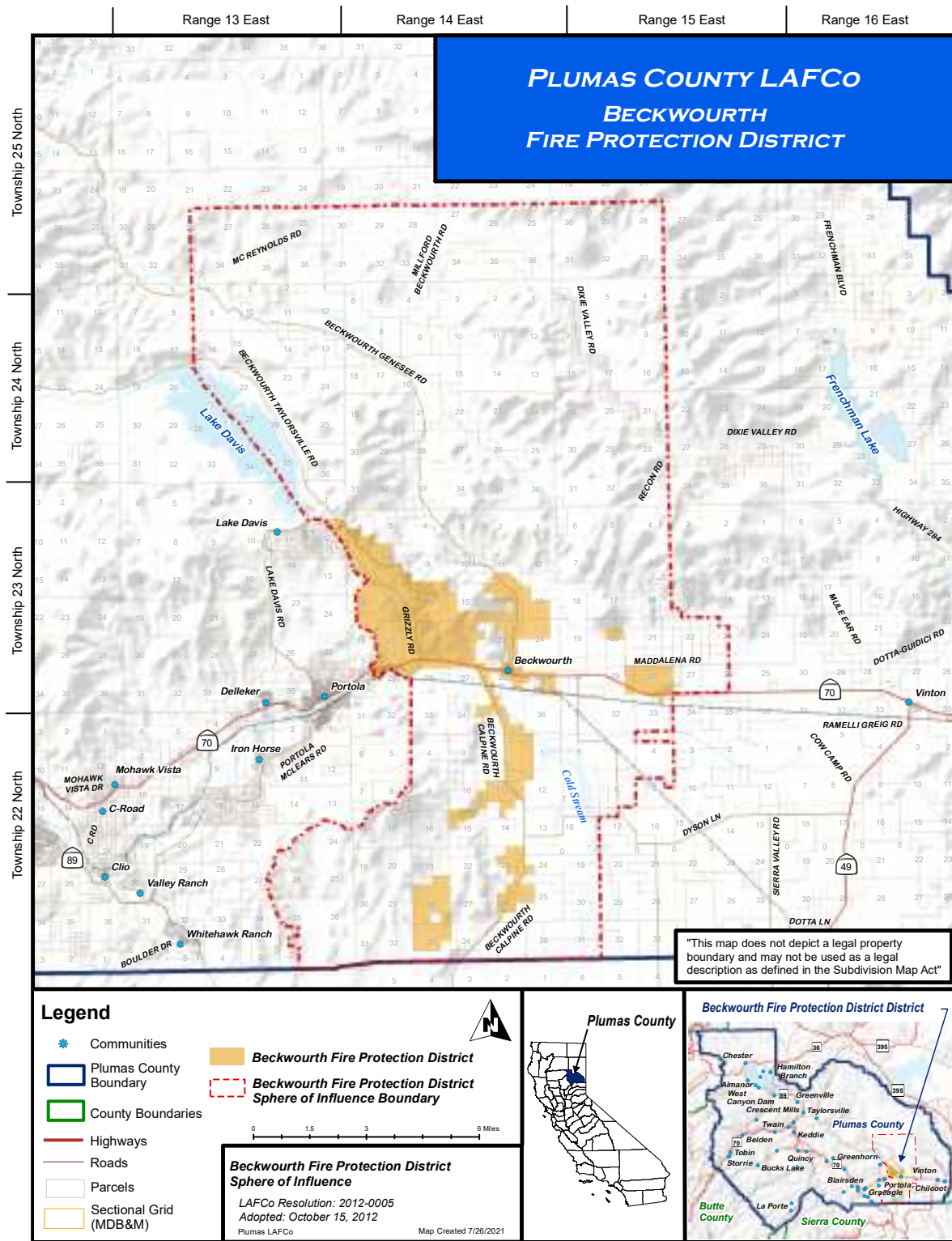
The District also occasionally responds to wild land fires outside of its boundaries when requested. Response to a wild land fire in federal and state responsibility areas is reimbursed by the federal or State government. The U.S Forest Service notified all Plumas County Fire Agencies in 2021 that they wanted to change the reimbursement structure for response by local departments from starting after 2 hours on scene to after 10 hours on scene. This is a big concern for all volunteer agencies and will basically end local response to fires on US

Forest Service land. We are working with the Plumas County Chiefs Association and Plumas County Officials to negotiate with the USFS to eliminate this change.

Areas of Interest

One area of interest for the District is the Maddalena Tree Farm. Currently, the area is within the boundaries of SVVFD, but Beckwourth FD would like to annex the area. Beckwourth FD reported that its stations were in closer proximity to the tree farm than the SVVFD stations. In addition, SVVFD has to go through Beckwourth FD territory to access the Maddalena Tree Farm, which makes it even more of a challenge to serve this territory. This would obviously not be an issue if the new district formation is successful.

Figure 5-2: Beckwourth FD Boundaries and SOI



Accountability and Governance

The principal act orders that the governing body of a fire protection district must have an odd number of members, with a minimum of three and a maximum of 11 members. Directors may be appointed or elected. Beckwourth FD is governed by a five-member board of directors who are elected to staggered four-year terms. Three of the current board members were elected and two appointed. The last contested election took place in 2019. Board member names, positions, and term expiration dates are shown in Figure 5-3.

The Board meets on the third Wednesday starting in 2022 every month at six thirty in the evening at Fire Station 1 in Beckwourth. Agendas and minutes are posted on the website and at Fire Station 1 and at the Portola Post Office.

Figure 5-3: Beckwourth FD Governing Body

Beckwourth Fire District				
<i>District Contact Information</i>				
Contact:	Fire Chief, Bret Russell			
Address:	180 Main Street, Beckwourth, CA 96129			
Telephone:	530-832-1008			
Email/Website:	www.beckwourthfire.com, chief russell@beckwourthfire.com			
<i>Board of Directors</i>				
Member Name	Position	Term Expiration	Manner of Selection	Length of Term
Tyler McGarr	Member	December-23	Appointed	4 years
Larry Smith	Chair	December-23	Appointed	4 years
Gay Miller	Member	December-23	Appointed	4 years
Alyson Ceresola	Member	December-23	Appointed	2 years
Daniel Greenwood	Vice Chair	December-23	Appointed	2 years
<i>Meetings</i>				
Date:	Third Wednesday of every month at 6:30 p.m.			
Location:	Beckwourth Station 1			
Agenda Distribution:	Posted at the Station 1 and on the website			
Minutes Distribution:	Posted at the Station 1 and on the website			

In addition to the required agendas and minutes, the District does public outreach through its website and prevention programs that are described in more detail in the Fire and Emergency Services section of this chapter.

If a customer is dissatisfied with the District's services, the complaints may be submitted by calling the District. The two people who are responsible for handling complaints are the Administrative Secretary and the Fire Chief. According to the District, there were no complaints in 2020 and 2021 to date; however, there were many reports of appreciation from constituents.

Beckwourth FD demonstrates accountability and transparency in its disclosure of information and cooperation with Plumas LAFCo, regularly and throughout the MSR process.

Planning and Management Practices

Daily operations of the District are managed by the Fire Chief, while financial and clerical operations of the fire department are managed by the Administrative Officer and are overseen by the Fire Chief.

Beckwourth FD had the following staff as of July 1, 2021.

Figure 5-4: Beckwourth FD Staff

Staff	Status
1 Fire Chief	Paid, Part-time
1 Administrative Officer	Paid, Part-time
2 Division Chiefs	Volunteers
2 Captains	Paid, Part-time
5 Duty Officers	Paid, Part-time
20 Fire Fighters	Volunteers

BFD currently has a total of 30 firefighters including the Chief. BFD has one Administrative Officer who is not a firefighter. As of current the staff is as follows: There are 30 members with varying positions that include division chiefs, part-time paid duty officers, captains, engineers, senior firefighters, firefighters, and auxiliary members. All members are required to be medically certified at minimum of EMR.

The Administrative Officer and the Chief are accountable to the Board of Directors. The rest of the personnel are accountable to the Fire Chief. There are two Division Chiefs who oversee two Captains. Two engineers report to the captains and supervise firefighters. The Administrative Officer also reports to the Chief, and the Chief is responsible for evaluating the Administrative Officer with input from the Board.

The Chief is evaluated by the Board annually. The Chief evaluates his paid subordinates annually. Volunteers are evaluated annually by the Chief and Division Chiefs.

Beckwourth FD reported that it does not perform formal evaluations of overall District performance, such as benchmarking or annual reports. However, it informally compares itself to other neighboring providers and considers itself to be performing as well or better than others. The District does not track its employees' workload, but the Chief does track the different tasks he has assigned to each of his staff. In addition, maintenance logs are kept for the vehicles and equipment, and the District tracks the number of service calls to which it has responded.

The District's financial planning efforts include an annually adopted budget. The financial statements are done by the County and are audited once every two years by an outside auditing firm. The latest audit took place for FY 19-20. Beckwourth FD currently has

adopted other planning documents, such as a capital improvement plan and a reserve policy plan for 2021. In addition to adopting these reserves the board has also started to fund these accounts to attain the target levels approved.

Existing Demand and Growth Projections

The land uses within the District include residential, suburban, industrial, commercial, agricultural and wild land. The area within the District’s boundaries is approximately 14 square miles.

Population

There are approximately 618 permanent residents within the District, based on census block population in the 2020 census. Census block numbers used to calculate the population are from within the existing boundary area of Beckwourth FD, as of October 2021. It should also be noted that there is a significant seasonal variation in population.

Existing Demand

The District reports that the peak demand period for every service, including emergency medical, occurs during the summer months, due to the influx of tourists. The most service calls occur between noon and three in the afternoon.

The District reported that it has observed a significant increase in the number of calls in 2021 due to contracting with the City of Portola. The District has doubled the number of volunteers to handle the increase in calls.

Figure 5-5: Beckwourth FD Number of Calls (2018- June 2021)

Year	BFD calls	Portola calls	Total calls
2018	86	N/A	86
2019	77	N/A	77
2020	78	N/A	78
2021*	50	117	167

Notes:

- 1) 2021* covers YTD Jan-June 2021.
- 2) BFD breakdown 2021 9 fire/24 med/17 misc.
- 3) Portola breakdown 2021 8 fire/ 88 med/ 21 misc.
- 4) Combined breakdown 17 fire/ 112 med/ 38 misc.

Projected Growth and Development

The District anticipates minimal growth in population and similarly in service demand within the District in the next few years; however, no formal population projections have been made by the District.

The State Department of Finance (DOF) projects that the population of Plumas County will decline by 0.27 percent annually through 2040. Based on these projections, the District’s population would decline from 618 in 2020 to approximately 585 in 2040. It is anticipated that demand for service within the District will remain constant based on the DOF population growth projections through 2040.

The District reported that to their knowledge there are minimal planned developments within its boundaries. Grizzly Ranch has not reached its build out potential of 330 homes; empty lots are scattered throughout the community. Another area of potential development is located along County Road A-23. One of those developments is a business retreat with lodging, restaurant, and meeting facilities that has been working closely with the County the last 18 months. There are currently 50 homes, but there are plans to build more. It is not a single development, but instead multiple individually planned homes. Other potential growth areas consist of four to five lot zones that are scattered all over the District.

The district expects its service demand to go up when the planned developments are fully constructed. Currently, Beckwourth FD reported that it does not have the capacity to serve large or spread-out developments. It plans to negotiate with the developers to build a new station when the need arises. The District identified an area in its future growth area that will be difficult to serve—future homes along some areas along County Road A-23 are too far away from the District's stations, which will lead to longer response times.

Growth Strategies

The District is not a land use authority and does not hold primary responsibility for implementing growth strategies. The land use authority for unincorporated areas is the County.

The County enforces the codes that it has enforcement power over, which does not encompass all State fire codes. The County ensures that new construction meets the requirements of the latest adopted edition of the California Building Standards. The County enforces the County codes that have been adopted in lieu of the California Fire Safe regulations. The County does not have authority to enforce PRC 4291, which requires defensible space around structures; however, the County does have some enforcement authority over vegetation removal around buildings that was adopted prior to PRC 4291. In addition, the Board of Supervisors, through the adoption of the General Plan and county codes, regulates development standards to be followed in processing subdivisions, including fire protection.

The proposals for new developments are sent for review to the appropriate fire provider if a development is within district's boundaries. Since the last MSR, all SOIs have been updated and shared with the County to ensure that proposals within a district's SOI but outside of its boundaries are also shared with the respective district for review. In 2010, the County Board of Supervisors had been discussing the possibility of hiring a fire marshal, part of whose responsibilities may be code enforcement and building inspections. However, as of the drafting of this report no movement has been made toward hiring of a fire marshal due to budget restrictions.

The County's General Plan was adopted in 2013 with several policies impacting the fire providers of new developments.

The District reported concerns that new developments in the County were not being required to comply with existing requirements. The County reported that only one agency had come to the County regarding these concerns, which were unfounded at the time. No conjecture is made by the authors of this report as to the accuracy of these statements. It

should be noted that one of the purposes of the newly formed Emergency Service Feasibility Group is to address these concerns.

Policies outlined in the General Plan that impact fire service providers include:

- 1) LU 1.5.3 The County shall require development to be located adjacent to, or within, areas where fire and life safety services exist, or can be efficiently and economically provided.
- 2) LU 1.5.5 The County shall review development proposals for their impacts on infrastructure (for example, sewer, water, fire stations, libraries, streets, etc.). New development shall be required to pay its proportionate share of the costs of infrastructure improvements required to serve the project to the extent permitted by State law.
- 3) CIR 4.1.7 All commercial and industrial parcels shall be served by a structural fire protection entity and shall be within reasonable service distance from existing fire protection facilities and as determined by the appropriate area.
- 4) PHS 6.1.3 The County shall continue to promote awareness and education among residents regarding possible natural hazards, including soil conditions, landslides, earthquakes, flooding, wildfire hazards and emergency procedures.
- 5) PHS 6.1.4 The County shall promote all applicable public safety programs, including neighborhood-watch programs, hazards materials disposal, public awareness and prevention of wildfire hazards, and other public-education efforts.
- 6) PHS 6.3.1 The County shall review and update its Fire Safe ordinance to attain and maintain defensible space through conditioning of tentative maps and in new development at the final map or building permit stage.
- 7) PHS 6.3.2 The County shall consult the current Fire Hazard Severity Zone Maps during the review of all projects so that standards and mitigation measures appropriate to each hazard classification can be applied. Land use densities and intensities shall be determined by mitigation measures in areas designated with a high or very high fire hazard rating. Intensive development in areas with high or very high fire hazard rating shall be discouraged.
- 8) PHS 6.3.3 All developments within the service boundaries of an entity which provides structural fire protection may be required to make contribution to the maintenance of the existing level of structural service proportionate to the increase in demand for service structural fire protection and Emergency Medical Services resulting from the development.
- 9) PHS 6.3.4 As a requirement for approving new development, the County must find (based on information provided by the applicant and the responsible fire protection district), that concurrent with development, adequate emergency water flow, fire access and fire-fighting personnel and equipment, will be available in accordance with applicable State, County, and local fire district standards
- 10) PHS 6.3.5 As a requirement of new development, the applicant must demonstrate that adequate emergency access exists or can be provided to ensure that

emergency vehicles can access the site and that private vehicles can evacuate the area.

- 11) PHS 6.3.6 As a condition of development, the County shall require the long-term maintenance of private roads, including roadside vegetation management, to the standards of original improvements.
- 12) PHS 6.3.7 The County shall research the feasibility of a countywide rural fire protection water system that provides a cost-effective, adequate water supply.
- 13) PHS 6.2.8 The County shall encourage upgrading facilities within existing fire protection districts and encourage expansion of existing districts where warranted by population density allowed under the General Plan.
- 14) PHS 6.3.9 The County shall require new development within high and very high fire hazard areas to designate fuel break zones that comply with defensible space requirements to benefit the new and, where possible, existing development.
- 15) PHS 6.3.10 The County shall encourage the use of prescribed burning as a management tool for hazardous fuels reduction, timber management purposes, livestock production and enhancement of wildlife habitat. The County shall support removal of fuels and chipping and onsite distribution of chipped materials as an alternative to burning.
- 16) PHS 6.3.11 The County shall cooperate with Federal, State, community fire safety groups and other fire protection entities in fire prevention programs and in identifying opportunities for hazardous fuel reduction projects in zones of high and very high fire hazard either prior to or as a component of project review.
- 17) PHS 6.3.12 The County, in cooperation with Federal and State agencies, community fire safety groups, and the local fire protection districts, shall educate the public about the hazards of wildfires, methods to reduce the potential for fires to occur, and mitigation measures, including reducing fuel loads, to lessen the impacts of wildfires.
- 18) PHS 6.3.13 The County shall support fuel modification across public and private forestlands to reduce the potential for catastrophic wildfires, with the highest priority directed toward reducing hazardous fuel levels in the wildland-urban interface.
- 19) COS 7.2.16 The County shall support the use of controlled fuel management where feasible and appropriate as a natural ecosystem process, to reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfire and promote healthy forest environments and habitats.
- 20) AG/FOR 8.13.3 Support both State and Federal wildland fire protection programs and local Fire Safe programs that reduce the risk of wildland fires and the loss of timber on private and public property.
- 21) W 9.2.4 The County shall, in cooperation with wildfire management agencies, such as CalFire, United States Forest Service and local fire protection agencies, develop a variety of land-use planning, site design and vegetation management techniques to reduce the risk of wildfires. This risk reduction shall also include post-fire erosion, sedimentation and water-quality conditions.

- 22) W 9.3.2 The County shall support plans and projects to improve the conditions of overstocked forestlands, especially around communities-at-risk, to reduce the potential adverse impacts from wildfires, to protect watersheds, habitats and reduce excessive evapotranspiration losses.
- 23) W 9.5.6 The County, in coordination with local water service purveyors, wildfire protection agencies and local fire protection agencies, shall ensure consistent and adequate standards for fire flows and fire protection for new development, with the protection of human life and property as the primary objectives.

The County has not adopted the new standards for development yet resulting from the policies adopted in the 2013 General Plan. County zoning code is to go through a revision process and an annual report on progress in order for the zoning code to implement the General Plan. The District reported that the lack of updated standards poses a challenge in providing proper fire protection.

In 2007, the Board of Supervisors formed the Emergency Services Advisory Committee to “evaluate the funding feasibility of providing uniform and comprehensive emergency services to all of Plumas County.” The Committee attempted to look for opportunities to increase funding for emergency services but faced a considerable challenge in the difficult economic times. It focused on mitigating efforts through building and development standards improvements and the General Plan update process and encouraging local fire service providers to share resources and realize economies of scale in preparing grant applications, conducting training and engaging in other joint programs.

According to the District, the County sends Beckwourth FD plans for proposed construction for review and input, but only for existing subdivisions and not for new developments.

In 2010, Beckwourth FD conducted a consolidation study in which it explored the possibility of consolidating with EPRFPD. The conclusion reached was that although consolidation is inevitable in the future, right now all parties are not agreeable on various terms. If EPRFPD were to take on parcel fees, consolidation may be financially sound, as reported by Beckwourth FD.

The current consolidation effort of the Eastern Plumas Fire Agencies in 2021 is the furthest these efforts have gone to date. The four agencies that are participating have issued an RFP and hired a consultant to perform a feasibility study that meets LAFCO’s requirements for formation of a new combined district, which was selected by the study group as the best option forward. This effort is more critical than ever for the community as the agencies are struggling to survive financially and maintain sufficient volunteer fire fighters to do the job as currently configured.

Financing

The District reports that current financing levels are adequate to deliver services; however, Beckwourth FD reported that it is constantly in search of more income to be able to provide current and better services and equipment. It was also reported that the 2008 recession had a negative impact on the District’s revenue streams, as planned developments

within its boundaries were on hold and the growth in assessed values for property taxes had been low and many properties were in default on taxes and emergency services assessments. The District has relied on strike team funds from wildfires to close the funding gap and to upgrade equipment over the last 4 to 5 years. The District has moved to a hybrid staffing model due to difficulty in recruiting and maintaining volunteers. This has made it more difficult to fund all the necessary reserves and replacement funds necessary. The hybrid model has led to better and faster service to the community.

The County keeps accounts for the District’s finances and tracks revenues and expenditures. The District’s total revenues for FY 19-20 were \$295,918. Revenue sources include property taxes (32 percent), benefit assessments (23 percent), Strike team (32 percent), state aid (zero percent), charges for services (one half percent), and other revenue (one sixth percent). Benefit assessments are charged on properties recently annexed into the District. The District has three areas that pay assessment fees. The first is Grizzly Ranch and was built by a developer in 2003. As part of the negotiation with the County and the BFD they were required to build a Fire Station on Grizzly Road adjacent to the development and dedicated to the BFD. They also built a water and sewer system with water storage and 86 fire hydrants, back up generators and emergency fire pumps. The current annual assessment is \$223 per lot with a 2% inflation escalator annually. There are 333 lots in Grizzly Ranch, approximately 20% of the lots are in default on their taxes and assessment fees currently. The second assessment area is the Grizzly Ranch / Sierra Valley development annexed into the district in 2005 the current annual assessment is \$79 per parcel with a 2% escalator. There are 378 lots in this assessment area. The third assessment area was annexed into the District in 2011. The annual assessment is \$179 per parcel with a 2% escalator. There are 21 lots in this assessment

Beckwourth FD charges fees for conducting inspections and responding to wild land fires. The District has a commercial, industrial and residential special inspection fee schedule. The service fees paid to the District for responding to wild land fires as a Cooperating Agency under Assistance by Hire are the same for all Districts that respond to a federal incident. The rates for the personnel responding to an incident are based on comparative salary survey of representative paid fire districts and departments and are updated annually. The District also charges for out-of-area service agreements. Sierra Health Foundation began contracting for services from the District at \$10,000 per year; contract payments are increased two percent annually. Their 2020 annual payment is \$14,213.00, which is paid in quarterly payments.

Figure 5-6: Beckwourth FD Revenues and Expenditures

Income/Expenses	FY 19/20 Budgeted	FY 19/20 Actual	FY 20/21 Budgeted
<i>Income</i>			
General tax revenue	\$ 67,050	\$ 68,260	\$ 65,108
Special assessment	118,668	93,434	92,800
Interest	500	2,085	0
State grants	2,340	0	0
Strike Team	0	96,721	0
Federal other	5,400	0	5,400

Contract Fire Fees	13,661	17,026	14,213
Training	500	550	500
Donations	2,000	4,050	2,500
Other	13,050	13,792	0
Total Revenues	223,169	295,918	180,521
Expenses			
Salaries & Benefits	\$ 117,289	\$ 110,634	\$ 117,693
Services & Supplies	85,930	87,000	83,246
Capital Outlays	19,950	54,950	13,950
Other Expenditures	0	0	0
Total Expense	223,169	252,584	214,889
Net Income	\$ 0	\$ 43,334	(\$ 34,638)

Beckwourth FD expenditures were \$252,584 in FY 19-20. Of this amount, 34 percent was spent on services and supplies, 43 percent on salaries and wages, 22 percent on fixed assets which included a type 1 Fire Engine purchased from CAL-OES and the remainder was spent on a compressor and accessories for filling air packs. In FY 19-20, revenues exceeded expenditures by \$43,334. The 43 percent on salaries was high due to the strike team assignments that brought in \$96,721 which pushed the overall payroll percentage higher.

The District does have a capital improvement plan; it currently plans expenditures for capital improvement projects on an annual basis in the annual budgets. Capital improvements are financed through capital reserves which are set aside for specific uses such as repair and replacement. Operational reserve has been created and the District has started to fund these reserves in the FY 20-21 budget. The District also does fundraising through selling T-shirts and reflective signs.

The District routinely identifies additional funding opportunities, one of which is to apply for more grants. The current grants awarded in 2021 to BFD are.

1. Cal Fire FFP grant for wildland and structure fire PPE
Grant amount \$39,440 with a 50% matching funds required.
BFD reimbursement \$19,720 Total
2. FEMA / Department of Homeland Security Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG)
Grant amount \$148,799 with a 5% matching funds required.
BFD reimbursement \$148,713 Total
Replacement of SCBA's for BFD

Additionally, the township of Beckwourth Tax Rate Area 53-138, does not have a parcel rate attached to it, therefore, BFD is not receiving property tax revenue from this tax rate area, although it was part of the District's original boundaries.

The County reported that only those areas that had existing taxes in place prior to 1977 contribute a share of the property tax base to the districts. Before the passage of Proposition 13, Districts had the ability to set the tax rate at will. With the passage of Proposition 13, the tax rate was frozen as of a certain date. The County does not have a procedure for renegotiating tax sharing for existing developed areas, only for annexations on a case-by-case basis and only for a portion of any future tax increases, not for the base. Fire district law allows districts to hold parcel tax elections in order to raise tax revenue.

FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

Service Overview

Beckwourth FD provides structural fire suppression, wild land fire suppression, emergency response, basic life support, rescue and limited fire prevention programs. Prevention programs include performing educational activities with children at the local elementary school, nearby summer camp, conducting inspections, issuing burn permits, patrolling and checking on burn permits, and putting up signs and warnings. Additionally, the District has been more active working with the many Firewise committees in our jurisdiction.

Collaboration

The District has mutual aid agreements with SVVFPD, City of Loyalton FD, USFS, Sierra County FPD, EPRFPD, and EPHC. It engages in joint trainings with fire departments from Plumas and other counties. The District is a member of the Fire Chief's Association, Special District Association of Plumas County, California Special District Association, National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), and International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC)

Dispatch

The County Sheriff is the Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP); consequently, most land line emergency calls (9-1-1 calls) are directed to the Sheriff. Most cell phone emergency calls (9-1-1 calls) are answered by CHP and redirected to the Sheriff. The Sheriff provides dispatching for most fire providers in the County except for the ones in the northern part of the County, which are served by the CHP Susanville Dispatch Center. The Forest Service has its own dispatch. The Sheriff Dispatch Center has a first responder map, which it uses to identify which provider to dispatch to an incident. All territory within the County has a determined first responder; although, many areas lie outside the LAFCo approved boundary of the districts and lack an officially designated fire provider.

When multiple providers respond to an incident in Beckwourth FD's service area, they use the incident command model. The chief assigns other service providers tasks as needed.

Staffing

Beckwourth FD has 30 sworn personnel—one fire chief, two division chiefs, two, captains, two engineers, and firefighters. five of these positions are Duty Officers who are part time paid personnel. The rest of the firefighters are entitled to compensation when they respond to wild land fires. The median age of the fire fighters is 50, with a range from 23 to 77. Currently, the staff is as follows: There are 31 members with varying positions that include division chiefs, part-time paid duty officers, captains, engineers, senior firefighters, firefighters, and auxiliary members. All members are required to be medically certified at a minimum of EMR.

The District reports that its staffing levels have increased significantly since January 2021 when the City of Portola contracted with BFD for fire and medical services. The District conducts weekly trainings. On the first Monday of each month there is a business meeting, on the second and third Mondays there are fire trainings, and on the fourth they conduct

EMS training. The District also holds state certified classes and NWCG classes that typically take place on Saturdays and Sundays. These classes are open to any and all state fire departments. The District does not have a minimum required amount of training hours, but if a firefighter misses three months of training, he or she becomes inactive.

Facilities and Capacity

Beckwourth FD operates two fire stations within its boundaries. In addition, the District now operates and staffs the two stations in the City of Portola by contract. Station 1 is located in Beckwourth and was built in 1948. The last addition to the station was done in 2003-04. Station 2, on Grizzly Road, was built in 2006. The District owns both stations. Station 1 is staffed from ten in the morning to four in the afternoon. There are always two to three people at a time staffing the station, including administrative personnel. Station 2, shared with USFS, is staffed from nine in the morning till seven in the afternoon in summer months and from eight in the morning to five in the afternoon during the rest of the year. Five people, all of whom are USFS personnel, usually staff the station. Station 2 is also operated by Beckwourth FD volunteers who typically respond from their work or residence. Station 3 and Station 4 are in Portola and were both renovated in early 2021 and are staffed by part time duty officers and a volunteer Portola Division of fire fighters. Stations 3 and 4 are described in greater detail in the City of Portola's chapter.

Station 1, which is the main station, was reported to be in fair condition. It is used to house vehicles, for training purposes and as an administrative office. Station 2 was reported to be in excellent condition. It is shared with USFS, which has a small office and a wild land engine there. Station 1 houses one Type 1 engine, one Type 3 engine, two Patrols, and one Type 1 water tender. Station 2 is used to store one Type 1 engine, one utility/response vehicle, and one Type 3 engine that belongs to USFS. There is also a command vehicle, which is used by the chief and is usually kept at his place of residence.¹⁸

The Beckwourth Fire District has access to fire flows. Total water storage available is 650,000 gallons. Flow range from 1,000 gpm to 1,500 gpm and PSI is 60.

Currently, the District has the capacity to provide adequate services within its boundary area. However, it is anticipated that as expanded planned developments are completed, Beckwourth FD will need additional stations.

Infrastructure Needs

Station 1 requires upgrades. It needs new asphalt that would cost approximately \$80,000-\$100,000 and replacement of a portion of the roof that is estimated to be about \$10,000, additional funding is needed for engine bay exhaust upgrades and rot of siding in general around the station. There are currently plans to address these needs in the capital improvement program.

Station 2 is a newer station and does not require any upgrades. The District just up graded its water tender and also acquired an additional water tender through the

¹⁸ Station 1- 500-gallon Type 3 wild land, 5000-gallon water tender, 800-gallon Type 1 structure and wild land, 100 gallon medical/patrol utility. Station 2 - 800-gallon type 1, 500-gallon Type 3 USFS, 500-gallon Type 3 BEC, Medical Patrol/Utility BEC.

Government Surplus program in 2021. A majority of the vehicles have been replaced recently. The command vehicle assigned to the Chief was also replaced in late 2020. The Type 1 engine at Station 2 was just upgraded with a 2007 American La France Eagle engine. The 1989 Peirce type 1 is now in reserve status.

Challenges

The District reported several challenges to providing adequate services:

- ❖ A residence on Cub Lane is extremely difficult to get to during an incident. There is an easement instead of a driveway, and only a pickup truck is able drive up to the house.
- ❖ A similar challenge exists at a residence off of Grizzly Road. The driveway is at a 45-degree angle and none of the larger engines can drive up to the house.
- ❖ The District does not have the ability to provide full hazardous materials service. It is only able to contain a threat and wait for the hazmat team.
- ❖ Due to the local recession, the District's tax income has been reduced and planned developments are presently on hold.
- ❖ Due to the local recession and the COVID-19 pandemic, tax assessment defaults at Grizzly Ranch are at 20 percent which is affecting income to the District significantly.

Some of the opportunities for service improvement mentioned by the District include looking for additional grants and possible reorganization with three other fire providers. In 2019 the District executed an MOU with the other local fire providers in Eastern Plumas County. That committee has made significant progress in evaluating consolidation. A consultant has been selected to conduct a feasibility study in order to provide information needed for LAFCO to approve a new district formation. BFD and the City of Portola signed a contract that went into effect as of February 1, 2021, for Beckwourth Fire District to assume fire and EMS services for a two-year period. This is a good initial step to a larger and complete reorganization.

Service Adequacy

While there are several benchmarks that may define the level of fire service provided by an agency, indicators of service adequacy discussed here include ISO ratings, response times, and level of staffing and station resources for the service area.

Fire services in the communities are classified by the Insurance Service Office (ISO), an advisory organization. This classification indicates the general adequacy of coverage. Communities with the best fire department facilities, systems for water distribution, fire alarms and communications, and equipment and personnel receive a rating of 1. Beckwourth FD has an ISO rating of 5/7/10. Grizzly Ranch, Grizzly Creek Ranch and Crocker Estates have a rating of 5, the southern area of County Road A-23 has a rating of 10, and the remainder of the District has a rating of 7. The ISO rating was last updated in 2010. The rating of 5 is achieved in the mentioned communities because of the three water service

providers operating within them, Grizzly Ranch CSD, Grizzly Creek Ranch/Sierra Health Foundation and Grizzly Lake CSD, and consequently the additional water supply.

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) has issued a performance standard for volunteer and combination fire departments (NFPA 1720). This standard, among other guidelines, identifies target response time performance for structure fires. The response time is measured from the completion of the dispatch notification to the arrival time of the first-responder at the scene. Though not a legal mandate, NFPA 1720 does provide a useful benchmark against which to measure fire department performance. NFPA 1720 recommends that the response times for structure fire be nine minutes in urban demand zones at least 90 percent of the time, 10 minutes in suburban zones at least 80 percent of the time and 14 minutes in rural zones at least 80 percent of the time. Response times in remote zones are directly dependent on travel distances.¹⁹

Emergency response time standards vary by level of urbanization of an area: the more urban an area, the faster a response has to be. The California EMS Agency established the following response time guidelines: five minutes in urban areas, 15 minutes in suburban or rural areas, and as quickly as possible in wild land areas. The District's response zones include the rural and wilderness classifications. The District tracks each incident's response time. Sometimes it takes a minute to respond, but other times it may take more than ten depending on the time of day and the area. The average response time is five minutes. An area that Beckwourth FD can improve upon is calculating its median and 90th percentile response times.

The service area size for each fire station varies between fire districts. The median fire station in eastern Plumas serves approximately 20 square miles. Sierra Valley FPD serves the most expansive area, with 111 square miles served per station on average. Densely populated areas tend to have smaller service areas. For example, the average service area for the City of Portola is 3.8 square miles. By comparison, each fire station in Beckwourth FD serves approximately 39.5 square miles.

The number of firefighters serving within a particular jurisdiction is another indicator of level of service; however, it is approximate. The providers' call firefighters may have differing availability and reliability. A district with more firefighters could have fewer resources if scheduling availability is restricted. Staffing levels in eastern Plumas County vary considerably from department to department.

¹⁹ Urban demand zone has population density of more than 1,000 people per square mile; suburban zone—between 500 and 1,000 people per square mile, rural zone—less than 500 people per square mile, and remote zone is identified by eight or more miles of travel distance to an incident.

Figure 5-7: Beckwourth Fire District Fire Profile

Fire Service					
Facilities					
Fire station	Location	Condition	Staff per Shift	Vehicles	
Station 1, 180 Main Street	Beckwourth CA 96129	Good	2-3 District staff including administrative staff	1 Type 1 engine, 2 Type 3 engines, 2 water tenders, 2 Type 4 engines.	
Station 2, 4076 Grizzly Road	Portola, CA 96122	Excellent	5 USFS staff	1 Type 1 engine, 2 Type 4 engines, 1 Type 3 engine that belongs to USFS.	
Facility Sharing					
Current Practices: The District currently shares Station 2 with the USFS. The meeting room at Station 1 is used by various groups for community events and the Hospital uses the room for an annual vaccination clinic.					
Future and new opportunities: The District uses the City of Portola's Southside Station large meeting room as a training hub for fire trainings now that Portola and BF District are combined services.					
Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies					
Station 1 needs asphalt repairs and building repairs to the roof and siding.					
District Resource Statistics		Service Configuration		Service Demand	
Staffing Base Year	2021	Configuration Base Year	2021	Statistical Base Year	2021
Fire Stations District & Portola	4	Fire Suppression	Direct	Total Service Calls thru June 30, 2021	167
Stations Serving District & Portola	4	EMS	Direct	% EMS	67%
Sq. Miles Served/Station District only	40	Ambulance Transport	EPHCD	% Fire/Haz Mat	10%
Total Staff ²	32	Hazardous Materials	Direct	% False	1%
Total Full-time Firefighters	0	Air Rescue/Amb. Helicopter	Care Flight	% Misc. emergency	12%
Total Call Firefighters	30	Fire Suppression Helicopter	USFS, CalFire	% Non-emergency	10%
Total Sworn Staff per Station inc. Portola	7.5	Public Safety Answering Point	Sheriff	% Mutual Aid Calls	Unk
		Fire/EMS Dispatch	Sheriff		
Service Adequacy			Service Challenges		
Response Time Base Year	2010	The District is paged out for non-emergency and non-department relevant services, which needs to be revised with dispatch to prioritize responses for emergencies.			
Median Response Time (min)	NP	Training			
90th Percentile Response Time (min)	NP				

ISO Rating	5/7/2010	Firefighters train every Monday. On the first Monday is a business meeting, on the second and third Monday there are fire trainings, and the fourth Monday is EMS training. If a firefighter misses three months of training, he or she becomes inactive.
<i>Mutual & Automatic Aid Agreements</i>		
The District has mutual aid agreements with SVVFD, City of Loyalton FD, USFS, Sierra County FPD, EPHCD, and EPRFPD.		
Notes:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Primary service area (square miles) per station. 2) Total staff includes sworn and non-sworn personnel. 3) Based on ratio of sworn full-time and call staff to the number of stations. Actual staffing levels of each station vary. 		

BECKWOURTH FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT DETERMINATIONS

Growth and Population Projections

- ❖ Despite economic difficulties and stalled developments, the population of the District is expected to grow minimally over the next few years.

The Location and Characteristics of Disadvantaged Unincorporated Communities Within or Contiguous to the Agency's SOI

- ❖ Based on American Community Survey 2016-2020 Census Tract information, the entirety of the study area and the boundaries within and immediately adjacent to each of the five reviewed fire providers is defined as disadvantaged. While the City of Portola is incorporated, the remainder of the territory meets the definition of a disadvantaged unincorporated community as defined in Water Code §79505.5. Census Tract 000300 encompasses the entirety of the service area and has a population of 4,484 comprising 2,051 households with a median income of \$48,238.

Present and Planned Capacity of Public Facilities and Adequacy of Public Services, Including Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies

- ❖ The District's current facilities have the capacity to adequately serve current demand, but not future growth. When planned developments are constructed, the District will need to evaluate the need for additional stations.
- ❖ It is recommended that the County Sheriff's Office and the local paid ambulance service work with the fire districts to develop a dispatch protocol that makes sense for a volunteer fire service. It is critical to the long-term viability of volunteer departments that a tiered dispatch is developed so the District is only dispatched to necessary emergencies.
- ❖ The District will need to institute some capital projects at its headquarters including new asphalt and replacement of a portion of the roof at Station 1 including other miscellaneous upgrades.
- ❖ Currently, capital improvement projects are identified in the annual budget. The District has adopted reserve policies and will need to do a replacement study of its assets and continue to fund the reserves funds annually.
- ❖ An area that Beckwourth FD could improve upon is tracking and calculating its median and 90th percentile response times.

Financial Ability of Agencies to Provide Services

- ❖ The District reports that current financing levels are adequate to deliver services. The District does have a short fall in its Capital and repair and replacement programs.

- ❖ Beckwourth FD is searching for additional revenue sources to provide enhanced service levels.
- ❖ The District hopes to increase its funding by applying for grants, ensuring all parcels are contributing property taxes and annexing additional territories.

Status of, and Opportunities for, Shared Facilities

- ❖ Beckwourth FD collaborates with other fire providers in Plumas County, and outside of it, through mutual aid agreements and memberships in the Fire Chiefs Association, Special District Association of Plumas County, and NFPA.
- ❖ The District shares its Station 2 with USFS and provides its meeting hall for community and hospital events.
- ❖ The District now contracts with the City of Portola to provide fire and emergency services. This is a critical step in what is hoped to be a larger consolidation project in Eastern Plumas County.

Accountability for Community Service Needs, Including Governmental Structure and Operational Efficiencies

- ❖ Beckwourth FD demonstrated accountability and transparency by disclosing financial and service-related information in response to LAFCo requests.
- ❖ Generally, the fire districts have been challenged in maintaining full and legally-seated governing bodies. Over the last decade, the districts have failed to appropriately renew terms for already seated members, have appointed board members that do not meet the legal requirements to sit on the board, and have failed to inform the County Clerk regarding any changes to their board members.
- ❖ A governmental structure option is reorganization with other neighboring fire service providers, which offers opportunities for shared resources and finances.
- ❖ Beckwourth FD is conducting a consolidation study with four other local departments including City of Portola, Gold Mountain CSD, and Sierra Valley VFD. The feasibility study has determined that formation of a new fire district is a practical and affordable solution to many of the challenges faced by fire providers in the region.

6. EASTERN PLUMAS RURAL FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

Eastern Plumas Rural Fire Protection District (EPRFPD) provides structural fire suppression, wildland fire suppression, emergency response, basic life support, rescue and occasional fire prevention programs.²⁰ A municipal service review was last completed for the District in 2011.

AGENCY OVERVIEW

Background

EPRFPD was formed in 1975 as an independent special district to provide structural fire, emergency medical and emergency rescue services.²¹ The reason for its formation was the need to provide fire protection to the growing urban areas around the City of Portola. For the first few years EPRFPD contracted with the City of Portola for the provision of fire and emergency services within the District's boundaries.²² Eventually, EPRFPD started providing fire suppression, emergency services, rescue and some fire prevention programs on its own.

The principal act that governs the District is the Fire Protection District Law of 1987.²³ The principal act empowers fire districts to provide fire protection, rescue, emergency medical, hazardous material response, ambulance, and any other services relating to the protection of lives and property.²⁴ Districts must apply and obtain LAFCo approval to exercise services authorized by the principal act but not already provided (i.e., latent powers) by the district at the end of 2000.

EPRFPD is located in the eastern part of Plumas County, in the high Sierra Mountains. The District surrounds the City of Portola and borders Beckwourth Fire Protection District in the northeast.

Boundaries

EPRFPD's boundary is entirely within Plumas County. The initial boundaries extended north to the Carmichael Ranch, south to Iron Horse Rancho, east to the end of Meadow Way, and west to include the Maybe area. The present bounds encompass approximately eight square miles,²⁵ 98 percent of which is rural and wild land.²⁶ The boundary area consists of two non-contiguous parts. The larger part surrounds the City of Portola and stretches from

²⁰ Trent Saxton, *FEMA Fire House Grant Application*, 2009, Fire Department Characteristics Part I, p. 1.

²¹ Plumas LAFCo, Resolution No. 75-2766.

²² John Gullixson, Plumas LAFCo, EPRFPD Municipal Service Review & Sphere of Influence Amendment, 2007, p. 7.

²³ Health and Safety Code §13800-13970.

²⁴ Health and Safety Code §13862.

²⁵ Total agency area calculated in GIS software based on agency boundaries as of July 1, 2011. The data is not considered survey quality.

²⁶ Trent Saxton, *FEMA Fire House Grant Application*, 2009, Fire Department Characteristics Part I, p. 1.

Willow Creek in the west to Grizzly Ranch in the east. The smaller of the two areas is located by Lake Davis. The existing boundaries of the District are shown in Figure 6-2.

Plumas LAFCo and Board of Equalization records indicate there have been five annexations to the District and six detachments from the District, since EPRFPD was formed. All recorded boundary changes are shown in Figure 6-1. The most recent annexation took place in 2010 and involved 93.6 acres of the Ridges Properties.²⁷

Figure 6-1: EPRFPD Boundary History

<i>Project Name</i>	<i>Type of Action</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Recording Agency</i>
Eastern Plumas Rural Fire Protection District	Formation	1975	LAFCo, SBOE
Northern Area, Lake Davis Rt	Detachment	1984	LAFCo, SBOE
Les Premo Territory	Annexation	1984	LAFCo, SBOE
Joy Way Territory	Detachment	1984	LAFCo, SBOE
West Side Territory	Annexation	1990	LAFCo, SBOE
Francisco Territory	Detachment	1995	SBOE
Lake Davis Area	Annexation	1998	LAFCo, SBOE
Portola 192	Detachment	1999	SBOE
North Joy Way	Detachment	2002	LAFCo, SBOE
Joy Parcels	Annexation	2007	LAFCo, SBOE
The Ridges Properties	Annexation	2010	LAFCo
Southeastern portion of Grizzly Ranch property	Detachment	2010	LAFCo
Sierra Health Foundation/Rocky Point Road	Detachment	2011	LAFCo, SBOE

Sphere of Influence

The SOI for EPRFPD was first adopted in 1975. The District’s SOI was amended in 2007 and most recently updated in 2012.²⁸ The current SOI includes areas southeast of its boundary along A-15, west along SR 70 to Mohawk Vista, and north of SR 70. In addition, the Gold Mountain Community Service District (GMCSO) territory is included in the District’s SOI.²⁹ EPRFPD’s existing SOI excludes the City of Portola. According to EPRFPD’s 2007 MSR, the reason for inclusion of these communities and private developments into the District’s SOI was that this extension would allow for a “streamlined approach for future annexations to the most logical service provider.” In the 2012 SOI study and the subsequently adopted SOI, the Sphere line between the Beckwourth Fire Protection District and the Eastern Plumas Rural Fire Protection District was adjusted from the middle of Lake Davis to the eastern shore of the Lake.

The current SOI encompasses approximately 22.5 square miles, of which approximately one-third is within the District’s boundaries.

²⁷ The Ridges Annexation has been approved by LAFCo but not yet been annexed or recorded. The LAFCo approval will expire if annexation is not completed within one year of commission approval.

²⁸ LAFCo Resolution 2012-0005.

²⁹ Plumas LAFCo, Eastern Plumas Rural Fire Protection District Municipal Service Review and Sphere of Influence Amendment, 2007, p. 28.

Extra-territorial Services

Through an informal agreement with the Sheriff's Office, which is discussed in more detail in the Fire Service Section in this chapter, the District responds outside of its boundaries. The District's service area extends to the north and south of the boundary and encompasses about 37 square miles compared to eight miles of boundary area.

Additionally, EPRFPD provides contract services to C-Road Community Services District and Gold Mountain Community Services District. In 2014, C-Road CSD began contracting for fire protection and EMS services with EPRFPD. The contract is to be semiannually and extends annually automatically. Responses within C-Road CSD's boundaries are relatively low; for the basis of the determining the contract fees it was assumed there would be approximately five fire protection responses and 10 emergency responses per year. C-Road CSD pays a total annual payment of \$7,500 to EPRFPD for services. Fire Station #4 and the equipment located there continues to be owned by C-Road CSD. C-Road CSD is responsible for insurance on the station and the fire trucks.

Gold Mountain CSD contracted with the City of Portola fire and EMS services from formation in 1996 through 2018. With the City disbanding its fire department in 2018, GMCSO began contracting with EPRFPD for fire and EMS continuing to this date. As EPRFPD also assumed contract services for the City of Portola, and with limited options, the District agreed to contract directly with EPRFPD for services equivalent to those previously provided by the City. Initially on a one-year contract for \$35,000, the District agreed to renew in 2019 on a three year contract starting at \$36,050 with an annual 3 percent escalation option. GMCSO is currently working with City of Portola, the Beckwourth Fire District (BFD), and the Sierra Valley Volunteer Fire Department (SVFD) to explore the feasibility of establishing a new overarching fire district covering the SOIs of the City and three independent districts. Should the reorganization be successful, GMCSO will divest itself of fire protection services and cease receiving contract services.

EPRFPD maintains a mutual aid agreement with Beckwourth FD and is a member of the countywide mutual aid agreement, both of which occasionally require the District to respond and support incidents outside of its boundaries and service area.

Areas of Interest

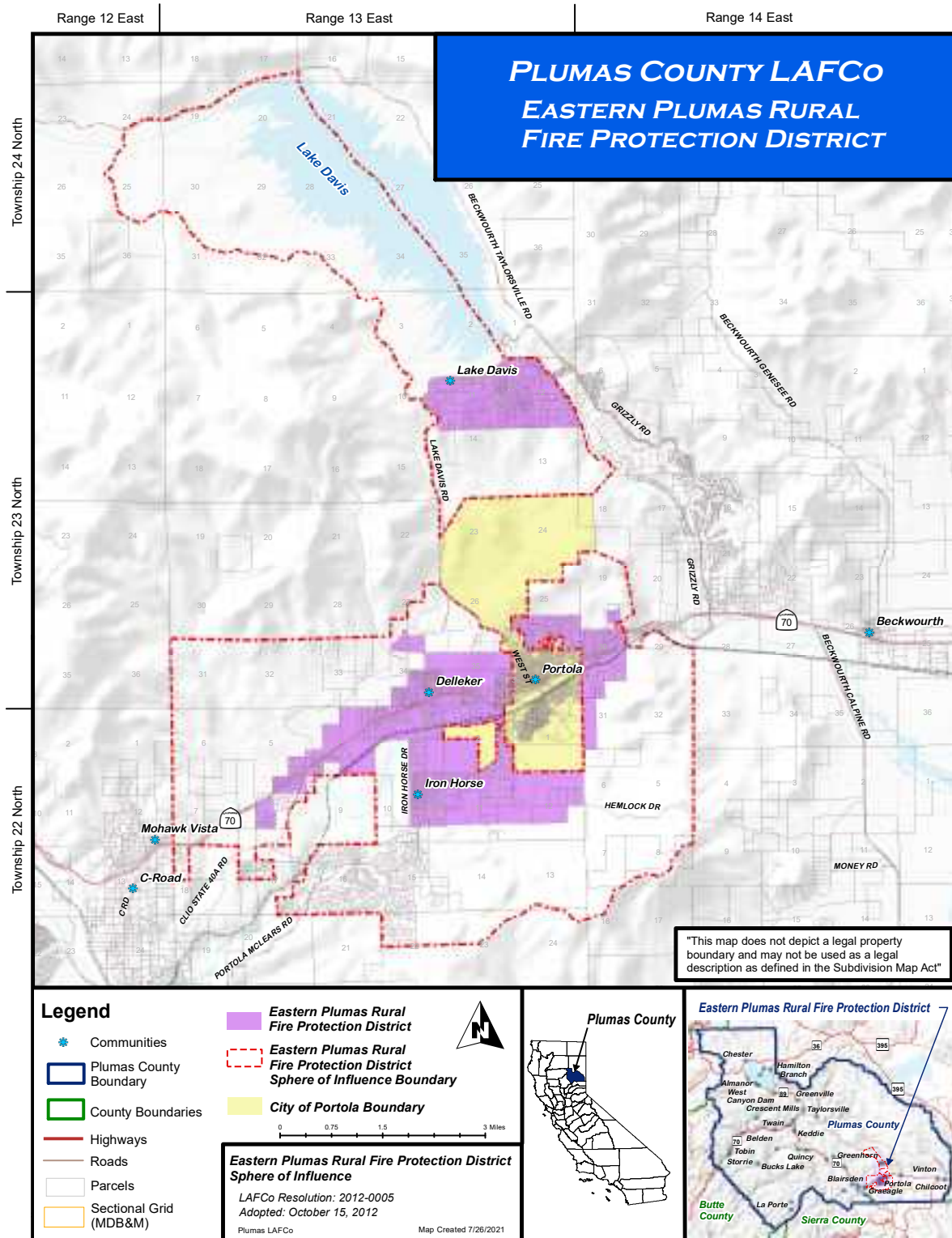
EPRFPD reported a number of areas of interest where there were 1) challenges due to limited access, 2) areas lacking a designated service provider, 3) areas with the potential for miscommunication regarding the proper first responder, or 4) overlapping service providers:³⁰

- ❖ The area between the border of the City of Portola along Lake Davis Road and the border of the District has no designated provider. At this time, EPRFPD responds to Lake Davis Road from north of Depersia Road to Grizzly Road, north along the east and west side of Lake Davis providing service to the campgrounds only.

³⁰ Interview with Keith Clark, EPRFPD Fire Chief, November 7, 2010.

- ❖ During incidents, there is sometime confusion regarding who serves the finger areas in the northeastern part of the City of Portola along Manzanita Street, Chaparral Street, Loyaltan Avenue, Magnolia Avenue, and Sagebrush Avenue.
- ❖ In 2010, the District reported that it was concerned that other fire service providers are providing service within the District's SOI. Over the course of this review, the District indicated that this continues to be the case.

Figure 6-2: EPRFPD Boundaries and SOI



Accountability and Governance

The principal act orders that the governing body of a fire protection district must have an odd number of members, with a minimum of three and a maximum of 11 members. Directors may be appointed or elected.³¹ EPRFPD is governed by a five-member board of directors who are elected to staggered four-year terms. All five current Board Member were appointed in lieu of election by the County Board of Supervisors as the positions were unopposed or became available midterm. Current board member names, positions, and term expiration dates are shown in Figure 6-3.

The Board meets once a month on the third Monday at the Delleker station at 6:30 pm. Board meeting agendas are posted on the bulletin board outside of the station and on website. Minutes of every board meeting are available online and upon request from the secretary. The District maintains a website where documents are made available to the public. The website is not fully complete yet and continues to be a work in progress.

Figure 6-3: EPRFPD Governing Body

Eastern Plumas Rural Fire Protection District				
<i>District Contact Information</i>				
Contact:	Board Chair, Jeanne Graham			
Address:	141 Delleker Road, Portola, CA 96122			
Telephone:	530-832-5626			
Email/Website:	https://eprfpd.specialdistrict.org/			
<i>Board of Directors</i>				
Member Name	Position	Term Expiration	Manner of Selection	Length of Term
Jeanne Graham	Chair	December-23	Appointed (in lieu)	4 years
Audrey Mitrevics	Director	December-23	Appointed	2 years
Kevin Sankey	Director	December-25	Appointed (in lieu)	4 years
Angelina Sutcliffe	Director	December-25	Appointed	4 years
Dave Rudolph	Director	December-23	Appointed	4 years
<i>Meetings</i>				
Date:	Third Monday of every month at 6:30pm			
Location:	Delleker Station			
Agenda Distribution:	Posted outside of Delleker Station and on website			
Minutes Distribution:	Available online and provided upon request			

In addition to the required agendas and minutes, the District does public outreach through one fundraiser – a fishing derby at Lake Davis annually.

³¹ Health and Safety Code §13842.

If a customer is dissatisfied with District's services, complaints may be submitted to the fire chief, district secretary, on the website, or directly to the Board. In the past, most of EPRFPD's complaints were regarding former staff and possible reorganization. The District reported the only formal complaint is in the form of a law suit from former staff in 2020, which is ongoing, and three formal Cease and Desist communications regarding concerns of violations of Brown Act requirements by the District to date in 2022. These communications indicated concerns of 1) preventing members of the public from commenting on agenda items, 2) delayed communication of a Director's resignation, and 3) not properly posting an agenda on the District's website prior to a meeting.

EPRFPD demonstrated accountability and transparency in its disclosure of information and cooperation with Plumas LAFCo. While delayed, the District ultimately participated in an interview and cooperated with the document requests.

Planning and Management Practices

Daily operations are managed by the Chief and the Secretary. There are 15 staff, of which, only the secretary and fire chief are paid. The Chief receives a stipend and the secretary is paid an hourly rate. The fire chief dedicates about 25 hours a week to district operations. The secretary puts in approximately 10 to 12 hours per week. All other personnel are volunteers. They include one battalion chief, one captain, one lieutenant, one medical officer, and 13 volunteer fire fighters.

Personnel are accountable to the chief. The chief reports to the Board of Directors at meetings. The chief does not perform formal employee evaluations. He makes himself available to discuss any issues on an as-needed basis.

The District tracks its staff workload by incident and by person responding. Personnel also track equipment and its maintenance by recording it in logs. EPRFPD records training hours for each volunteer. Additionally, the District reportedly conducts performance evaluations of staff. All volunteers are drug tested, and the District runs a Department of Motor Vehicles check.

EPRFPD reported performing no evaluations of overall district performance, such as benchmarking or annual reports. However, the District does meet with the two contract agencies annually to review performance and every two years to evaluate contract requirements with the agencies during renewal.

The District's financial planning efforts include an annually adopted budget and occasional audit by outside auditors. The District is required to complete an audit at least every five years; however, the most recent audit took place in 2014. The District is currently undergoing a multi-year audit to bring the District in to compliance. The District provided two adopted budgets: one for FY20-21 and another for FY21-22. EPRFPD does not adopt other planning documents, such as a capital improvement plan or master plan.

Existing Demand and Growth Projections

Ninety-eight percent of the existing land uses within the District's boundary area are agricultural and undeveloped properties, with some forest zones. Residential, commercial and industrial uses are mostly concentrated around the City of Portola. There are some

residential and recreational areas in the Lake Davis portion of the District.³² The District's boundaries encompass a total of nine square miles.

Population

As of 2008, the District's boundary area included 5,284 acres, 1,486 residential unit equivalents, 827 structures, and 1,443 lots.³³ Based on average household size throughout the County of 2.21 people during the period of 2016-2020,³⁴ the estimated population within EPRFPD's boundaries is 3,284.

Additionally, the District serves the populations of C-Road and Gold Mountain CSDs by contract. C-Road CSD has an estimated population of 133,³⁵ of which a significant majority is seasonal. The permanent population of C-Road is unknown. Gold Mountain CSD has a permanent population of approximately 76 based on GIS analysis of Census data and seasonal population of up to 180 individuals in the residential structures and a substantial number of additional seasonal guests at the hotel, rental units, and resort.

Existing Demand

The District reported having fluctuating peak demand, with no regular pattern of peak periods. Calls for medical emergencies are consistently high throughout the year, similar to other providers.

EPRFPD did not provide the number of service calls received over the last five years. However, it did provide a breakdown of calls received in 2021, which totaled 262 calls for service. Between 2010 and 2021 calls increased by approximately 118 percent, a portion of which is due to additional calls from C-Road and Gold Mountain CSDs through the initiation of contract services to these areas during that time period.

Projected Growth and Development

The agency anticipates little or no growth in population and similarly in service demand within the District in the next few years; however, no formal population projections have been made by the District.

The State Department of Finance (DOF) projects that the population of Plumas County will decline by 0.27 percent annually through 2040. Based on these projections, the District's population would decline from 3,284 in 2020 to approximately 3,111 in 2040. It is anticipated that demand for service within the District will remain at least constant based on the DOF population growth projections through 2040 given the seasonal recreational and wildfire demand for services on the fire and EMS providers in the area.

The District reported that to their knowledge there are no new or proposed developments within EPRFPD's boundaries.

³² Plumas County Online Parcel Application.

³³ Eastern Plumas Rural Fire Protection District- *2008 Annexations, Analysis of Fiscal Effects*, 2008, Attachment 1.

³⁴ United States Census Bureau, Quick Facts Plumas County, California, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/plumascountycalifornia/PST045221> accessed on September 11, 2022.

³⁵ Based on approximately 60 residential structures and the countywide average household size of 2.21.

While growth in demand over the next 10 years is anticipated to be minimal, the District faces challenges providing adequate services to the existing population and will face similar challenges providing adequate service levels to any increase in demand in the future without additional funding.

Growth Strategies

The District is not a land use authority and does not hold primary responsibility for implementing growth strategies. The land use authority for unincorporated areas is the County.

The County enforces the codes that it has enforcement power over, which does not encompass all State fire codes. The County ensures that new construction meets the requirements of the latest adopted edition of the California Building Standards. The County enforces the County codes that have been adopted in lieu of the California Fire Safe regulations. The County does not have authority to enforce PRC 4291, which requires defensible space around structures; however, the County does have some enforcement authority over vegetation removal around buildings that was adopted prior to PRC 4291. In addition, the Board of Supervisors, through the adoption of the General Plan and county codes, regulates development standards to be followed in processing subdivisions, including fire protection.

The proposals for new developments are sent for review to the appropriate fire provider if a development is within district's boundaries. Since the last MSR, all SOIs have been updated and shared with the County to ensure that proposals within a district's SOI but outside of its boundaries are also shared with the respective district for review. In 2010, the County Board of Supervisors had been discussing the possibility of hiring a fire marshal, part of whose responsibilities may be code enforcement and building inspections. However, as of the drafting of this report no movement has been made toward hiring of a fire marshal due to budget restrictions.

The County's General Plan was adopted in 2013 with several policies impacting the fire providers of new developments.

The District reported concerns that new developments in the County were not being required to comply with existing requirements. The County reported that only one agency had come to the County regarding these concerns, which were unfounded at the time. No conjecture is made by the authors of this report as to the accuracy of these statements. It should be noted that one of the purposes of the newly formed Emergency Service Feasibility Group is to address these concerns.

Policies outlined in the General Plan that impact fire service providers include:

- 24) LU 1.5.3 The County shall require development to be located adjacent to, or within, areas where fire and life safety services exist, or can be efficiently and economically provided.
- 25) LU 1.5.5 The County shall review development proposals for their impacts on infrastructure (for example, sewer, water, fire stations, libraries, streets, etc.). New development shall be required to pay its proportionate share of the costs of infrastructure improvements required to serve the project to the extent permitted by State law.

- 26) CIR 4.1.7 All commercial and industrial parcels shall be served by a structural fire protection entity and shall be within reasonable service distance from existing fire protection facilities and as determined by the appropriate area.
- 27) PHS 6.1.3 The County shall continue to promote awareness and education among residents regarding possible natural hazards, including soil conditions, landslides, earthquakes, flooding, wildfire hazards and emergency procedures.
- 28) PHS 6.1.4 The County shall promote all applicable public safety programs, including neighborhood-watch programs, hazards materials disposal, public awareness and prevention of wildfire hazards, and other public-education efforts.
- 29) PHS 6.3.1 The County shall review and update its Fire Safe ordinance to attain and maintain defensible space through conditioning of tentative maps and in new development at the final map or building permit stage.
- 30) PHS 6.3.2 The County shall consult the current Fire Hazard Severity Zone Maps during the review of all projects so that standards and mitigation measures appropriate to each hazard classification can be applied. Land use densities and intensities shall be determined by mitigation measures in areas designated with a high or very high fire hazard rating. Intensive development in areas with high or very high fire hazard rating shall be discouraged.
- 31) PHS 6.3.3 All developments within the service boundaries of an entity which provides structural fire protection may be required to make contribution to the maintenance of the existing level of structural service proportionate to the increase in demand for service structural fire protection and Emergency Medical Services resulting from the development.
- 32) PHS 6.3.4 As a requirement for approving new development, the County must find (based on information provided by the applicant and the responsible fire protection district), that concurrent with development, adequate emergency water flow, fire access and fire-fighting personnel and equipment, will be available in accordance with applicable State, County, and local fire district standards
- 33) PHS 6.3.5 As a requirement of new development, the applicant must demonstrate that adequate emergency access exists or can be provided to ensure that emergency vehicles can access the site and that private vehicles can evacuate the area.
- 34) PHS 6.3.6 As a condition of development, the County shall require the long-term maintenance of private roads, including roadside vegetation management, to the standards of original improvements.
- 35) PHS 6.3.7 The County shall research the feasibility of a countywide rural fire protection water system that provides a cost-effective, adequate water supply.
- 36) PHS 6.2.8 The County shall encourage upgrading facilities within existing fire protection districts and encourage expansion of existing districts where warranted by population density allowed under the General Plan.

- 37) PHS 6.3.9 The County shall require new development within high and very high fire hazard areas to designate fuel break zones that comply with defensible space requirements to benefit the new and, where possible, existing development.
- 38) PHS 6.3.10 The County shall encourage the use of prescribed burning as a management tool for hazardous fuels reduction, timber management purposes, livestock production and enhancement of wildlife habitat. The County shall support removal of fuels and chipping and onsite distribution of chipped materials as an alternative to burning.
- 39) PHS 6.3.11 The County shall cooperate with Federal, State, community fire safety groups and other fire protection entities in fire prevention programs and in identifying opportunities for hazardous fuel reduction projects in zones of high and very high fire hazard either prior to or as a component of project review.
- 40) PHS 6.3.12 The County, in cooperation with Federal and State agencies, community fire safety groups, and the local fire protection districts, shall educate the public about the hazards of wildfires, methods to reduce the potential for fires to occur, and mitigation measures, including reducing fuel loads, to lessen the impacts of wildfires.
- 41) PHS 6.3.13 The County shall support fuel modification across public and private forestlands to reduce the potential for catastrophic wildfires, with the highest priority directed toward reducing hazardous fuel levels in the wildland-urban interface.
- 42) COS 7.2.16 The County shall support the use of controlled fuel management where feasible and appropriate as a natural ecosystem process, to reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfire and promote healthy forest environments and habitats.
- 43) AG/FOR 8.13.3 Support both State and Federal wildland fire protection programs and local Fire Safe programs that reduce the risk of wildland fires and the loss of timber on private and public property.
- 44) W 9.2.4 The County shall, in cooperation with wildfire management agencies, such as CalFire, United States Forest Service and local fire protection agencies, develop a variety of land-use planning, site design and vegetation management techniques to reduce the risk of wildfires. This risk reduction shall also include post-fire erosion, sedimentation and water-quality conditions.
- 45) W 9.3.2 The County shall support plans and projects to improve the conditions of overstocked forestlands, especially around communities-at-risk, to reduce the potential adverse impacts from wildfires, to protect watersheds, habitats and reduce excessive evapotranspiration losses.
- 46) W 9.5.6 The County, in coordination with local water service purveyors, wildfire protection agencies and local fire protection agencies, shall ensure consistent and adequate standards for fire flows and fire protection for new development, with the protection of human life and property as the primary objectives.

The County has not adopted the new standards for development yet resulting from the policies adopted in the 2013 General Plan. County zoning code is to go through a revision process and an annual report on progress in order for the zoning code to implement the General Plan. The District reported that the lack of updated standards poses a challenge in providing proper fire protection.

In 2007, the Board of Supervisors formed the Emergency Services Advisory Committee to “evaluate the funding feasibility of providing uniform and comprehensive emergency services to all of Plumas County.” The Committee attempted to look for opportunities to increase funding for emergency services but faced a considerable challenge in the difficult economic times. It focused on mitigating efforts through building and development standards improvements and the General Plan update process and encouraging local fire service providers to share resources and realize economies of scale in preparing grant applications, conducting training and engaging in other joint programs.

The District reported that it is not considering any annexations at this time. The District was previously part of the Local Emergency Services Study Group (LESSG), a framework for cooperative and collaborative action to explore ways to strengthen and improve the provision of fire and emergency services throughout the service areas for the five member agencies (Beckwourth Fire Department (Beckwourth), City of Portola (City), Eastern Plumas Rural Fire Protection District (EPRFPD), Gold Mountain Community Services District (GMCS), and Sierra Valley Fire Protection District (Sierra Valley).

All agencies are facing similar issues in recruiting volunteers, financing, training, and administrative compliance. In October of 2020, following ten months of meetings with the Plumas Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo), CAL FIRE, Plumas National Forest Service, Plumas County officials, legal counsels, and the surrounding area fire departments, the LESSG along with the new Plumas County District 1 Supervisor Dwight Ceresola arrived at a consensus. The decision of the Five Agencies was unanimous that creating a new single fire district that will provide fire and emergency medical response services, thus dissolving the existing Districts or relinquishing their fire and EMS authority, is the most effective, efficient, and economical choice available. The LESSG continues to work toward this aim by contracting with a consultant and conducting a feasibility study. Prior to the initiation of the feasibility study, in October 2021, EPRFPD’s Board chose to remove the District from participation in the group and feasibility study. Given EPRFPD’s struggles identified over the course of this review and the minimal funding EPRFPD had committed to the process, it is unclear why EPRFPD ceased participation prior to completion of the feasibility study. Based on the challenges faced by EPRFPD identified over the course of this review, which are similar to other LESSG member agencies, it is apparent that residents could receive an enhanced level of services if included in the reorganization efforts.

Financing

In 2010, the District reported that financing levels were not adequate to deliver services.³⁶ District reported as a part of this review that current financing levels, while constrained, are

³⁶ Interview with Keith Clark, EPRFPD Fire Chief, November 7, 2010.

sufficient to provide an adequate level of services.³⁷ While financing levels have been improved over the last decade, primarily due to new contract revenues and grant funds, the District continues to struggle to fund capital needs and to meet any cost sharing mandatory commitments for grant funding.

According to the District, additional funding is needed to provide for enhanced staffing levels, new vehicles, new equipment, to ensure adequate service levels to meet existing and future demand. While the additional funding would be ideal currently, it will be necessary to meet any growth in demand in the future.

The District has faced several challenges with regard to service financing:

- ❖ The District has consistently over the last three fiscal years not invested in its capital assets, including stations, office equipment, radio equipment, and other fire equipment.
- ❖ Another challenge to financing is that 300 lots, which were annexed before 2002 (subdivisions on the south side of Lake Davis and some small lots at Maybe), do not pay property tax to EPRFPD. They pay a modest annual property assessment that is only a small fraction of the amount of taxes that original properties pay to the District in taxes.³⁸
- ❖ The lack of new developments within the District's boundaries in recent years has resulted in less growth than anticipated in property tax income for the District.

The District struggles ensuring adequate funding sources to maintain adequate service levels. It is essential for the District to find ways to increase its funding. The District continues to seek grant funds, and has been allocated a grant in conjunction with Beckwourth FPD for personal protective equipment. The District attempted to pass an additional special tax of \$45 in the Lake Davis area and \$65 in other areas of the district; however, Measure C failed to pass.

The County keeps accounts for the District's finances and tracks revenue and expenditures. The District's total revenues for FY 20-21 were \$456,855. Revenue sources include contract services (unclear as the actual income for FY 20-21 was not provided), other miscellaneous (86 percent), property taxes and benefit assessments (13 percent), State and Federal aid (less than one percent), and interest (less than one percent).

The District charges a benefit assessment on the properties that were annexed in 2007 and 2008.³⁹ In addition, there is a \$20 special assessment on the properties at Lake Davis.⁴⁰ Assessment revenues are categorized as part of the property taxes in the District's financial report.

During the annexation of the Joy Properties (2007) and The Ridges (2010), the County agreed to a redistribution of a portion of the property tax increment to the District (seven

³⁷ Interview with Katy Martinez, EPRFPD District Secretary, February 23, 2022.

³⁸ Eastern Plumas Rural Fire Protection District, *2008 Annexations, Analysis of Fiscal Effects*, 2008, Attachment 1.

³⁹ Eastern Plumas Rural Fire Protection District, *2008 Annexations Analysis of Fiscal Effects*, 2008.

⁴⁰ Beckwourth FPD, 2010 Ad Hoc Committee Report on: Consolidation of the Beckwourth Fire District and Eastern Plumas Rural Fire District, 2010, p. 2.

percent of the total tax increment) and a benefit assessment of \$157.40 per residential unit equivalent per parcel that increases by two and a half percent annually. It is unclear if this benefit assessment was implemented in these areas. The District is confirming with the County.

The District's expenditures in FY 20-21 were \$303,062. Expenditures were composed of salaries and benefits (53 percent), services and supplies (46 percent), and loan repayment (one percent). The District did not make any capital expenditures in this fiscal year.

Figure 6-4: EPRFPD Revenues and Expenditures

<i>Income/Expenses</i>	<i>FY 20-21 Budgeted</i>		<i>FY 20-21 Actual</i>		<i>FY 21-22 Budgeted</i>	
<i>Income</i>						
Property Tax	\$53,140	15%	\$61,300	13%	\$58,300	51%
Use of Money	\$503	0%	\$478	0%	\$478	0.4%
State and Federal Aid	\$152	0%	\$317	0%	\$317	0.3%
Contract Services	\$121,302	34%	Not reported		\$48,530	43%
Other Miscellaneous	\$179,598	51%	\$394,760	86%	\$6,000	5%
Total Income	\$354,695	100%	\$456,855	100%	\$113,625	100%
<i>Expenses</i>						
Salaries & Benefits	\$57,119	24%	\$160,902	53%	\$36,195	20%
Services & Supplies	\$177,398	75%	\$140,041	46%	\$143,430	80%
Loan Repay	\$1,325	1%	\$2,119	1%	\$0	0.0%
Fixed Assets	\$0	0%	\$0	0%	\$0	0%
Total Expense	\$235,842	100%	\$303,062	100%	\$179,625	100%
Net Income	\$118,853		\$153,793		-\$66,000	

The District continues to perform no formal capital improvement planning. EPRFPD reported that its known capital needs consist of repaving the Delleker State parking lot and a Type 3 wildfire engine. Capital needs are budgeted for in the annual budget and as funds are available. The District attempts to acquire grants to fund capital needs. It most recently submitted a grant to fund new hosing but was denied. There were no outstanding grant applications as of the drafting of this report.

At the time of the last MSR, EPRFPD had two loans related to the Lake Davis Station and the Iron Horse Station. Since that time, both loans have been paid off and the District had no loan related debt as of the end of FY 20-21.

The District currently does not have a financial reserve or reserve policy. The net income balance left over at the end of any year rolls over to the next year. At the end of FY 20-21, the District had an estimated carry-over balance of approximately \$70,000. At the end of FY 21-22 EPRFPD is anticipating having a carry-over balance of about \$59,473.

The District does not participate in any joint power authorities (JPAs) or joint financing mechanisms.

FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

Service Overview

EPRFPD provides fire suppression, emergency medical, rescue, hazardous material response services, and some fire prevention programs. The District does not have any certified paramedics, but all firefighters are trained in basic life support. Ambulance and Advanced Life Support services are provided by the Eastern Plumas Healthcare District. The prevention efforts of the District include making safety recommendations to homeowners.

Service Agreements

EPRFPD has formal mutual aid agreements with the City of Portola, Beckwourth FPD, Graeagle FPD and the U.S. Forest Service and is a member of the countywide mutual aid agreement. As previously described, EPRFPD provides contract services to C-Road and Gold Mountain CSD.

Training

EPRFPD collaborates with other fire departments on some training events. EPRFPD trains with local fire departments, Graeagle FPD, USFS, and law enforcement agencies. The District is a member of the Chief's Association, through which it participates in training to provide service to no man zones (areas without designated service providers). The District also participates in Quincy FPD's Fire Academy when offered.

Dispatch

The County Sheriff is the Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP); consequently, most land line emergency calls (9-1-1 calls) are directed to the Sheriff. Most cell phone emergency calls (9-1-1 calls) are answered by CHP and redirected to the Sheriff. The Sheriff provides dispatching for most fire providers in the County except for the ones in northern part of the County, which are served by the CHP Susanville Dispatch Center. The Forest Service has its own dispatch. The sheriff dispatch center has a first responder map, which it uses to identify what provider to dispatch to an incident. All territory within the County has a determined first responder; although, many areas lie outside the LAFCo approved boundary of the districts and lack an officially designated fire provider.

The District reports that the dispatch service is usually fairly adequate; however, sometimes backup is slow when there is a high volume of calls. EPRFPD indicated a concern that dispatch does not consistently record the time that an agency is on scene to a call.

Staffing

EPRFPD has 14 sworn personnel—one fire chief, one assistant fire chief, three captains and nine safety volunteers. The chief receives a small stipend, while the rest of the fire fighters are volunteers. The fire fighters range in age from 21 to 74.

The District currently tries to maintain a roster of 16 to 20 firefighters. The District reported that it has experienced a cumulative loss of three positions over the last decade. However, there are three new volunteers that are going through the intake and training

process. Most volunteer firefighters get recruited through word of mouth and the current firefighters' circle of friends. The District tried to use newspaper advertising, but had limited success with these efforts. The District reported that it needed more qualified people, but they are hard to find. Retention of volunteers was reported as a significant challenge for the District, similar to neighboring fire protection providers. Turn over was primarily attributed to residents moving out of the area.

According to the California State Fire Marshal, all volunteer and call firefighters must acquire Firefighter I certification; however, there is no time limit as to how long they may work before attaining certification. Firefighter I certification requires completion of the 259-hour Firefighter I course, which includes training on various fireground tasks, rescue operations, fire prevention and investigation techniques, and inspection and maintenance of equipment. In addition to this course, Firefighter I certification also requires that the applicant have a minimum of six months of volunteer or call experience in a California fire department as a firefighter performing suppression duties.⁴¹ EPRFPD did not provide its firefighter certification information.

Volunteers are required to attend at least 50 percent of all trainings. Firefighters train every Thursday for two to three hours and on occasional Saturdays.

Facilities and Capacity

EPRFPD operates three fire stations—one in Delleker, the second one in the Lake Davis area, and the third one in the Iron Horse community. The District owns all three stations, two of which were acquired via loan from Plumas Bank that have since been paid off.

The Delleker (Station #1) and Lake Davis (Station #2) stations were reported to be in fair condition, and the Iron Horse (Station #3) station was described to be in poor condition,⁴² as it is only adequate for housing vehicles and equipment and inadequate to for personnel due to a lack of running water.

The Delleker Station, which was built in 1991, was the District's first fire station. It generally houses three vehicles—two to fight structural fires and one for wildland fires. The Lake Davis Station was built in 1998 and the Iron Horse Station in 2002.⁴³ The Lake Davis Station has one vehicle to fight structural fires, one for wildland fires and one rescue vehicle. The Iron Horse Station houses two vehicles for structural fires and one for wildland fires.

The District's water reserves at the Lake Davis Station are represented by a 4,000-gallon water tank. The Ridges project will have two storage tanks with water available for EPRFPD to use. The Iron House Station does not have any water storage infrastructure.

⁴¹ State Fire Marshall, *Course Information and Required Materials*, 2007, p. 44.

⁴² Facility condition definitions: Excellent-relatively new (less than 10 years old) and requires minimal maintenance. Good-provides reliable operation in accordance with design parameters and requires only routine maintenance. Fair- operating at or near design levels; however, non-routine renovation, upgrading and repairs are needed to ensure continued reliable operation. Poor- cannot be operated within design parameters; major renovations are required to restore the facility and ensure reliable operation.

⁴³ Eastern Plumas Rural Fire Protection District, *2008 Annexations, Analysis of Fiscal Effects*, 2008.

There are no set hours when the stations are staffed by fire fighters. The District Secretary is at the Delleker Station Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday 8am-11:30am and when needed. Volunteers are always on call.

Staffing levels appear to be a capacity constraint for the District. Over the last year 2021 to 2022, response to incidents has on occasion been unpredictable and disorganized due to these staffing constraints, which have limited response capabilities as well as communication and coordination with neighboring agencies. Additionally, there has been an increase in requests for mutual aid calls within EPRFPD's boundaries, also as a result of lack of adequate personnel.

Infrastructure Needs

All three facilities require work and need to be updated. Although a storage container was added to Delleker Station in 2021 to address storage needs, the Station would ideally be expanded to hold additional vehicles and equipment to meet the District's needs. Additionally, the Delleker Station and Iron Horse Station require showers. The Iron Horse Station currently is just a garage, which requires expansion, heat, and a water tank.

Growth in the number of tourists, the public expectation of improved levels of service and aging property owners require EPRFPD to provide a higher level of service, which requires a new fire station or a significant expansion of an existing one.

There are currently no specific plans for facility expansion or construction, because the District lacks funding for large capital projects.

The District reported a need for a new Type 3 Fire Engine for use against wildfires, which in turn can generate revenue. The District's territory needs additional fire hydrants. Only one percent of the area within its boundaries has fire hydrants, which is typical of rural fire districts.

Challenges

In addition to challenges to response coordination in areas outside of the District's boundaries (discussed at the beginning of this chapter), the District reported several constraints to providing adequate services.

- ❖ Lack of current and accurate address records combined with a lack of visible address signs,
- ❖ Lack of fire hydrants within boundaries and SOI,
- ❖ Absence of water storage at the Iron Horse Station,
- ❖ Limited access and narrow rough roads in some areas (i.e., northeast of the City of Portola around Aspen Drive and Sunset Drive, the community of Gold Mountain), and
- ❖ Lack of public education regarding the need for clearing of trees and brush on private property (although there appears to be improvement in this area due to recent wildfire threats),

- ❖ Recruiting and retaining volunteers, and
- ❖ Contract negotiation with USFS regarding payouts for service on USFS lands, which remains unresolved.

Service Adequacy

While there are several benchmarks that may define the level of fire service provided by an agency, indicators of service adequacy discussed here include ISO ratings, response times, and level of staffing and station resources for the service area.

Fire services in the communities are classified by the Insurance Service Office (ISO), an advisory organization. This classification indicates the general adequacy of coverage. Communities with the best fire department facilities, systems for water distribution, fire alarms and communications, and equipment and personnel receive a rating of 1. EPRFPD has an ISO rating of 5 in urban areas and 5x in rural areas (5x denotes a former classification of 9 in split rating areas), which is an improvement from the District's previous rating of 6. The District was last evaluated in March 2015.

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) has issued a performance standard for volunteer and combination fire departments (NFPA 1720). This standard, among other guidelines, identifies target response time performance for structure fires. The response time is measured from the completion of the dispatch notification to the arrival time of the first-responder at the scene. Though not a legal mandate, NFPA 1720 does provide a useful benchmark against which to measure fire department performance. NFPA 1720 recommends that the response times for structure fire be nine minutes in urban demand zones at least 90 percent of the time, 10 minutes in suburban zones at least 80 percent of the time and 14 minutes in rural zones at least 80 percent of the time. Response times in remote zones are directly dependent on travel distances.⁴⁴

Emergency response time standards vary by level of urbanization of an area: the more urban an area, the faster a response must be. The California EMS Agency established the following response time guidelines: five minutes in urban areas, 15 minutes in suburban or rural areas, and as quickly as possible in wildland areas. District's response zones include primarily rural classifications. The District reported that its average response time in 2021 was 7.2 minutes for all call types.

The service area size⁴⁵ for each fire station varies between fire districts. The median fire station in eastern Plumas serves approximately 20 square miles. Sierra Valley FPD serves the most expansive area, with 111 square miles served per station on average. Densely populated areas tend to have smaller service areas. For example, the average service area for the City of Portola is 3.8 square miles. By comparison, each station in EPRFPD serves approximately 12.3 square miles.

⁴⁴ Urban demand zone has population density of more than 1,000 people per square mile; suburban zone—between 500 and 1,000 people per square mile, rural zone—less than 500 people per square mile, and remote zone is identified by eight or more miles of travel distance to an incident.

⁴⁵ Service area refers to the area that the agency will respond to, based on a first responder map used by the Sheriff's office.

The number of firefighters serving within a particular jurisdiction is another indicator of level of service; however, it is approximate. The providers' call firefighters may have differing availability and reliability. A district with more firefighters could have fewer resources if scheduling availability is restricted. Staffing levels in eastern Plumas vary considerably from department to department.

As a contract agency, EPRFPD is also subject to regular review by its contractees to ensure that the District is meeting all contract obligations. Gold Mountain CSD conducted a review of EPRFPD's services in January 2022. The review identified certain contractual obligations that were not met by EPRFPD during the review period, including the following:

- 1) Concern of the proper type of equipment not responding to call outs in the community,
- 2) Lack of partnership with other fire agencies resulting in a refusal to request mutual aid from neighboring agencies,
- 3) Familiarization training did not occur within GMCSO during the review period,
- 4) Not conforming to NFPA 1620 Pre-Incident Planning, and
- 5) Lack of leadership availability resulting in delayed fire inspection follow ups.

Also, while not a specific contractual requirement, Gold Mountain CSD identified a lack of leadership depth and availability leading to communication and coordination concerns, particularly during the Dixie Fire. Also, there has generally been a lack of communication and communication protocols on the part of EPRFPD, as well as lack of adherence to direction from the GMCSO regarding point of contact for all fire related correspondence between the two agencies. EPRFPD provided a response to the review in April 2022 negating all findings and recommendations in GMCSO's review. It is apparent that there has been a breakdown in communication challenging the working relationship between the two agencies.

Figure 6-5: Eastern Plumas Rural Fire Protection District Fire Profile

Fire Service					
Facilities					
Firestation	Location	Condition	Staff per Shift	Vehicles	
#1 Delleker Station	151 Delleker Road, Portola, CA	Fair	Unstaffed	2 Engines for structural fire; 1 Wildland fire engine	
#2 Lake Davis Station	Lake Davis Road	Fair	Unstaffed	1 Engine for structural fire; 1 Wildland fire	
#3 Iron Horse Station	5585 Semiphore Road, Portola, CA	Poor	Unstaffed	2 Engines for structural fire; 1 Wildland fire engine	
Facility Sharing					
Current Practices: The District does not currently share its facilities with other agencies. EPRFPD collaborates with other fire districts through Fire Chiefs Association and collective trainings					
Future opportunities: Opportunities for future facility sharing are dependent on the District's participation in regional discussion of reorganization.					
Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies					
The District identified needs for station expansion and upgrades, a Type 3 engine, and water tank at the Iron Horse station.					
District Resource Statistics		Service Configuration		Service Demand	
Staffing Base Year	2021	Configuration Base Year	2021	Statistical Base Year	2021
Fire Stations in District	3	Fire Suppression	Direct	Total Service Calls	262
Stations Serving District	3	EMS	Direct	% EMS	62%
Sq. Miles Served per Station ¹	12	Ambulance Transport	EPHCD	% Fire/Hazardous Materials	6%
Total Staff ²	15	Hazardous Materials	Direct	% False	2%
Total Full-time Firefighters	0	Air Rescue/Amb. Helicopter	CareFlight	% Misc. emergency	0%
Total Call Firefighters	14	Fire Suppression Helicopter	CalFire	% Non-emergency	30%
Total Sworn Staff per Station ³	4.7	Public Safety Answering Point	Sheriff	% Mutual Aid Calls	NP
Total Sworn Staff per 1,000	0.06	Fire/EMS Dispatch	Sheriff	Calls per 1,000 people	80
Service Adequacy			Service Challenges		
Response Time Base Year	2021	Lack of fire hydrants. No water tank at Iron Horse station. Limited access areas.			
Average Response Time (min)	7.2	Training			
90th Percentile Response Time (min)	NP	Volunteers are required to attend at least 50 percent of all trainings and at least three Fire and Medical meetings. Firefighters train every Thursday for two to three hours and on occasional Saturdays.			
ISO Rating	5/5x (2015)				
Mutual & Automatic Aid Agreements					
EPRFPD has mutual aid agreements with the City of Portola, Beckwourth FPD, Graeagle FPD, Plumas Eureka FPD and Forest Service, and is a member of the countywide mutual aid agreement. EPRFPD provides contract services to C-Road and Gold Mountain CSD.					
Notes:					
1) Primary service area (square miles) per station.					
2) Total staff includes sworn and non-sworn personnel.					
3) Based on ratio of sworn full-time and call staff to the number of stations. Actual staffing levels of each station vary.					

EASTERN PLUMAS RURAL FPD DETERMINATIONS

Growth and Population Projections

- ❖ The estimated population of EPRFPD is 3,284 based on number of residential units and average household size in Plumas County.
- ❖ Over the past decade, the District has experienced a reduction in residential population; however, there has been an increase in tourists and related demand.
- ❖ The State Department of Finance (DOF) projects that the population of Plumas County will decline by 0.27 percent annually through 2040. Based on these projections, the District's population would decline from 3,284 in 2020 to approximately 3,111 in 2040. It is anticipated that demand for service within the District will remain at least constant based on the DOF population growth projections through 2040 given the seasonal recreational and wildfire demand for services on the fire and EMS providers in the area.

The Location and Characteristics of Disadvantaged Unincorporated Communities Within or Contiguous to the Agency's SOI

- ❖ Based on American Community Survey 2016-2020 Census Tract information, the entirety of the study area and the boundaries within and immediately adjacent to each of the five reviewed fire providers is defined as disadvantaged. While the City of Portola is incorporated, the remainder of the territory meets the definition of a disadvantaged unincorporated community as defined in Water Code §79505.5. Census Tract 000300 encompasses the entirety of the service area and has a population of 4,484 comprising 2,051 households with a median income of \$48,238.

Present and Planned Capacity of Public Facilities and Adequacy of Public Services, Including Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies

- ❖ The District's current facilities have minimally adequate capacity serve current demand. EPRFPD does not have the capacity to serve future growth with existing fire stations and financial resources.
- ❖ The District identified a need for station expansion and upgrades, a new Type 3 engine, and a water tank at the Iron Horse station. However, EPRFPD does not have plans to address these needs in the near future due to financing constraints.
- ❖ It is recommended that the County Sheriff's Office work with the fire districts to address dispatch and response recording concerns. The District indicated concerns that dispatch does not consistently record when agencies are on scene.
- ❖ The District should consider adopting a capital improvement plan to identify financing needs and potential revenue sources for these needs.

- ❖ It is a recommended practice that fire service providers track response times for each incident.
- ❖ Staffing limitations are the primary capacity constraint for EPRFPD, which has resulted in unpredictable response capabilities and occasional leadership and communication issues.

Financial Ability of Agencies to Provide Services

- ❖ While financing levels have been improved over the last decade for EPRFPD, primarily due to new contract revenues and grant funds, the District continues to struggle to fund capital needs and to meet any cost sharing mandatory commitments for grant funding. Without these supplemental funding sources, the District would not be financially sustainable.
- ❖ The District requires enhanced revenues to finance facility and infrastructure needs.
- ❖ The District has attempted to increase revenues by charging fees for services rendered and a proposed district-wide lot assessment, both of which have been unsuccessful.
- ❖ The District is overdue for a comprehensive multi-year audit. The last audit was conducted eight years ago in 2014. It is recommended that the District finalize the audit that was reportedly underway.

Status of, and Opportunities for, Shared Facilities

- ❖ EPRFPD collaborates with other fire providers in Plumas County and outside of it through mutual aid agreements, common trainings and membership in the Fire Chiefs Association.
- ❖ The District practices facility sharing by providing contract services from its facilities to C-Road and Gold Mountain CSDs.

Accountability for Community Service Needs, Including Governmental Structure and Operational Efficiencies

- ❖ The District has received formal complaints regarding open meeting practices that conflict with the Brown Act. It is recommended that the District continue to make efforts to meet all Brown Act requirements.
- ❖ EPRFPD demonstrated accountability and transparency by disclosing financial and service-related information in response to LAFCo requests.
- ❖ Generally, the fire districts have been challenged in maintaining full and legally-seated governing bodies. Over the last decade, the districts have failed to appropriately renew terms for already seated members, have appointed board members that do not meet the legal requirements to sit on the board, and have failed to inform the County Clerk regarding any changes to their board members.
- ❖ EPRFPD's Board chose to not take part in the reorganization study being conducted by Beckwourth FPD, Gold Mountain CSD, Sierra Valley FPD, and the City of Portola.

Based on the challenges faced by EPRFPD identified over the course of this review, which are similar to other LESSG member agencies, it is apparent that residents could receive an enhanced level of services if included in the reorganization efforts.

7. GOLD MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT

The Gold Mountain Community Services District (GMCS D) provides fire suppression, fire prevention, emergency medical, domestic water delivery, and wastewater collection and disposal. Eastern Plumas Rural Fire Protection District (EPRFPD) provides contracted fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS). The Nakoma Community Association (NCA) (formerly known as the Gold Mountain Homeowners Association (HOA)) provides road maintenance and snow removal services. Plumas LAFCo conducted the last Municipal Service Review (MSR) for GMCS D in 2011.

AGENCY OVERVIEW

Background

The Gold Mountain Community Services District is an enterprise, *independent* special district formed in 1996 under the provision of the Community Serviced District Law, commencing with Government Code §61000⁴⁶. Plumas LAFCo originally adopted Resolution No. 96-5 on April 25, 1996, approving the Formation of the GMCS D as a dependent special district⁴⁷ and appointing the Plumas County Board of Supervisors (BOS) as its first Board of Directors. The Plumas BOS approved its Resolution No. 96-5893 ordering the formation of the GMCS D on May 14, 1996. There were no provisions for a property tax exchange for any service.

In 2004, GMCS D residents voted to take over control of the District in a general election and requested that the Plumas BOS appoint three interim directors until District residents could elect a permanent board. The Plumas BOS approved the request, and in 2005, residents voted to expand the Board of Directors from three to five members. Residents elected five Directors and GMCS D became an *independent* special district in 2005.⁴⁸

Under the State of California Community Services District Law, CSDs may potentially provide a wide array of services, including water supply, wastewater, solid waste, police and fire protection, street lighting and landscaping, airport, recreation and parks, mosquito abatement, library services; street maintenance and drainage services, ambulance service, utility undergrounding, transportation, abate graffiti, flood protection, weed abatement, hydroelectric power, among various other services. State code requires CSDs to gain LAFCo approval to provide those services permitted by the principal act but not performed by the end of 2005 (i.e., latent powers).⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Government Code §61000-61226.5.

⁴⁷ LAFCo Resolution 96-5, 1-F-96.

⁴⁸ Plumas LAFCo, *Gold Mountain Community Services District Municipal Service Review and Sphere of Influence Amendment 2006-2011*, 2006, pp. 6-7.

⁴⁹ Government Code §61106.

Initially, LAFCo assigned the District the power to provide all services common to a community services district. However, in January 2006, Plumas LAFCo determined that the District's active powers consisted of the provision of domestic water, sanitation sewer, fire protection, weed abatement and snow removal.⁵⁰ LAFCo determined that all other powers were latent powers consistent with SB1234. The GMHOA had previously assumed responsibility for snow removal and weed abatement and retained those duties by mutual agreement with the GMCSO (District).

With District formation, Directors had to initially overcome several challenges stemming from the bankruptcy of the original developer as outlined below. For a more detailed description of these challenges, refer to the District's MSRs from 2006 and 2011.

- ❖ The developer had only constructed a portion of the required water and wastewater infrastructure and failed to provide "as built" drawings of the water and sewer (W&S) infrastructure. This has resulted in the District's continual need to develop plans and financing for significant system improvements which continue to this time.
- ❖ Major construction defects by the original developer resulted in failing infrastructure which required replacement or remediation on an emergency basis. Early expenditures in 2005 and 2006 to rebuild a leachfield and remediate landslide damage above the community water storage tanks eliminated the District's initial meager reserves.
- ❖ The District was severely underfunded while under Plumas BOS governance due to 1) developer subsidized W&S rates that the BOS did not adjust when the subsidy expired, 2) delinquent payments from the developer on over 30 properties, 3) a lack of property tax funding for fire protection services, and 4) failure to require the developer to complete infrastructure buildout.
- ❖ The transition agreement deeding the water and wastewater infrastructure and water rights to the District had not been fully implemented when the developer went into bankruptcy. The District successfully sued the developer to gain ownership of the infrastructure and water rights however at significant legal costs to the District.

District Boundaries and Sphere of Influence

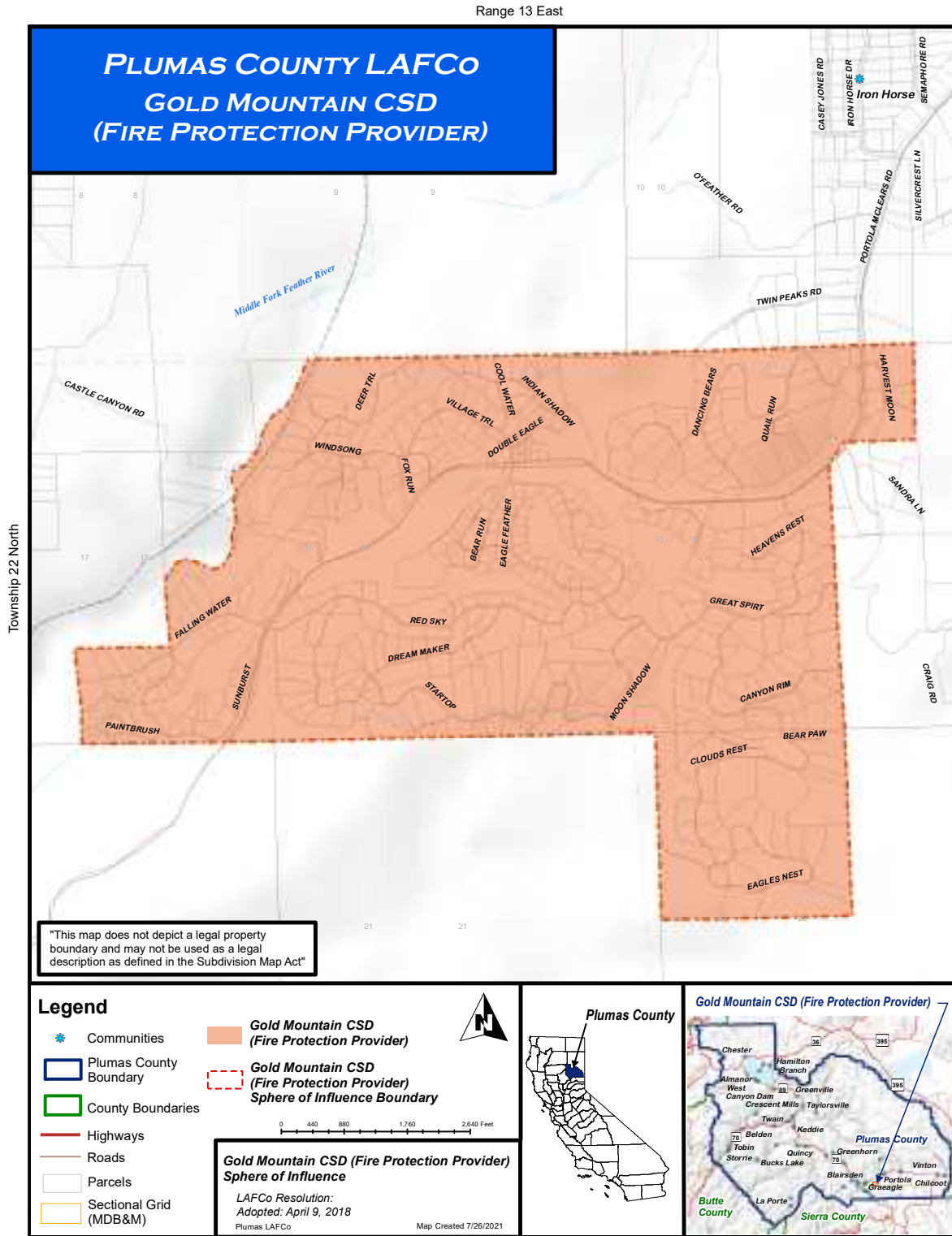
Located in the eastern part of Plumas County, three miles west of the City of Portola along County Road A-15 (Portola-McLears Road), the District borders the Feather River in the west, EPRFPD in the north, and the Plumas National Forest in the east and south.

GMCSO's boundary is entirely within Plumas County. The District's boundaries encompass 1,294 acres or two square miles.⁵¹ Since its formation, there have been no annexations to or detachments from the District. **Figure 1-1** on the following page depicts the District boundaries and sphere of influence (SOI).

⁵⁰ Plumas LAFCo, *Gold Mountain Community Services District Municipal Service Review and Sphere of Influence Amendment 2006-2011*, 2006, p. 6.

⁵¹ Total agency area calculated in GIS software based on agency boundaries as of July 1, 2011. The data is not considered survey quality.

Figure 7-1: GMCSO Boundaries and SOI



Sphere of Influence

As the GMCSO was formed to serve the Gold Mountain Planned Development, its original Sphere of Influence (SOI) was coterminous with its boundary, which was consistent with the land within the development. The District's SOI was updated in 2006, expanding to include wildland territory south of the boundaries, small suburban pieces of land to the north and east, and industrial property to the west.⁵² According to the 2006 MSR, the Sphere of Influence was expanded "to accommodate those property owners outside the present District boundary who may seek services from the District in future annexations."⁵³ Most recently, in 2018, the District's SOI was updated to be coterminous with its boundaries.

Extra-territorial Services

The District does not provide any extra-territorial services.

Areas of Interest

The District was formed to serve the water, wastewater, and fire protection requirements for the Gold Mountain planned development, a predominately senior, retirement golf course and mountain community. Two thirds of the developed residential structure are second homes or vacation homes resulting in a higher population during the summer months and a low winter population. Open year round, the resort population fluctuates dramatically between winter and summer, with upwards of several hundred guests during peak season weekend events. The District provides domestic water to residences and the resort from four deep granite wells, distributing water through nine pressure zones served by seven lift stations. The resort maintains its own golf course irrigation system fed by wells using the same deep granite aquifers shared with the district. To date, there is little evidence of any aquifer deterioration.

The entire territory of the District is an area of interest with regards to the provision of fire services. The District contracted with the City of Portola fire and EMS services from formation in 1996 through 2018. With the City disbanding its fire department in 2018, the GMCSO began contracting with EPRFD for fire and EMS continuing to this date. GMCSO is currently working with City of Portola, the Beckwourth Fire District (BFD), and the Sierra Valley Volunteer Fire Department (SVFD) to explore the feasibility of establishing a new overarching fire district covering the SOIs of the City and three independent districts. Should this effort to form a new fire district fail, GMCSO will be interested in annexation to a fire district that can best meet the community's needs. Located within the wildland-urban interface (WUI), the National Forest Service has primary responsibility for response to wildfire.

Accountability and Governance

District residents elect a five-member Board of Directors to govern the GMCSO on staggered four-year terms. As of July 2020, the District had 67 registered voters. There are currently four board members, with one vacancy announced in September 2021. Board members are all elected or, as necessary, appointed to fill a vacancy. There has never been a

⁵² GMCSO SOI Zoning Map, 2006.

contested election in the history of the District. **Figure 1-2** provides current board member names, positions, and term expiration dates.

Figure 7-2: GMCS D Governing Body and Points of Contract

Gold Mountain Community Services District				
Board of Directors				
Member Name	Position	Term Expiration	Manner of Election	Term of Service
Cary Curtis	President	December 23	Elected	4
Kim Seney	Vice President	December 25	Appointed	4
Kathy Kogge	Member/Firewise	December 23	Elected	4
Rene St. Pierre	Member/Financial	December 25	Elected	4
Gordon Bennie	Member	December 25	Appointed	4
District Contact Information				
General Manager	Rich McLaughlin			
Lead Operator, Ass't GM	Skyler Allingham			
Administrative Manager:	Tiana Bradley			
Address:	150 Pacific Street, #8, Portola, CA 96122			
Telephone:	530-832-5945			
Fax:	530-832-4591			
Email/Website:	info.gmcsd@gmail.com https://www.gmcsd.org/			
Meetings				
Date:	Second Monday every other month; schedule on District website			
Location:	District conference room, 150 Pacific Street, Portola			
Agenda Distribution	Posted in District office, Clio Post Office, Portola Post Office, website			
Minutes Distribution	Posted on the District website			

The Board meets on the second Monday of every other month at ten in the morning at the District’s conference room at 150 Pacific Street, Portola, CA. The District’s Administrative Manager/Secretary posts meeting agendas at the district office and post offices in Portola and Clio. The Secretary also posts board agendas, meeting packages, and meeting minutes on the website available for public download. In addition to the required agendas and minutes, the District reaches out to its constituents through its website, a quarterly newsletter, important bulletins, and participating in NCA meetings.

If a customer is experiencing problems with District’s services, the customer may submit complaints by calling the District office or filling out a complaint form online. In 2020, the District had four trouble calls regarding water services and two issues regarding sewer services. Three of the water trouble calls were due to cloudy water, a problem isolated to naturally entrained CO2 in water produced from Well 29. One call was due to low water pressure at a high elevation lot. Both sewer calls were due to septic alarms. The GMCS D Administrative Manager oversees taking and recording trouble calls. The District’s Lead Operator is responsible for handling any issues and assigning Utility Operators to investigate, respond, and deal with issues.

Planning and Management Practices

The part-time General Manager/Treasurer and the Administrative Manager manage daily business operations. The Lead Operator/Assistant GM manages all field operations using two licensed Utility Operators. A part-time Fire Coordinator is responsible for assisting the GM on all fire related issues and serves as a liaison with EPRFPD. In total, there are four full-time and two part-time employees on staff that together constitute five full-time equivalents (FTEs).

The number of FTEs has effectively doubled since the 2011 MSR due to a combination of three factors:

- 1) Aging infrastructure requiring increased maintenance and repairs
- 2) Increased state mandates for testing, inspections, and maintenance actions
- 3) Unanticipated loss of the Districts long time licensed GM and the need for licensed Utility Operator depth and experience

With the untimely loss of the GM in late 2017, the Board President stepped down to serve as the interim GM. An unsuccessful search for a replacement GM resulted in a reorganization of the District, retaining the interim GM in a regular part-time position to provide program management oversight and expertise; promoting the Utility Operator 2 to Lead Operator/Assistant GM responsible for all field operations; and promoting the Office Administrator to Administrative Manager, responsible for all front and back office requirements. The loss of the previous GM left the District with only one licensed D2 Utility Operator, leading the district to hiring an experienced D1/T1 Utility Operator to provide depth and resilience. In 2019, the District's Laborer also achieved D1 status but lacks depth of field experience.

The General Manager, supported by the Administrative Manager and Lead Operator, reports to the Board of Directors. Contractors and General Counsel report through the GM. One long term board member serves as the District's Financial Advisor, working closely with the GM and Administrative Manager with a focus on reviewing District finance and managing reserve funds.

The GM evaluates the Lead Operator and Administrative Manager on an annual basis, and reviews field employee evaluations conducted by the Lead Operator. To track staff workload, Lead Operator assigns field employees with daily workplans, and all district employees fill out and submit timesheets on a two week basis. The General Manager monitors the contract fire and EMS provider performance on an ongoing basis. The GM, Lead Operator, and Administrative Manager provide regular written reports on district performance at every board meeting.

The District works closely with the Community Association with the GM participating in monthly NCA Board meetings. The Board and GM participate in the annual NCA owner's meeting to provide a comprehensive annual update on district performance. CSD and NCA field teams share a joint maintenance building and regularly support each other on community field projects.⁵⁴ To increase efficiency and reduce costs, the District cooperates

⁵⁴ Gold Mountain CSD, *Master Plan Report*, 2017, p. 22.

with both the NCA and local Resort owner by lending resources, monitoring infrastructure, and assisting with personnel resources when needed. The District maintains an open dialogue with other similar districts in the area regarding mutual aid, cross training of staff positions, and an exchange of technical information.

The District's financial planning efforts include an annually adopted budget and annually audited financial statements. The financial statements were last audited for FY 19-20 and the District has scheduled its FY 20-21 audit for October 2021. The District provides Plumas LAFCO with all financial documents upon request. GMCSO uses its Master Planning process to project 5-, 10- and 30-year capital project requirements as discussed below. GMCSO actively participates with the Community Association and the Nakoma Resort staff in ongoing Hazardous Fuel Treatment (HFT) planning and is currently working to introduce a more comprehensive Forest Management Program.

Existing Demand and Growth Projections

Designated land uses within the District are primarily suburban.⁵⁵ The total boundary area of GMCSO is two square miles or 1,294 acres, including 380 acres of open space recreation and common area. The Nakoma community (formerly Gold Mountain) is primarily residential with a commercial golf resort and small commercial district. Community Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions (CC&Rs) define 415 residential lots, reduced by lot mergers to 395 lots designated for private single family homes. Nakoma community residential lots are restricted by CC&Rs to a single primary residence, a guest quarters, and one addition quarters. All original single family lots were sold into private ownership prior to the original developer's bankruptcy. After the bankruptcy settlement, the new owners of the Nakoma Resort initiated a buyback program, purchasing over 100 of the private lots and marketing these lots for resale bundled with resort memberships. Currently the resort owns 93 of these private properties for sale in their inventory. Two parcels originally designated for stables and an unnumbered "remaining" parcel have also been sold into private residential ownership within the District but outside the NCA.

The current Plumas County Assessor's map includes an additional 43 resort parcels, including 19 commercial properties, 21 commercial multi-unit residential properties, and three lots since sold into private ownership. Of the 21 multi-unit lots, six are currently developed into multi-unit time share and rental villas while one lot including three Ascend rental units has sold into private ownership. The remaining 14 residential lots are planned for a combination of single and multi-unit Ascend vacation homes.

Commercial developed properties are owned by the Nakoma Resort.⁵⁶ The resort includes the original restaurant, pro shop, and 18 hole golf course, and in recent years has added a 42 room hotel, health club, and large recreation/pool facility through numerous lot mergers. The resort also owns six acres of undeveloped commercially zoned property and a 37-acre parcel previously reserved for a nine hole executive golf course, which is not in their current development plans.

⁵⁵ Plumas County Online Parcel Application.

⁵⁶ John Gullixson, *Gold Mountain Community Services District Municipal Service Review and Sphere of Influence Amendment 2006-2011*, 2006, p. 9.

Population

The District currently has 86 private residential structures, seven commercial residential properties, and two private residences under construction. Based on a household size slightly less than the County average of 2.1 people per household, the estimated population of GMCSO is 180. However, the District estimates that less than one quarter of these residences are occupied on a full-time basis. Summer resort business adds significant numbers to the local population including the hotel, rental units, and resort guests.

Based on GIS analysis of 2020 Census data, it is estimated that there are approximately 76 residents that make use of the area as their primary residence.

Existing Demand

The District has observed slow residential growth in last the ten years. Since the 2011 MSR, seven additional single family residential structures and three multi-unit residential structures have been constructed and connected to the District's utility systems, equating to less than two percent annual growth. However, resort expansion including the hotel and large recreational facility represents significantly increased water and wastewater demand for the District during peak holiday and summer periods.⁵⁷ The District does not anticipate any major commercial projects over the next five years.

Master Planning

GMCSO completed a Master Plan in 2007 with a 30-year planning horizon with updates completed on a five-year basis. Engineers completed the most recent update in July 2017. The plan identifies needed capital improvements as well as projected costs to service additional customers and emerging capital projects associated with buildout and commercial expansion.

The District's System Development Charge (SDC) is the primary source of capital revenues, based on a 2009 connection fee study. The District assesses the SDC at the time a customer (residential or commercial) applies for a Will-Serve letter to connect to the District's W&S system, based on the size and number of water connections. A District issued Will-Serve letter is a prerequisite for the County to issue a building permit. The Board adjusts the SDC charge annually by resolution based on the construction cost index.

The 2017 Master Plan Update estimated the cost of necessary identified capital improvement projects at \$6,020,000 as shown in **Figure 7-3**. As discussed later in this document, the District has found the engineering estimates to be on the high side as evidenced by the two recent wells completed at 50 percent of the estimated cost. Additionally, water reclamation technology has become much more affordable with modular filtration methods making these solutions practical for a small district. At current SDC rates adjusted for inflation, residential buildout could generate upwards of \$4,000,000. A conflict exists in that capital projects need to be completed and available for occupancy prior to demand, e.g., prior to construction and the paying of SDC fees. The District is actively pursuing drought resilient grant dollars to complete water storage, water reclamation, and leachfield projects. Lacking success in

⁵⁷ Gold Mountain CSD, *Master Plan Report*, 2007, p. 4.

obtaining grant financing, the District will consider generational financing in the form of low interest loans to stay ahead of 5-10 year capital requirements.

Figure 7-3: Estimate Capital Buildout Costs

2017 MASTER ESTIMATED BUIDOUT REQUIREMENTS			
Domestic Water Projects			
Description	2017 Est.	Status	Est. to Complete
• Construct two new wells	\$ 600,000	Complete; 2 nd well will need to be tied into system at future date	\$ 100,000
• High Elevation Water Storage	\$ 630,000	Property purchased; preliminary engineering complete	\$ 625,000
• Well 29 rehab/storage tank	Not included	Preliminary engineering complete	\$ 232,000
• New primary water tank	Not included	Land purchased	\$ 700,000
• Water Main Replacement	\$ 2,100,000	Deferred	Unknown
Wastewater Projects			
• Water Reclamation Facility	\$ 2,200,000	Preliminary engineering complete	\$ 635,000
• New Leachfield	\$ 490,000	Leachfield expansion underway.	\$ 211,000
Total	\$ 6,020,000		\$ 2,503,000

Project Growth and Development

District growth in population and service demand has fallen well behind the District’s 2007 planning documents which assumed build-out of the development by 2039 with a 5.7 percent annual growth rate.⁵⁸ The District’s original 30-year Master Plan projected its service needs related to growth on these build-out projections. Due to slower than projected growth, the District modified projections with the 2012 Master Plan Update to include “trigger points” based on existing water production, water storage, and wastewater handling capacity relative to new connection requirements. The 2017 Master Plan Update further reduced projected growth, forecasting a total of 99 residences by 2022, well above current actual construction rates.

The year 2021 represents the first meaningful change in the Gold Mountain real estate market in 10 years, with significant turnover of existing homes and unimproved lots. However, the current economy and high building costs have continued to hold down new development with only one private and one resort residential project start this year. Low building starts are not isolated to any area of the development with both golf course properties and view properties located at higher elevations within the District showing flat growth. As a result, GMCS D continues to have the capacity to serve short-term projected development. Any significant increase in population will require capacity enhancements as outlined in the Water and Wastewater sections of this review. The District has identified wastewater handling as the agency’s priority capital project requirement for 2022 to ensure an adequate level of effluent processing capacity.

Growth Strategies

The District is not a land use authority and does not hold primary responsibility for implementing growth strategies. The land use authority for unincorporated areas is the

⁵⁸ GMCS D, *Water and Wastewater System Development Charges*, November 2009, p. 4-3.

County. The District is interested in joining the potential new fire district under consideration as a strategy to provide improved fire protection for the growing community.

Financing

The District operates out of a governmental fund for fire services and separate enterprise funds for water and wastewater services. All parcels within the development have water and sewer laterals installed to the property line resulting in two general classes of customers: customers “connected” to the system, and unconnected “standby” customers. Additionally, the District divides customers by residential (as governed by the CCR’s for private single family homes), and commercial, to include both business and multi-unit residential properties falling outside CCR defined development.

The District’s Fiscal Year (FY) runs from 1 July to 30 June. Total revenues for FY 2019-2020 were \$648,032. Primary revenue sources included standby charges (36 percent), connected sales (34 percent), Consumption charge (two percent), System Development Charges (two percent), Fire Tax (18 percent), and miscellaneous fees (eight percent).

GMCS D charges its residents fees for water and wastewater services provided. The current fees are based on the 2006 cost of service study with a 3 percent rate escalation through 2011. The District charges water and wastewater connected customers a flat annual rate of \$1,888, and standby customers are charged a flat annual rate of \$708. Of these costs, 47 percent is allocated for water services and 53 percent is allocated to wastewater services. The District charges an additional water consumption fee to connected customers of \$0.55 per 1,000 gallons for first 10,000 gallons, and increased rates for each additional 10,000 gallons. Based on these charges, the average residential connection is charged \$77.32 a month for water services and \$83.39 for wastewater services.

Between 2011 and 2021, the CSD has experienced an approximate 60 percent growth in its operating budget, versus only a 23 percent growth in operating income. Budget increases were the direct result of:

- 1) Cost of living – the overall inflation rate in California has averaged 1.78 percent per year since 2010 resulting in a 21.4 percent increase in cost (or loss of buying power).
- 2) The average cost of electricity in California has increased from 14.75 cents per kilowatt hour in 2010, to 21.43 cents per kilowatt hour in 2021 – representing a 45 percent increase in the cost of electricity needed to operate the pressurized water and wastewater systems.
- 3) Aging infrastructure – District system maintenance costs have increased 40 percent between 2010 and 2021. What was considered relatively new infrastructure in 2010, has now been in the ground for upwards of 20 years.
- 4) Increasing State mandates for inspections and testing have increased both the cost and frequency of meeting requirements.
- 5) Increased staffing to cover related increases in maintenance, inspection, testing, and capital project requirements.

The CSD has not implemented a W&S rate increase since 2011. In 2011, the CSD was able to contribute significant surplus operating funds to its Reserves account. Between 2011 and 2019, operating surpluses at end of the year, while dwindling, served to mask the need for a W&S rate increase. FY 19-20 saw a tight budget with no planned reserve contributions. In July 2021, the District contracted with Hansford Consulting out of Truckee, Ca, for a new Proposition 218 cost of service rate study to initiate operating rate increases beginning in 2022.

With the original development approval, the County failed to include a property tax sharing agreement to fund Fire Protection and EMS. With the lack of a property tax sharing agreement, district voters approved and adopted a special tax for fire protection in 2006. Plumas County bills the fire tax in conjunction with the property tax for each parcel. The Fire Tax includes an annual escalation clause enacted by board resolution each year. In FY 20-21, single family homes paid \$277.05 and undeveloped lots paid \$184.73 in fire taxes.

In 2007, after having negotiated with the County, the BOS granted the District a tax sharing agreement that took effect in FY 07-08. It directed six percent of the annual assessed tax valuation increases within the District boundaries be transferred to the District's Fire fund. Between 2008 and 2010, property values dropped significantly, and the District has not received any property tax sharing income since 2009 due to the lack of property assessment increases. Current community assessed values remain well below the 2007/2008 peak.

As detailed in **Figure 7-4**, the District's expenditures in FY 19-20 were \$640,188 against revenues of \$648,032. The District's primary expenditures consist of fire (13 percent), administrative (44 percent), water operations (17 percent), and wastewater (14 percent).

Figure 7-4: GMCS D Revenues and Expenses

Income/Expenses		FY 2019-2020 Actuals			
GMCS D Income		GMCS D Expenses			
Fire Fund	\$\$\$	%	Fire Fund	\$\$\$	%
Fire Tax	\$ 113,304		Fire Protection Contract	\$ 37,131	6%
Interest Income	\$ 2,646		Fire Admin Fee	\$ 21,284	3%
Total Fire Income	\$ 115,768	18%	Capital Projects	\$ 9,850	2%
W&S Fund	\$\$\$	%	Miscellaneous	\$ 27,236	4%
Water Service Fees	\$ 260,738	40%	Total Fire Expenses	\$ 95,501	15%
Sewer Service Fees	\$ 196,132	30%	W&S Fund	\$\$\$	%
Consumption Charges	\$ 10,569	2%	Water Services	\$ 111,784	17%
Connection Fees	\$ 12,184	2%	Sewer Services	\$ 89,745	14%
Fire Admin Fee	\$ 21,283	3%	Administrative & Labor	\$ 280,080	43%
Admin Fees & Misc. Charges	\$ 31,928	5%	Depreciation	\$ 73,172	11%
Total W&S Income	\$ 532,834	82%	Total W&S Expenses	\$ 554,781	85%
Total District Income	\$ 648,032	100%	Total District Expenses	\$ 650,282	100%

The District maintains a formal reserve policy covering three reserve funds: Fire Restricted Reserves, Capital Restricted Reserves, and Operational Reserves.

- ❖ Fire Restricted Reserves are funded with surplus annual Fire tax dollars. The Board approves the movement of funds between the Fire Restricted Reserve account and the Fire checking account.
- ❖ Capital Restricted Reserves are funded with System Development and Consumption Charge revenues and Board directed deposits. With Board approval, funds are transferred to the Capital Checking account for disbursement.
- ❖ Operational Reserves are funded with surplus annual W&S operational dollars. The Board approves the movement of funds between the Operational Reserve account and the W&S Operational checking account.

Figure 7-5: GMCS D Reserve Funds

Figure 7-5 lists the District’s reserve balances at the end of FY 20-21 Current Operational Reserves are sufficient to finance six months of water and sewer operations. The District currently has no long-term debt. The District does not participate in any joint power authorities (JPAs); however, as mentioned, GMCS D is a member agency of the MOU analyzing reorganization options for regional fire services.

Fund	Balance
Fire Restricted Reserves	\$153,825
Capital Restricted Reserves	\$171,698
Operational Reserves	\$245,159

WATER SERVICES

Service Overview

The District provides retail water services, in the form of groundwater extraction and distribution via a pressurized water system. The District's three operational wells deliver a combined capacity of 90 gallons per minute (GPM), delivering water to nine pressure zones via seven booster stations. The District owns the water rights underlying all private residential lots and HOA common areas but does not hold the water rights underlying golf course property; therefore, the District competes for water in the deep granite aquifer. The District participates in groundwater monitoring as part of a groundwater management plan though monitoring devices on all District domestic water wells along with shallow purpose drilled monitoring wells in proximity to community leachfields. The District is working with the resort owner to improve monitoring of the six independently operated golf course wells. There are no other private wells within the district.

All three District Utility Operators hold appropriate Utility Operator Certifications. The District's Lead Operator has a D2 certification exceeding the requirements of this small water system. The District's other experienced operator holds D1/T1 certifications. The junior Operator received his D1 certification in 2021.

Facilities and Capacity

District infrastructure dedicated to water services consists of three operational wells, two storage tanks, 12 miles of distribution pipelines, seven booster pump stations, and 24 fire hydrants. The District has one out-of-service well awaiting refurbishment, and a new well in hibernation status not yet connected to the system.

Water Source

The District relies entirely on groundwater pumped from three dispersed wells as its water source. All wells pump water from the Humbug Valley Groundwater Basin. The 2004 Department of Water Resources estimates storage capacity of the basin to be 76,000 acre-feet to a depth of 100 feet.⁵⁹ County geohydrologists estimate groundwater extraction for municipal and industrial uses at 200 acre-feet and estimates deep percolation of applied water to be 200 acre-feet, meaning that the amount pumped by users is replaced by groundwater recharge. The City of Portola and Grizzly Lake Community Services District also pump from the Humbug Valley Basin. More recent Humbug Valley Basin information is not available. While there is a considerable amount of groundwater development in this general area, aquifer performance remains good, and the District has observed few indications of over-pumping to date.⁶⁰

Quality

The Humbug Valley Groundwater Basin has excellent quality water. Regular testing indicates that water produced from this basin does not require treatment.

⁵⁹ Department of Water Resources, California's Groundwater Bulletin 118 – Humbug Valley Groundwater Basin, 2004, p. 1.

⁶⁰ GMCSO, *Hydrology and Groundwater Development*, August 11, 2006, p. 9.

Existing and Projected Water Use

Groundwater pumping:

- ❖ Well 17 was constructed in 1997 and is the District's current primary winter season well, delivering a consistent 30 GPM. Well 17 is in the influence zone of the primary golf course Well 25 and as such is unavailable during the summer irrigation system without golf course accommodation to shut down their irrigation well.
- ❖ Well 29 was reconstructed in 2007 and refurbished in 2018. Well 29 currently injects air bubbles into the system when in operation due to naturally entrained CO₂ in the aquifer. Capable of pumping at a rate of 15-17 GPM, the well is currently out-of-service until the District can install an air separation facility. The well, however, remains as an available source of standby water if needed. The District is currently working a grant request for a Well 29 upgrade to include a water storage/air separation tank, which will return the well to service and increase the District's water storage capacity.
- ❖ Well 33 was constructed in 2017 and is one of the District's two primary summer season wells, delivering a consistent 35 GPM.

In late 2018, the District contracted for the drilling of two test wells with the intent of developing a new primary domestic water source to provide a hedge against ongoing drought and unknown future well performance. With 35 wells drilled in the District since 1996, there is an established record of hitting a viable water source of less than 30 percent. In 2019 both test wells, 36 and 37 found viable water with estimated pumping rates of 25-30 GPM and 35-40 GPM, respectively. The District invested in both wells, casing both bores and capping Well 36 for future use. Well 37 came online the first week of September 2021 and has joined Well 33 as a summer season well producing upwards of 30 GPM.

Combined, Wells 17, 33, and 37 provide a combined capacity of 90+ GPM. If ground sources remain stable, and slow growth continues within the development, the District considers current water sources sufficient for 10-15 years. The original Master Plan recommended a build out capacity of 140 GPM. With wells 29 and 36 in standby status, the District's domestic water posture is now on a solid footing.

Treatment and Distribution Facilities

The District does not treat the groundwater. Wells pump water directly into the distribution system. Operators ensure excess capacity is available to fill the storage tanks. The system distributes water to nine pressure zones via a combination of gravity flow, seven booster stations, and pressure relief valves to control pressure. The distribution system is composed of 12 miles of pipeline ranging in size from two to six inches in diameter. The distribution system is in fair condition. In 2019-2020 the District updated the two most critical booster stations with jockey pumps designed to relieve excessive cycling of the primary pumps and provide energy efficiency. The District is continually making small upgrades to the system, most recently adding more efficient pumps, and initiating a valve exercise program in 2021. District Utility Operators manually operate the entire water distribution system requiring daily attention to maintain a dependable supply of domestic water to all connections.

Original engineering did not design the water supply system to provide for fire protection; however, continual upgrades to the system including the installation of fire hydrants throughout the community provide a minimal ready source of water for structural protection. With 24 hydrants installed, the District has the goal of installing 30 hydrants to ensure reasonable flows are available in proximity to all structures. The District tests all fire hydrants on an annual basis and color codes hydrants to designate expected flow rates. In 2018, the resort installed a 90,000-gallon swimming pool. As a condition of approval, the pool includes a pump and associated hydrant to ensure pool water is available for fire use in an emergency.

The District is working to improve fire flows to the extent possible given the limitations of the system. The primary issue with the existing system is undersized distribution pipes and the lack of a higher elevation water source to allow gravity flows to the entire district. The 2017 Master Plan update estimated the cost of replacing the small diameter piping throughout the District at \$2,100,000 to provide additional hydraulic capacity for the conveyance of significant fire flows. Water main replacement remains a deferred capital project. In 2020, the District installed a new hydrant feeding directly off the water storage tanks, providing a primary hydrant with good flow to fill water tenders in an emergency.

Power Resiliency

All district wells and booster stations require stable electrical power to pump water into and through the distribution system. Approximately 80 percent of the customer base requires stable power to the booster stations for water distribution with only 20 percent achieving reliable gravity flow from the storage tanks. The District can move its new portable high capacity mobile generator to any well site to provide emergency power. Old diesel backup generators at each booster station provide backup power. In 2020, the District applied for and received a Cal OES power resiliency grant to equip all booster stations with clean burning propane generators with the capability of providing a minimum of 48 hours of backup power. The District expects to complete the generator replacement project in the spring of 2022.

Storage Facilities and Emergency Supply

The District's two water storage tanks have a combined storage capacity of 280,000 gallons. The storage tanks have sufficient capacity to provide fire flow for two hours (240,000 gallons) and one day of water service at peak day demands. The District anticipates that additional storage will be necessary once it is serving 140 connections.

Little redundant storage is available in the system at this time and a water shortage could exist on peak demand days if any existing sources were out of service. The District is currently working a plan to install a 60,000 gallon water storage/air separation tank at well 29. In October of 2020, the District purchased the property for a High Elevation Water Tank (HEWT) and completed preliminary engineering for a 100,000-gallon domestic water storage tank on the site per the Master Plan.

Infrastructure Needs

The primary remaining infrastructure needs identified in the District 2017 Master Plan update include:

- ❖ Two new domestic water wells at an estimated cost of \$600,000. The District completed two new wells in 2021. The District cased, capped, and sealed Well 36 and placed the well in hibernation pending future development. Well 37 is now online as one of the District's primary wells. The addition of Wells 36 and 37, both with the capability of producing 30 plus gallons per minute will meet all domestic water requirements for the near to mid future.
- ❖ Construction and operation of a HEWT to significantly increase the reliability of the water system to serve higher elevation customers, as well as to improve fire flows in conjunction with a distribution main replacement. The plan recommended that the District install a tank above the Eagles Nest loop; however, a suitable site for a large tank does not exist within the District. Working with its engineers, the District identified a suitable slightly lower elevation location on the Eagles Nest loop which will include a new booster station creating a 10th pressure zone to serve Eagles Nest. The District purchased the identified property and has completed preliminary engineering for construction of a 100,000-gallon tank.
- ❖ Replacing the small diameter (2") water mains through much of the District with properly sized 6" mains to ensure adequate flows to all customers including fire sprinklers now required in all new construction. New mains will also increase flows to fire hydrants throughout the District. As District water mains run under or adjacent to the District's paved roads, replacing the mains, valves, lateral connections, and associated infrastructure engineering estimates the cost to exceed \$2 million. The District has deferred this project due to lack of funding and higher priority requirements.

Additional needs identified in the Master Plan include: 1) constructing one million gallons of water storage, 2) upgrading/replacing/reinforcing all transmission lines, 3) upgrading remaining booster stations, and 4) incorporating Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) controls to automate portions of the system and improve data collection. The District works closely with Plumas County Public Health Agency and ensures that operators correct any identified water system deficiency.

Challenges

With the addition of the new wells, the District's primary challenge regarding water services is the provision of adequate fire suppression flows. The District is implementing several strategies to maximize the potential of the existing distribution system and identifying a source of funds to address system upgrades.

Service Adequacy

This section reviews indicators of service adequacy, including the Plumas County Public Health Agency annual system evaluation, drinking water quality, and distribution system integrity. **Figure 7-6** provide detail of water service adequacy and quality.

Figure 7-6: GMCS D Water Service Adequacy Indicators

Water Service Adequacy and Efficiency Indicators			
Service Adequacy Indicators (2019/2020)			
Connections/FTE	32	O&M Cost Ratio ¹	
MGD Delivered/FTE	2.57	Distribution Loss Rate	12%
Distribution Breaks & Leaks (2010)	0	Distribution Break Rate ²	0%
Water Pressure average	20+ psi, 40 psi	Total Employees (FTEs)	3
Customer Complaints CY 2020:Odor/taste (0), leaks (0), pressure (1), air (3)			
Drinking Water Quality Regulatory Information³			
Category	#	Description	
Health Violations	0	N/A	
Monitoring Violations	0	N/A	
DW Compliance Rate ⁴	100%		
Notes:			
(1) Operations and maintenance costs (exc. purchased water, debt, depreciation) per volume (mgd) delivered.			
(2) Distribution break rate is the number of leaks and pipeline breaks per 100 miles of distribution piping.			
(3) Violations since 2000, as reported by the U.S. EPA Safe Drinking Water Information System.			
(4) Drinking water compliance is percent of time in compliance with National Primary Drinking Water Regulations			

The County Public Health Agency is responsible for the enforcement of the federal and California Safe Drinking Water Acts, and the operational permitting and regulatory oversight of public water systems of 199 connections or less. These systems are subject to inspections by the County Public Health Agency. During the Agency’s most recent inspection in August 2021, the Agency noted several minor deficiencies with the District’s distribution system, which have subsequently been addressed.

Drinking water quality is determined by a combination of historical violations reported by the EPA and the percent of time that the District is in compliance with Primary Drinking Water Regulations. Since 2000, the District has had one health violation due to a positive coliform test in 2010, and one monitoring violation due to inadequate monitoring for coliform in 2002. This equates to approximately 22 violations per 1,000 connections served. The District is not aware of any additional violations since 2010.

Indicators of distribution system integrity are the number of breaks and leaks in 2019/2020 and the rate of unaccounted for distribution loss. The District did not experience any breaks or reportable leaks during this period. The District estimated unaccounted for water losses of 12 percent of water between the water source and the connections served. Some water losses can be accounted for due to unmetered water provided to the National Forest Service and local agencies to fight a local wildfire in May 2020.

Figure 7-7 below provides summary data on District water demand and supply for the period from 1 July 2019 through 30 June 2021.

Figure 7-7: GMCS D Water Service Tables

Water Demand and Supply							
Service Connections	Total		Inside Bounds		Outside Bounds		
Total	102		102		0		
Irrigation/Landscape	3		3		0		
Domestic	86		86		0		
Commercial/Industrial/Institutional	11		11		0		
Recycled	0		0		0		
Other (construction)	2		2		0		
Average Annual Demand Information (Acre-Feet per Year)¹							
	2000 ²	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
Total	Unknown ³	21	17	21	29	38	45
Residential	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	16	20	24	28
Commercial	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	4	7	10	13
Industrial/Utility	0	0	0	1	1	1	2
Irrigation/Landscape	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Supply Information (Acre-Feet per Year)^{1,4}							
	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
Total	0	22	18	20	26	40	47
Imported	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ground Water	Unknown	22	18	20	26	38	44
Surface	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Recycled ⁵	0	0	0	0	0	2	3
Drought Supply and Plans⁶							
Drought Supply	New well online in 2021; Reserve well available for connection with the system in event the District experiences loss of production in existing wells.						
Storage Practices	Storage is for short-term emergency supply only; active plans in place to increase storage capacity with a tank at Well 29 and the high elevation site.						
Drought Plan	Conservation plan on file as used in 2013-2017 drought, which will result in savings of 25%. Bring Well 36 online and implement mandatory conservation practices if needed.						
Water Conservation Practices⁶							
CUWCC Signatory	No						
Metering	Yes						
Conservation Pricing	Yes – current cost of service rate study underway to establish pricing within legal limits of Proposition 218 requirements.						
Other Practices	Voluntary/Required conservation plan as executed in 2013-2017 drought.						
Notes:							
(1) Annual projected production less 5 percent system loss.							
(2) The District did not operate the system prior to 2005 and has no flow records prior to that time.							
(3) The District does not have records of the commercial use prior to 2015 as the system had a single unmetered connection at the time the resort went into bankruptcy.							
(4) Revised projected production based on District assumption of continued slower growth over the next 10 years.							
(5) The District plans to begin construction of a recycled water plant in 2022.							

(6) With development of two new wells, the District does not anticipate significant drought impacts. During the 2013-2017 drought, the District realized routine savings of 23-25% each year over 2013 baseline consumption. The District has already asked for voluntary conservation measures and is prepared to implement mandatory conservation similar District implemented measures in 2013.

The District commissioned its last rate study in 2006 with rates set through 2011 with a 3 percent annual escalation. Due to the lack of a rate history, the significant complications resulting from conversion to an independent district after the original developer's bankruptcy, and early community resistance to further rate increases, the District maintained level rates through 2021 with diminishing reserve contributions. Due to the increased cost of doing business and 10 years of inflation pressure, the District commissioned a new cost of service rate study with the intent of implementing rate increases in 2022. **Figure 7-8** provides an overview of water rates and planned financing.

Figure 7-8: Water Rates and Financing

Water Rates and Financing					
Residential Water Rates-Ongoing Charges FY 19-20					
	Rate Description	Avg. Monthly Charges	Consumption		
Residential	Fixed annual charge of \$1,888 for water and wastewater services, 47% charged to water. Water consumption charge of .55 per 1,000 gallons for first 10,000 gallons, and increased rates for each additional 10,000 gallons.	\$ 77.32	5,610 gal/month		
Rate Setting Procedures					
Most Recent Rate Change		7/1/10	Frequency of Rate Changes		N/A
Water Development Fees and Requirements					
Fee Approach		Rates are set to cover the costs of operation, maintenance, and a portion of the capital outlays			
Connection Fee Amount		\$13,681 per connection			
Water Enterprise Revenues, FY 19-20			Operating Expenditures, FY 19-20		
Source	Amount	%	Amount		
Total	\$ 304,412		Total	\$ 299,954	
Rates & Charges	\$ 271,307	89%	Administration	\$ 133,165	37%
Property tax	\$ 0	0%	0 &M	\$ 111,784	44%
Administration	\$ 10,003	3%	Depreciation	\$ 55,005	18%
Interest & Fees	\$ 10,335	3%	Debt	\$ 0	
Connection Fees ³	\$ 8,096	3%	Other	\$ 0	
Other ⁴	\$ 4,671	2%			
Notes:					
(1) Rates include water related service charges and usage charges.					
(2) Water use assumptions were used to calculate average monthly bills. Assumed use levels are consistent countywide for comparison purposes.					
(3) Connection fee appropriately allocated between Water and Sewer per CSD policy					
(4) Includes non-operation revenues for water					

WASTEWATER SERVICES

Service Overview

The District operates and maintains a wastewater utility which provides collection and disposal of domestic wastewater using a Septic Tank Effluent Pumping (STEP) system. Engineers designed the system to complete primary treatment in the individual septic tanks and dispose of septic tank effluent via subsurface infiltration in community leachfields.

The District's full-time Lead Operator oversees field operations. The Lead Operator holds a D2 certification which exceeds the requirements of the system. Two utility operators (two FTE) assist in daily inspections under the direct supervision of the Lead Operator. The District's other experienced operator holds D1/T1 certifications, while the junior Operator holds a D1 certification.

Facilities and Capacity

The sewage collection and disposal facilities include an individual STEP system, consisting of a septic tank, effluent filter, and pump, at each connected facility, a common force main collection system and two separate community leachfields. Based on the site inspection and a case file review, the District has a monthly average flow rate of 100,000 gallons per day (gpd) or less and is therefore eligible for coverage under the general and specific conditions of State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) Water Quality Order 2014-0153-DWQ General Waste Discharge Requirements for Small Domestic Wastewater Treatment Systems (General Order). As an existing facility enrollment under the General Order, the District's system is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15301 which applies to ongoing or existing projects. The SWRCB has assigned General Order 2014-0153-DWQ-R5253 to the District.

The District will phase in wastewater treatment expansion as the influent flow increases over the course of community buildout. The initial Phase I, as it exists today, consists of subsurface disposal from individual septic tanks to two community leachfields allowing discharge of up to 33,000 gpd. Due to shallow groundwater and poor soil conditions, Phase II (discharge > 33,000 gpd) will require the installation of a recirculating sand filter (or equivalent) between the septic tanks and leachfields, and Phase III (discharge > 66,000 gpd) will involve the construction of an advanced secondary package treatment plant with sufficient effluent quality to discharge reclaimed water to the golf course for irrigation.

Annual average flows (AAF) in 2020 ranged from 4,000 gpd in the winter season to over 13,000 gpd in peak season, with an overall AAF of 9,216, well below the 33,000 gpd Phase I limitation. The District's current limitation is leachfield capacity as discussed below, not regulatory requirements.

The collection system, built in 1996, consists of thirteen miles of PVC/ABS sewer pipelines, which the District considers to be in good condition. The pressurized system has the advantage of reduced inflow and infiltration (I/I) from rainfall, runoff, and groundwater. The peak wet weather flow to the treatment plant is therefore less for a low pressure sewer

system than for a gravity sewer system. Low pressure sewers provide a more consistent strength of wastewater during heavy rainfall events.

The terminus of the collection system is two community leachfields—Falling Water leachfield and Windsong leachfield. Engineers never formally established the final design capacity of District’s two leachfields, rather they designed the facilities to accommodate a total of 84 lots per a letter dated April 22, 1996, from NST Engineering. The plan intended that the Windsong facility serve lots 1 thru 52, while the Falling Water facility was to serve lots 53 to 84. According to the initial plan, subsequent lots would then require a “modular package type” or recirculating sand-gravel filter bed; however, the developer never completed the system or expanded the system to meet full system demand. The District’s Waste Discharge Requirements does not indicate a maximum capacity of the system, nor phased upgrades based on AAF. As a result, the District continues to use the two existing leachfields with satisfactory results to date.

During an investigation of both the Windsong and Falling Water community leachfields, in 2005, it was determined that the construction of the collection system was not in accordance with the engineered design. During system investigation identified major construction defects in the Windsong leachfield, including lack of sufficient drain rock, clogged drain holes, undersized drain rock, and lack of covering fabric. the leachfield was subsequently reconstructed and continues in regular operation to this date.

Both leachfields have seen significant improvement since 2011 including tree clearing, weed abatement, and rodent control to extend leachfield life. During reconstruction of the **Windsong leachfield**, planners made the decision to leave a considerable number of pine and cedar trees growing in the interior of the field due to strict community tree removal policies. Between 2018 and 2019 the District began to see negative effects on the system due to root intrusion. The District instituted a tree clearing program in 2020 completing removal of 95 percent of trees in 2021, leaving only a few signature trees in the field’s interior. District Utility Operators monitor the field each day and rotate trenches as required by flow requirements in response to manual measurements.

At the **Falling Water leachfield**, the District installed a 5,000-gallon dosing station in 2017/18. Equipped with automated controls and valving, the dosing station increased field capacity and efficiency. Several upgrades to the control program, including the latest in June 2021, have further increased efficiency. The program automatically transfers flow to various trenches and adjusts flow times based on trench location and length. The District is in the initial stages of expanding the Falling Water leachfield on to adjacent District-owned property and completed clearing the field and satisfactory percolation testing July 2021. The District plans expansion in three phases over the next 18-24 months.

In 2020 the District began a valve upgrade program, repairing one critical main valve feeding the Windsong leachfield, and adding two new valves, which better allow Operators to direct effluent to either field, isolate either field, or adopt a balanced regime to allow each field to operate at maximum efficiency. District Operators inspect and monitor both leachfields each day, 365 days a year, watching for any signs of oversaturation

Infrastructure Needs

Wastewater handling is the District's current top priority capital project for adding capacity to the sewer system to accommodate future growth. While residential growth remains slow, the addition of the Nakoma Resort hotel and recreation facility have increased pressure on the system, especially during peak summer months. The existing system appears to be operating at 85-95 percent capacity during peak periods, although the exact capacity of the leachfields has never been established.

Pressure on the existing system as well as the certainty of future growth dictate the need for system expansion. In 2021, the District began planning for both the development of a water reclamation capability and leachfield expansion to improve wastewater handling capacity. While the Master Plan identified the need for above ground effluent storage in treatment ponds to achieve water reclamation, advancements in self-contained water reclamation units offer more efficient alternatives. The District is working with the manufacturer of its currently used STEP tanks to develop a cost effective media based water reclamation solution. Based on modern technology, the District estimates this project to cost \$650,000, well below the 2017 Master plan update estimate of \$2.2 million for traditional treatment. Managing and maintaining these new units is within the capacity, experience, and certifications of existing staff. The District has completed preliminary engineering for the system and submitted a request for grant funding. The District has also completed negotiations with the Resort operator to include a letter of understanding to discharge reclaimed water into golf course irrigation ponds during the summer months. To accommodate winter discharges and provide additional capacity, the District has begun a Falling Water leachfield expansion project using Capital Reserve dollars. This project will expand the capacity of the current leachfield by 50 percent. The District sized the recently added dosing station controller with the capacity to control the planned field expansion.

Challenges

The lack of established capacity limits for the existing leachfields and lack of permeable soil for new leachfields presents a particular problem for the District. The District has overcome the capacity issue through 19 years of daily experience managing the fields. They have developed standard operating procedures including a seven day a week inspection regime and installation of a series of dedicated monitoring wells to continually test for seepage and groundwater quality. While these practices provide adequate capacity monitoring for current service requirements, the District acknowledges the need for expansion and secondary treatment or reclamation to meet future demand. The current leachfield expansion project involves the permitted clearing of the lot to remove trees and understory, and mechanical "ripping" of the property to break up the non-permeable hard pan surfaces. Several test holes and lab testing have obtained adequate percolation results to continue with construction. The District plans for the expanded field to enter service in 2022.

Service Adequacy

This section reviews indicators of service adequacy, including regulatory compliance, treatment effectiveness, sewer overflows and collection system integrity. **Figure 7-9** summarizes service adequacy indicators.

Figure 7-9: GMCSO Wastewater Service Adequacy Indicators

Wastewater Service Adequacy and Efficiency			
Regulatory Compliance Record			
Formal Enforcement Actions	0	Informal Enforcement Actions	1
Formal Enforcement Action Type		Description of Violations	
NA		NA	
Total Violations, 2012-2021¹			
Total Violations	0	Priority Violations	0
Informal Enforcement Actions			
Installation of additional monitoring wells as the fields near capacity – complete in 2020			
Service Adequacy Indicators			
Treatment Effectiveness Rate	NA ²	Sewer Overflows 2012-2021 ³	1
Total Employees (FTE) ⁴	3	Sewer Overflow Rate ⁵	7.7
MGD Treated Per FTE ⁶	.0067	Customer Complaint 2012-2021 ⁷	9
Source Control and Pollution Prevention Practices			
Installation of ground water monitoring wells around leachfields			
Collection System Inspection Practices			
Daily inspection of the system including leachfields and transmission lines. Regularly scheduled septic tank inspections and pumping.			
Notes:			
(1) Order and code violations include sanitary system overflow violations			
(2) As the District does not provide treatment, they do not report the quality of effluent			
(3) Total number of overflows reported (excluding those caused by customers) from 2012 to 2021 as reported by the agency			
(4) Number of utility workers			
(5) Sewer overflows reported from 2012-2021 (excluding those caused by customers) per one hundred miles of collection piping			
(6) Based on maximum daily flow rate of 20,000 GPD			
(7) Customer complaints revolve around STEP system alarms and an occasional report of odors in the vicinity of the leachfield			

GMCSO has had no violations related to wastewater services between 2012 and 2021, and consequently, no priority violations and no formal actions. Due to the age of the system and lack of engineering capacity numbers, the County ordered the installation of the additional monitoring wells.

The State requires wastewater treatment providers comply with effluent quality standards under the waste discharge requirements determined by RWQCB. As the District is not presently treating sewage, it does not track the quality of the effluent.

Likewise, the State requires wastewater agencies to report sewer system overflows (SSOs) to SWRCB. Overflows reflect the capacity and condition of collection system piping

and the effectiveness of routine maintenance. The sewer overflow rate calculates the number of overflows per one hundred miles of collection piping. During the period from 2012 thru 2021, the District reported one overflow due to a small break in the collection system, and consequently the overflow rate is 7.7 per one hundred miles of piping.

There are several measures of integrity of the wastewater collection system, including peaking factors, efforts to address infiltration and inflow (I/I), and inspection practices. As a rule, peak demand periods are not related to wet weather flows in a pressurized system which minimizes infiltration and inflow into the system. However, during periods of heavy snow melt, saturation issues impact the leachfields requiring additional monitoring and flow modifications. **Figure 7-10 - 7-12** provide additional details on the District’s wastewater program.

Figure 7-10: GMCS D Wastewater Profile

Wastewater Service Configuration and Demand				
Service Configuration				
Service Type		Service Provider		
Wastewater Collection		GMCS D		
Wastewater Treatment		None		
Wastewater Disposal		GMCS D		
Recycled Water		None		
Service Area				
Collection		Scattered developed residential and commercial lots throughout the Gold Mountain Development		
Treatment		NA		
Recycled		NA		
Service Demand				
Type	Connections 2020	Inside Bounds	Outside Bounds	Flow (GPD) Average
Total	96	96	0	9,216 ¹
Residential	86	86	0	6,661 ²
Commercial Resid.	7	7	0	266 ²
Commercial	3	3	0	2,555 ²
Historical and Projected Demand (AAF in Gallons per Day)³				
2005	2010	2015	2020	2025
Unkonwn ⁴	5,004	5,865	9,216	12,000
Notes:				
(1) Average 2020 gpd sewer flows (range 4,084-13,323)				
(2) Estimates based on percentage of metered domestic water flows				
(3) Projections based on 6.1% per year District growth estimates over next 5 years				
(4) Flow data unavailable before 2010				

Figure 7-11: GMCS D Wastewater Infrastructure Summary

Wastewater Infrastructure			
Wastewater Collection, Treatment, & Disposal Infrastructure			
System Overview¹			
Facility Name	Capacity ²	Condition	Year Built
Windsong Community Leachfield	Approx. 6,000 gpd	Fair	2006
Falling Water Community Leachfield	Approx. 8,000 gpd	Fair	1996
Collection & Distribution Infrastructure			
STEP Tank Number	97	STEP Tank Capacities	1,500 – 5,000 gals
Sewer Pipe Miles	13	Sewage Lift Stations	0
Treatment Plant Daily Flow (mgd)			
AAF (gpd)	% of Capacity in Use	Peak Monthly (gpd)	Peaking Factor
9,216	Approx. 66%	13,323 ^{3,4}	N/A
Infiltration and Inflow			
The District did not identify any issues related to I/I. The system is pressurized which minimizes I/I.			
Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies			
The District identified a need for leachfield expansion to allow for additional capacity, and the need for a water reclamation facility to reduce growing pressure on the leachfields.			
Wastewater Facility Sharing			
Facility Sharing Practices			
The District shares a maintenance facility with the Community Association. The District also cooperates with the Resort operator by monitoring resort wells and production, in exchange for occasional use of resort yellow gear when needed.			
Facility Sharing Opportunities			
Potentially shared water source development between the District and Resort operator on adjacent property within the District's SOI.			
Notes:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) All information based on 2020 flow data (2) Capacity estimates based on 19 years' experience managing continuing increased flows (3) Peak AAF in July/August 2020 (4) Based on observed field conditions and estimated combined capacity of 14,000 gpd, peak flows are at 95% capacity 			

Figure 7-12: GMCS D Wastewater Financing

Wastewater Rates and Financing					
Wastewater Rates-Ongoing Charges FY 19-20¹					
	Rate Description	Charges ²	Demand ³		
Residential	Flat annual rate of \$1,888	\$83.39	172 gpd		
Commercial Residential	Flat annual rate of \$1,888	\$83.39	85 gpd		
Commercial	Flat annual rate of \$1,888	\$83.39	1,910 gpd		
Standby Customers	Flat annual rate of \$1,888	\$31.27	0 gpd		
Rate Zones					
None					
Rate Setting Procedures					
Last Rate Change 1 Oct 2011. Current cost of service rate study is underway.					
Wastewater Development Fees and Requirements					
Fee Approach	Rates are set to cover the cost of wastewater operations, maintenance, administration (OM&A) and a percentage of capital outlays. As all parcels in the District have sewer laterals installed to the parcel, the District assesses a standby fee for these parcels to offset the OM&A costs.				
Connection Fee Amount	Based on size of water meter connection. The sewer portion of the fee currently ranges from \$4,422 for a standard 1" connection up to \$88,575 for a six inch commercial connection.				
Wastewater Enterprise Revenues FY 19-20⁴			Operating Expenditures, FY 19-20⁴		
Source	Amount	%	Source	Amount	
Total	\$ 228,422	100%	Total	\$ 254,827	
Sewer Services	\$ 117,092	51%	Administration & General	\$ 146,915	58%
Standby Charges	\$ 79,040	35%	Depreciation	\$ 18,167	7%
Property Tax	\$ 0	0%	Collection	\$ 55,477	22%
Administrative Fees	\$ 11,280	5%	Sewage Treatment	\$ 34,268	13%
Interest & Late Charges	\$ 11,654	5%	Debt	\$ 0	
Connection Fees ⁶	\$ 4,088 ⁵	2%	Other	\$ 0	
Other ⁷	\$ 5,268	2%			
Notes:					
(1) The District uses a flat annual rate structure of \$1,888 for all connections (residential and commercial), and \$708 for all standby parcels. All connection/standby fees are allocated 53% to the sewer fund					
(2) The District bills customers quarterly (\$472 connected/\$177 standby.) Posted monthly rate indicates 53% percent allocated to the sewer fund.					
(3) Calculated based on average monthly flows and percentage of metered domestic water flows					
(4) FY19-20 Audited Financial Statements					
(5) Sewer allocation from single collection charge for 1" connection in this period					
(6) Connection fee appropriately allocated between Water and Sewer per CSD policy					
(7) Includes non-operation revenues for Sewer					

FIRE SERVICES

Service Overview

GMCSO provides structural fire suppression, emergency medical and fire prevention services to its residents through a contract with EPRFPD.

History

Under the governance of the Plumas County BOS, the District entered a contract for Fire Protection and EMS with the City of Portola in 1997. The term of the original agreement was from 1997 through 2001. Under this contract GMCSO paid the City a standby charge of \$5,000 a year. In addition, the District was paying the City per incident for firefighters and equipment used. Water provision was the District's responsibility.⁶¹

In 2002, the District and City extended the contract through 2006 with the City raising the rate to \$25,000 due to the ongoing construction of homes and the Nakoma Lodge created a higher responsibility burden and level of liability for Portola FD.⁶²

At the end of 2006, the City and the District renewed the contract and applied to LAFCO for an out-of-area service agreement. LAFCO approved the agreement with the stipulation the District needed to annex to a fire protection District. The parties entered a contract for the period of one and a half years from January 1, 2007, to June 30, 2008, with the City continuing to provide services at the agreed upon rate of \$25,000 per year.⁶³

In 2008, the District presented their case to Plumas LAFCO for contract renewal claiming an exemption under Government Code §56133(e) based on the City having provided fire suppression services to the District prior to 2001. The District claimed that service prior to 2001 excluded the contract from the LAFCO review requirement for contracts or agreements solely involving two or more public agencies as not requiring LAFCO approval.⁶⁴ At that time, LAFCO determined that "once an agency submits to LAFCO jurisdiction on an issue that LAFCO will have exclusive jurisdiction thereafter."⁶⁵ GMCSO and City of Portola extended their contract for two years, again through LAFCO.⁶⁶

In 2010, LAFCO determined that the agencies' exemption arguments had credence, and the City of Portola continued to provide contracted service to GMCSO under multiple year contracts until the City disbanded its Fire Department in 2017.

Contract with EPRFPD

With the disbanding of the City of Portola Fire Department, GMCSO reached out to EPRFPD for contract Fire Protection and EMS services. As EPRFPD also assumed contract

⁶¹ Agreement for Fire Suppression Services by the City of Portola for the Gold Mountain Service District, 1997, p. 1.

⁶² City of Portola and Gold Mountain CSD, *Plan for Providing Services, Out-of-Agency Service Agreement, Fire Suppression Service*, 2006, p. 1.

⁶³ 2006-OASA-002.

⁶⁴ From Steven C. Gross, City Attorney to Jim Murphy, Portola City Manager, *Legal Memorandum*, March 12, 2008, pp. 1-2.

⁶⁵ John M. Gullixson, Staff Report to Honorable Members of the Commission, April 14th, 2008.

⁶⁶ 2008-OASA-001.

services for the City of Portola, and with limited options, the District agreed to contract directly with EPRFPD for services equivalent to those previously provided by the City. Initially on a one-year contract for \$35,000, the District agreed to renew in 2019 on a three year contract starting at \$36,050 with an annual 3 percent escalation option.

Scope of Services

The nearest EPRFPD facility is located one mile from the community of Gold Mountain in the unincorporated area of Iron Horse. The Iron Horse facility is not a full fire house but houses two pieces of EPRFPD equipment accessible to their volunteer firefighters. At the time of GMCS D's original contract, EPRFPD was supporting the City's south side Fire Hall, three miles from the District. In 2019 the City ended its contract with EPRFPD and as a result, EPRFPD's nearest full fire house in Delleker is eight miles from GMCS D. While not ideal due to the distance involved, EPRFPD has provided reliable support to the District since the beginning of the contract meeting all calls for service. The District's contract with EPRFPD also includes the requirement to conduct quarterly training in the District, provide incident reports, and provide ancillary services such as support to the District's active Firewise efforts. District officers regularly attend EPRFPD board meetings to monitor and provide input on Fire and EMS. The District's part-time Fire Coordinator provides day-to-day liaison with EPRFPD's Chief for operational and training coordination.

Quick Attack Vehicle and Fire Cadre

The District maintains and operates a Quick Attack Vehicle (QAV) during the summer fire season. The QAV consists of a water/foam pumping unit and 150-gallon water tank mounted as a slide on package configured for the District's 1-ton pick-up. The QAV also holds Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and an assortment of wildfire hand tools. The District's Fire Coordinator manages and trains a cadre of six to eight volunteers to operate the QAV in the event of a wildfire ignition within the District. The District does not authorize the QAV or Fire Cadre for structural firefighting.

Funding

In 2006, GMCS D voters approved a special tax designated for fire protection and prevention, emergency medical response, and hazardous material emergency response, and other fire related programs. The primary expense paid from the tax is for contracted structural fire protection and EMS services. In FY 20-21, the single family homes paid \$277.05 and undeveloped lots paid \$184.73 in annual fire tax. Fire Tax funding primarily supports the District's contract for Fire Prevention, with additional dollars designated for Community Hazardous Fuel Treatment, installation of fire hydrants, maintenance of the Community Fire Break, support to the District's Firewise Program, QAV maintenance and equipping, and other fire related requirements. Surplus fire tax dollars are set aside for construction of a future District fire facility.

Constraints

The primary constraint to the provision of adequate fire services is a lack of sufficient fire flow through the District's pressurized water system. Since 2011, the District has made several improvements as previously noted including installation of 11 new fire hydrants, configuring the Resort swimming pool for firefighting water storage, and booster station

improvements. The District is currently in the process of installing new drafting plumbing at the golf course irrigation ponds to improve the ability of fire apparatus to draw water from the ponds, adding thousands of gallons of potential water storage. Ongoing improvements to the District water system including the HEWT should significantly improve the District's ability to provide enhanced firefighting flows.

The long term remedy for improved fire protection is the replacement of District 2", 3", and 4" fire mains with 6" mains to supply District fire hydrants with adequate fire flows. The District's 2007 Master Plan and subsequent estimates indicate a price more than \$2,000,000 to accomplish the required upgrades. Due to District infrastructure priorities and lack of fire funding, the District has deferred this major capital improvement to future years. The District will actively apply for grant funding to move this project forward.

Future of Fire Service

The District has completed several studies since 2011 to explore options to provide a more permanent fire service solution including the four options:

- ❖ **Annexation to EPRFPD** - The outlined pros included the proximity of one of EPRFPD's three fire facilities to GMCSO and the fact that GMCSO is adjacent to EPRFPD's SOI. The main argument against EPRFPD was the perception of EPRFPD underfunding as well as the lack of volunteers and the distance to an actual fire house.
- ❖ **Annexation into the Graeagle Fire Protection District (GFPD)** - The District determined that GFPD was a well-run and well-resourced district; however, there would be a prohibitive cost of buying-in to the District's services, and distances to GFPD facilities, coupled with District geography, which would not support the required response times.
- ❖ **Enter into a joint powers agreement (JPA) with the City of Portola** - No longer an option with the City's disbanding of its fire department.
- ❖ **Regional reorganization** - Most recently, the District has joined three other Eastern Plumas County fire protection agencies to explore consolidation and the forming of a new District to combine resources and capability to provide regional improvements to fire protection. Under this concept, the GMCSO would relinquish its latent power of fire protection and become an equal partner with the other fire entities in this new district. Currently this is the District's primary focus.

GOLD MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT DETERMINATIONS

Growth and Population Projections

- ❖ The District currently has 88 residential structures with an estimated total population of 181 and year round population of 76.
- ❖ Between 2011 and 2021, only 10 newly constructed residential structures have connected to the Districts' utility systems, equating an annualized growth of less than two percent.
- ❖ The District anticipates continued slow growth in population and similarly in service demand over the next five years. Current infrastructure trigger points combined with infrastructure improvements remain adequate for the slow growth model.

The Location and Characteristics of Disadvantaged Unincorporated Communities Within or Contiguous to the Agency's SOI

- ❖ Based on American Community Survey 2016-2020 Census Tract information, the entirety of the study area and the boundaries within and immediately adjacent to each of the five reviewed fire providers is defined as disadvantaged. However, based on smaller community size there are no disadvantaged communities within or adjacent to Gold Mountain CSD.

Present and Planned Capacity of Public Facilities and Adequacy of Public Services, Including Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies

- ❖ Presently, with the District's new well online, average daily demand for water is 18 percent of the 90 GPM wells' combined pumping capacity, while peak day demand constitutes 36 percent of the wells' combined pumping capacity.
- ❖ The primary infrastructure needs identified by the District for the water system are increased water storage capacity. The priority project is the high elevation water tank, leading to improved fire suppression flows and improved backup water supplies. The second priority is a third larger tank adjacent to the current main storage tanks on District owned property. The District is pursuing each of these capital improvements, having completed preliminary engineering and property procurement in preparation for completion in the 2022-2024 timeframe. The two new wells have eliminated short to mid-term concerns for water production.
- ❖ The existing sewer system appears to be at 95 percent capacity at peak flows and represents the District's primary infrastructure concern. The District is undertaking a two prong solution by expanding the Windsong leachfield with capital reserve dollars, while moving forward with a water reclamation plant funded by grant or utility loan

financing. The District plans to have Phase I of the leachfield expansion operational in 2022, with both projects complete by 2023.

- ❖ GMCSO projects its service needs related to growth through build-out of the subdivision in its regularly updated Master Plan. The next update is scheduled for 2022 although there are no current indications of a dramatic increase in new building starts.

Financial Ability of Agencies to Provide Services

- ❖ While the District has faced financial difficulties in the past, and anticipates significant underfunded infrastructure needs in the future, the District has solid financial planning and has initiated a cost of service rate study to provide long term financial stability.
- ❖ The District anticipated that it can meet mid-term (5-10 years) capital improvements with a combination of capital reserves, grants, and generational financing.
- ❖ GMCSO has a capital improvement program with a 30-year planning horizon, updated on a five-year basis and as outlined in the Master Plan. The District is aggressively pursuing grants and alternative funding to support the plan.
- ❖ The District has made effective use of healthy restricted and unrestricted reserves over the last two years to meet priority infrastructure needs. Unrestricted Operational Reserves are sufficient to finance approximately four months of operations for water and wastewater services, and over a year of operations for fire services.

Status of, and Opportunities for, Shared Facilities

- ❖ The District contracts for fire and EMS services with EPRFPD on a multiyear contract and is actively supporting the ongoing effort to consolidate and join a new regional fire district. If successful, the District will relinquish its current power for fire protection, yet retain a degree of fire responsibility for its QAV, HFT, and fire break programs.
- ❖ The District has a long-term agreement with the Nakoma Community Association to share the multipurpose maintenance facility and assist with resources, as necessary.
- ❖ The District has a cooperative relationship with the Nakoma Resort to monitor wells, provide reclaimed water to golf course irrigation, and cooperate in other ways to improve the community.

Accountability for Community Service Needs, Including Governmental Structure and Operational Efficiencies

- ❖ GMCSO demonstrated accountability in its disclosure of information and cooperation with Plumas LAFCO. The District responded to the questionnaires and cooperated with all document requests.
- ❖ The District has contracted for a professionally conducted cost of service rate structure, providing all records and documentation to follow the Proposition 218 process to increase water and sewer rates.
- ❖ GMCSO practices extensive outreach efforts which enhance transparency, including a website where the District Secretary ensure all material is available. The District is

actively participating in the California Special District Association's Transparency Challenge.

- ❖ Governance structure options regarding fire services in Gold Mountain include reorganization into a new Fire District, annexation with EPRFPD, annexation with another fire provider. As of the drafting of this report, the District had not made a final decision as to the course it would like to take in this matter. The recently completed LESSG feasibility study found that formation of a new fire district is a practical and affordable solution to many of the challenges faced by fire providers in the region.

8. SIERRA VALLEY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

Sierra Valley Fire Protection District, also known as the Sierra Valley Volunteer Fire Department (SVVFD), provides fire protection, basic life support response and some fire prevention programs. This is the second municipal service review for Sierra Valley FPD, the first was completed in 2011.

AGENCY OVERVIEW

Background

SVVFD was formed in 1948 as an independent special district.⁶⁷ The District was formed to provide structural fire and basic life support services.

The principal act that governs the District is the Fire Protection District Law of 1987.⁶⁸ The principal act empowers fire districts to provide fire protection, rescue, emergency medical, hazardous material response, ambulance, and any other services relating to the protection of lives and property.⁶⁹ Districts must apply and obtain LAFCo approval to exercise services authorized by the principal act but not already provided (i.e., latent powers) by the district at the end of 2000.

SVVFD is one of the largest fire protection districts in Plumas County based on the total area within its boundaries. It is located in the eastern part of the County and is surrounded by territory served by the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management. The District borders Beckwourth FPD in the west, Hallelujah Junction FPD of Lassen County in the east, Lassen County in the north, and Sierra County in the south.

Boundaries

SVVFD's boundary is entirely within Plumas County. The District's boundaries encompass approximately 220 square miles,⁷⁰ which include ranches, remote homes, residential sections, a mobile park, businesses and a lake/campground recreation area.⁷¹ Since its formation, there have never been any annexations to or detachments from SVVFD.

Sphere of Influence

The SOI for SVVFD was originally adopted in 1982⁷² and made coterminous with the District's boundaries. In 1994, it was reduced to a significantly smaller area to include the

⁶⁷ State Board of Equalization.

⁶⁸ Health and Safety Code §13800-13970.

⁶⁹ Health and Safety Code §13862.

⁷⁰ Total agency area calculated in GIS software based on agency boundaries as of July 1, 2011. The data is not considered survey quality.

⁷¹ Assistance to Firefighter Grants, *Sierra Valley FPD Grant Application*, 2010.

⁷² LAFCo resolution 82-07.11.

communities of Chilcoot and Vinton along SR 70 and encompass eight square miles compared to 220 square miles of boundary area. Most recently, the District's SOI was updated in 2012 to include substantially more territory within the District's boundaries. The SOI continues to exclude the northern most boundary area due to lengthy response times and accessibility challenges and an area to the west along SR 70 consisting of the Maddalena Tree Farm that may be best served by BFPD due to proximity and access. At present, the District's SOI is 191 square miles.

Extra-territorial Services

The District provides extra-territorial fire and emergency services to Hallelujah Junction Fire Protection District (HJFPD) of Lassen County. Previously, these services were approved by LAFCo through an out-of-area service agreement (OASA). The agreement became effective January 1, 2006 and expired at the end of 2010. The territory under the agreement included areas on both sides of SR 395 and along both sides of SR 70 east of SVVFD's boundaries. These areas are shown in Figure 1-1.⁷³ The OASA was not renewed in January 2011, because LAFCo advised the District that according to California Government Code §56133 it was not necessary to have an OASA for two public agencies.⁷⁴ SVVFD will continue to provide services to HJFPD under contract, which was voted to be extended by the District's Board of Directors on January 10, 2020. The contract will be valid for three years with an automatic two-year extension.

The District also occasionally responds to wildland fires when requested. Response to a wildland fire in federal and state responsibility areas is reimbursed by the federal government if the firefighters are on the fire for more than four hours.

Through an informal agreement with the Sheriff's Office, which is discussed in more detail in the Fire Service Section, the District responds outside of its boundaries to a small area along the county line in the south. The area is shown in Figure 1-1. Except for this small area that encompasses about two square miles, the District's service area is the same as its boundaries.

Areas of Interest

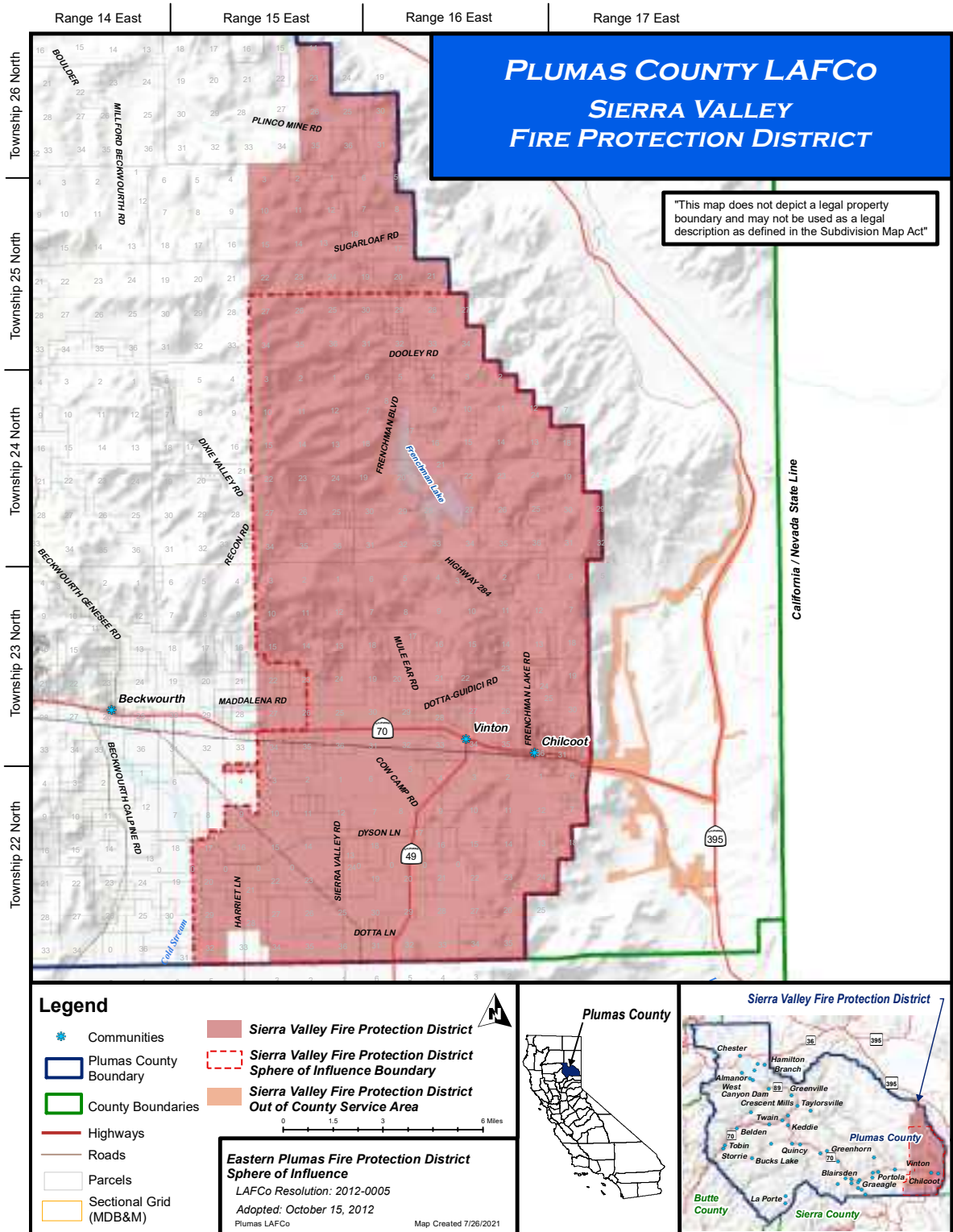
The only area of interest reported by the District is the Maddalena Tree Farm. Currently, the area is within the boundaries of SVVFD, but Beckwourth FPD would like to add it to its own boundaries.⁷⁵ Beckwourth FD reported that it was in closer proximity to the Beckwourth FD stations than the SVVFD stations. In addition, SVVFD has to go through Beckwourth FD territory to access the Maddalena Tree Farm, which makes it even more of a challenge to serve this territory. This area is presently excluded from the District's SOI.

⁷³ 2005-OASA-002.

⁷⁴ Interview with John Benoit, Plumas LAFCo Executive Officer, February 3, 2011.

⁷⁵ Interview with Russ Dickman, the treasurer and Tom, assistant chief of SVVFD, November 10, 2010.

Figure 8-1: Sierra Valley FPD Boundaries and SOI



Accountability and Governance

The principal act orders that the governing body of a fire protection district must have an odd number of members, with a minimum of three and a maximum of 11 members. Directors may be appointed or elected.⁷⁶ SVVFD is governed by a five-member Board of Directors who are elected to staggered four-year terms. When board members resign before the end of their terms, the District Board or the County Board of Supervisors appoints replacements. There are currently three members, one of whom was elected and two of whom were appointed. The Board of Directors has two vacancies. There has never been a contested election. Current board member names, positions, and term expiration dates are shown in Figure 1-2.

The Board meets once a month on the second Tuesday of the month at 6pm at the Chilcoot fire station. Board meeting agendas are posted at the Chilcoot station and at the Chilcoot post office. Minutes of every board meeting are available upon request. The District has a Facebook page, but the agendas and minutes are not published there.

Figure 8-2: SVVFD Governing Body

Sierra Valley Fire Protection District				
<i>District Contact Information</i>				
Contact:	Duncan Cameron, Fire Chief			
Address:	94362 CA-70, P.O. Box 211, Chilcoot, CA 96105			
Telephone:	(530) 993-1111			
Email/website:	https://www.facebook.com/SierraValleyFireDepartment/			
<i>Board of Directors</i>				
Member Name	Position	Term Expiration	Manner of Selection	Length of Term
Dean Morgan	Member		Appointed	4 years
Kasey Coonrod	Member		Appointed	4 years
Johnny Hernandez	Member	12/3/25	Appointed	4 years
Vicki Anderson	Member		Appointed	4 years
Matt Goodwin	Member		Appointed	4 years
<i>Meetings</i>				
Date:	Second Tuesday of every month at 6 pm			
Location:	Chilcoot fire station			
Agenda Distribution:	Posted at the Chilcoot fire station and Chilcoot post office			
Minutes Distribution:	Posted at the Chilcoot fire station and Chilcoot post office			

⁷⁶ Health and Safety Code §13842.

In addition to the required agendas and minutes, the District does public outreach through its Facebook Page and occasional newsletters. The Sierra Valley Fire auxiliary also holds regular fundraisers to raise money for the District and reach out to constituents.

If a customer is dissatisfied with the District's services, complaints may be submitted by calling the office. After that, they are forwarded to the Board, which is responsible for resolving them. The District reported that no complaints have been submitted in the last few years.

SVVFD demonstrated accountability and transparency in its disclosure of information and cooperation with Plumas LAFCo. The District responded to the questionnaires and cooperated with document requests.

Planning and Management Practices

Daily operations are managed by the chief. There are 11 staff—none of whom are paid. All the volunteer personnel are firefighters, including the bookkeeper. The sworn personnel consist of a chief, three captains and 7 firefighters.

Firefighters are accountable to captains; captains are accountable to the chief. The chief reports to the Board of Directors through monthly reports. Personnel are evaluated by the chief, and the chief is evaluated by the Board annually. The Board appoints the chief every two years.

The District tracks its staff workload through a training log and maintenance log. The District also tracks who responds to each call for service.

SVVFD reported performing no formal evaluations of overall district performance, such as benchmarking or annual reports.

The District's financial planning efforts include an annually adopted budget. The financial statements are audited on an as-needed basis. The latest audit took place in FY 14-15. The District provided the adopted budget for FY 20-21, audited financial statements for FY 14-15, up-to-date unaudited financial statements for FY 20-21. SVVFD does not adopt other planning documents, such as a capital improvement plan or master plan. The District's capital improvement projects are included in the budget.

Existing Demand and Growth Projections

Most of the land uses within the District are wildland and agricultural. The densest residential and suburban areas are located in the community of Chilcoot and along SR 49.⁷⁷ The territory north of Frenchman Lake is what the District referred to as a no-man's zone, which is part of SVVFD, but is extremely hard to reach. There are almost no residences approximately north of Dotta-Guidici Road and Rutting Deer Road.⁷⁸ The total square mileage of the District's boundary area is approximately 220.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Plumas County Parcel Application.

⁷⁸ Interview with Russ Dickman, SVFPD Treasurer, and Tom, Assistant Chief of SVVFD, November 10, 2010.

⁷⁹ http://www.sierravalleyfire.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1&Itemid=2

Population

There are approximately 600 residents within the District, based on the census block population in the 2020 census.⁸⁰

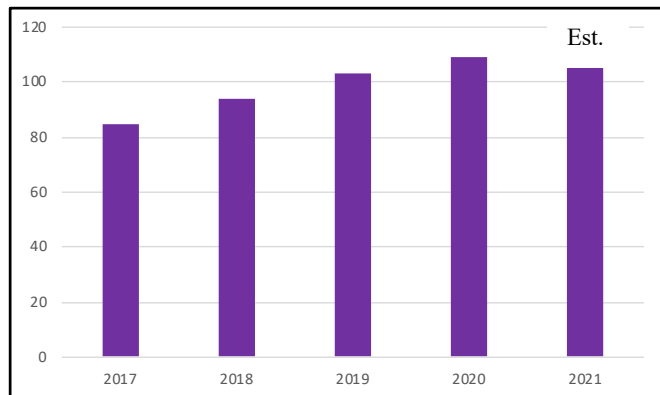
The District estimates that visiting tourists add approximately 13,000 additional people to its boundaries during peak tourism seasons. The contract with HJFPD increases the population served by an additional 190 people.⁸¹

Existing Demand

The District reported peak demand during snow season, due to driving accidents and during fire season. Calls for medical emergencies are consistently high throughout the year, similar to other providers.

The District reported that it has observed little change in service demand from 2017 to 2021. The number of calls slightly went down from 2020 to 2021.

Figure 8-3: SVVFD Number of Calls (2017-21)



Projected Growth and Development

The Agency anticipates little or no growth in population and similarly in service demand within the District in the next few years; however, no formal population projections have been made by the District.

The State Department of Finance (DOF) projects that the population of Plumas County will decline by five percent in the next 20 years. Thus, the average annual population growth in the County is anticipated to be approximately negative 0.27 percent. Based on these projections, the District’s population would decline from 600 in 2020 to approximately 568 in 2040. It is anticipated that demand for service within the District will have minimal change based on the DOF population growth projections through 2040; however, other factors may affect demand for the District’s services, as previously mentioned, such as an increase in tourism, use of major highways traversing the District’s boundaries, and an ageing population.

Currently, the Agency appears to have the capacity to serve the possible small growth in the area. Plumas Sierra Rural Electric Cooperative is in the permitting process for a solar

⁸⁰ Census Blocks 4597, 4603, 4606, 4584, 4599, 4590, 4595, 4585, 4593, 4592, 4591, 4594, 4586, 4573, 4315, 4316, 4374, 4285, 4314, 4238, 4615, 4288, 4283, 4284, 4287, 4263, 4269, 4286, 4292, 4299, 4278, 4291, 4289, 4279, 4280, 4283, 4284, 4287, 4288, 4313, 4285, 4311, 4312, 4507, 4588, 4589, 4605, 4590, 4604, 4586, 4313, 4277, 4272, 4271, 4281, 4282, 4265, 4266, 4267, 4398, 4309, 4305, 4294, 4223, 4268, 4217, 4207, 4206, 4218, 4222, 4204, 4224, 4226, 4227, 4230, 4268, 4269, 4228, 4230, 4229, 4199, 4203, 4292, 4992, 4202, 4295, 4296, 4212, 4216, 4215, 4210, 4207, 4217, 4222, 4260, 4228, 4229, 4243, 4336, 4234, 4230, 4243, 4185, 4186, 4172, 4171, 4180, 4184, 4214, 4180, 4186, 4170, 4259, 4194, 4192, 4207, 4203, 4199, 4230, 4243, 4245, 4246, 4247, 4194, 4198, 4250, 4197, 4248, 4200, 4201, 4203, 4245, 4199, 4243, 4116 in Tract 3, Block Group 4 in Plumas County. The Census Blocks used in the estimate are located south of Frenchman Lake because the District reported that the area north of the Lake is extreme wilderness and nobody lives there.

⁸¹ Assistance to Firefighter Grants, *Sierra Valley FPD Grant Application*, 2010.

farm along CA-70 in Vinton on a 37-acre parcel. It is understood that SVVFD will have no role servicing the facility.

SVVFD did not identify any areas within the District's future growth area to which it would be difficult to provide an adequate level of service.

Growth Strategies

The District is not a land use authority and does not hold primary responsibility for implementing growth strategies. The land use authority for unincorporated areas is the County.

The County enforces the codes that it has enforcement power over, which does not encompass all State fire codes. The County ensures that new construction meets the requirements of the latest adopted edition of the California Building Standards. The County enforces the County codes that have been adopted in lieu of the California Fire Safe regulations. The County does not have authority to enforce PRC 4291, which requires defensible space around structures; however, the County does have some enforcement authority over vegetation removal around buildings that was adopted prior to PRC 4291. In addition, the Board of Supervisors, through the adoption of the General Plan and county codes, regulates development standards to be followed in processing subdivisions, including fire protection.

The proposals for new developments are sent for review to the appropriate fire provider if a development is within district's boundaries. Since the last MSR, all SOIs have been updated and shared with the County to ensure that proposals within a district's SOI but outside of its boundaries are also shared with the respective district for review. In 2010, the County Board of Supervisors had been discussing the possibility of hiring a fire marshal, part of whose responsibilities may be code enforcement and building inspections. However, as of the drafting of this report no movement has been made toward hiring of a fire marshal due to budget restrictions.

The County's General Plan was adopted in 2013 with several policies impacting the fire providers of new developments.

Policies outlined in the General Plan that impact fire service providers include:

- 1) LU 1.5.3 The County shall require development to be located adjacent to, or within, areas where fire and life safety services exist, or can be efficiently and economically provided.
- 2) LU 1.5.5 The County shall review development proposals for their impacts on infrastructure (for example, sewer, water, fire stations, libraries, streets, etc.). New development shall be required to pay its proportionate share of the costs of infrastructure improvements required to serve the project to the extent permitted by State law.
- 3) CIR 4.1.7 All commercial and industrial parcels shall be served by a structural fire protection entity and shall be within reasonable service distance from existing fire protection facilities and as determined by the appropriate area.

- 4) PHS 6.1.3 The County shall continue to promote awareness and education among residents regarding possible natural hazards, including soil conditions, landslides, earthquakes, flooding, wildfire hazards and emergency procedures.
- 5) PHS 6.1.4 The County shall promote all applicable public safety programs, including neighborhood-watch programs, hazards materials disposal, public awareness and prevention of wildfire hazards, and other public-education efforts.
- 6) PHS 6.3.1 The County shall review and update its Fire Safe ordinance to attain and maintain defensible space through conditioning of tentative maps and in new development at the final map or building permit stage.
- 7) PHS 6.3.2 The County shall consult the current Fire Hazard Severity Zone Maps during the review of all projects so that standards and mitigation measures appropriate to each hazard classification can be applied. Land use densities and intensities shall be determined by mitigation measures in areas designated with a high or very high fire hazard rating. Intensive development in areas with high or very high fire hazard rating shall be discouraged.
- 8) PHS 6.3.3 All developments within the service boundaries of an entity which provides structural fire protection may be required to make contribution to the maintenance of the existing level of structural service proportionate to the increase in demand for service structural fire protection and Emergency Medical Services resulting from the development.
- 9) PHS 6.3.4 As a requirement for approving new development, the County must find (based on information provided by the applicant and the responsible fire protection district), that concurrent with development, adequate emergency water flow, fire access and fire-fighting personnel and equipment, will be available in accordance with applicable State, County, and local fire district standards
- 10) PHS 6.3.5 As a requirement of new development, the applicant must demonstrate that adequate emergency access exists or can be provided to ensure that emergency vehicles can access the site and that private vehicles can evacuate the area.
- 11) PHS 6.3.6 As a condition of development, the County shall require the long-term maintenance of private roads, including roadside vegetation management, to the standards of original improvements.
- 12) PHS 6.3.7 The County shall research the feasibility of a countywide rural fire protection water system that provides a cost-effective, adequate water supply.
- 13) PHS 6.2.8 The County shall encourage upgrading facilities within existing fire protection districts and encourage expansion of existing districts where warranted by population density allowed under the General Plan.
- 14) PHS 6.3.9 The County shall require new development within high and very high fire hazard areas to designate fuel break zones that comply with defensible

space requirements to benefit the new and, where possible, existing development.

- 15) PHS 6.3.10 The County shall encourage the use of prescribed burning as a management tool for hazardous fuels reduction, timber management purposes, livestock production and enhancement of wildlife habitat. The County shall support removal of fuels and chipping and onsite distribution of chipped materials as an alternative to burning.
- 16) PHS 6.3.11 The County shall cooperate with Federal, State, community fire safety groups and other fire protection entities in fire prevention programs and in identifying opportunities for hazardous fuel reduction projects in zones of high and very high fire hazard either prior to or as a component of project review.
- 17) PHS 6.3.12 The County, in cooperation with Federal and State agencies, community fire safety groups, and the local fire protection districts, shall educate the public about the hazards of wildfires, methods to reduce the potential for fires to occur, and mitigation measures, including reducing fuel loads, to lessen the impacts of wildfires.
- 18) PHS 6.3.13 The County shall support fuel modification across public and private forestlands to reduce the potential for catastrophic wildfires, with the highest priority directed toward reducing hazardous fuel levels in the wildland-urban interface.
- 19) COS 7.2.16 The County shall support the use of controlled fuel management where feasible and appropriate as a natural ecosystem process, to reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfire and promote healthy forest environments and habitats.
- 20) AG/FOR 8.13.3 Support both State and Federal wildland fire protection programs and local Fire Safe programs that reduce the risk of wildland fires and the loss of timber on private and public property.
- 21) W 9.2.4 The County shall, in cooperation with wildfire management agencies, such as CalFire, United States Forest Service and local fire protection agencies, develop a variety of land-use planning, site design and vegetation management techniques to reduce the risk of wildfires. This risk reduction shall also include post-fire erosion, sedimentation and water-quality conditions.
- 22) W 9.3.2 The County shall support plans and projects to improve the conditions of overstocked forestlands, especially around communities-at-risk, to reduce the potential adverse impacts from wildfires, to protect watersheds, habitats and reduce excessive evapotranspiration losses.
- 23) W 9.5.6 The County, in coordination with local water service purveyors, wildfire protection agencies and local fire protection agencies, shall ensure consistent and adequate standards for fire flows and fire protection for new development, with the protection of human life and property as the primary objectives.

The County has not adopted the new standards for development yet resulting from the policies adopted in the 2013 General Plan. County zoning code is to go through a revision process and an annual report on progress in order for the zoning code to implement the General Plan. The District reported that the lack of updated standards poses a challenge in providing proper fire protection.

In 2007, the Board of Supervisors formed the Emergency Services Advisory Committee to “evaluate the funding feasibility of providing uniform and comprehensive emergency services to all of Plumas County.” The Committee attempted to look for opportunities to increase funding for emergency services but faced a considerable challenge in the difficult economic times. It focused on mitigating efforts through building and development standards improvements and the General Plan update process and encouraging local fire service providers to share resources and realize economies of scale in preparing grant applications, conducting training and engaging in other joint programs.

In the prior MSR, the District reported that it would like to decrease its boundary area by detaching the portion north of Frenchman Lake. This area is an extreme wilderness area, which is very hard to access in case of an incident. However, to consider this option it would be desirable to identify which agency would provide summer fire protection and medical response to the wilderness area instead of SVVFD. Additionally, the financial impacts of removing this territory should also be considered, given that the District presently receives a majority of its revenue from property taxes. In 2012, this area was excluded from the District’s SOI.

The District is considering reorganization options as a mean to address challenges to services. The current consolidation effort of the Eastern Plumas Fire Agencies in 2021 is the furthest these efforts have gone to date. The four agencies that are participating have issued an RFP and hired a consultant to perform a feasibility study that meets LAFCo’s requirements for formation of a new combined district, which was selected by the study group as the best option forward. This effort is more critical than ever for the community as the agencies are struggling to survive financially and maintain sufficient volunteer fire fighters to do the job as currently configured.

Financing

The District reports that current financing levels are fairly adequate to deliver services, but would like to increase funding levels to be more prepared for a larger emergency. The financing levels are adequate for ordinary activities; however, funding is reportedly inadequate to handle large fires. The District applies for grants and partners with a fundraising auxiliary that raises money for its operations.⁸²

⁸² Interview with Russ Dickman, the treasurer and Tom, assistant chief of SVVFD, November 10, 2010.

Figure 8-4: SVVFD Revenues and Expenses

<i>Income/Expenses</i>	<i>FY 20-21 Budgeted</i>		<i>FY 20-21 Actual</i>		<i>FY 21-22 Budgeted</i>	
<i>Income</i>						
Property Tax	\$35,000	74%	\$40,149	71%	\$38,000	75%
Use of Money	\$0	0%	\$0	0%	\$0	0%
State and Federal Aid	\$1,500	3%	\$1,465	3%	\$1,500	3%
Charges for Services	\$0	0%	\$0	0%	\$0	0%
Other Miscellaneous	\$11,000	23%	\$15,159	27%	\$11,000	22%
Total Income	\$47,500	100%	\$56,773	100%	\$50,500	100%
<i>Expenses</i>						
Services & Supplies	\$47,500	100%	\$45,228	93%	\$50,500	100%
Loan Repayment	\$0	0%	\$0	7%	\$0	0%
Total Expense	\$47,500	100%	\$42,794	100%	\$50,500	100%
Net Income	\$0		\$13,979		\$0	

The County keeps accounts for the District’s finances and tracks revenues and expenditures. The District’s total revenues for FY 20-21 were \$56,773. Revenue sources include property tax revenue (71 percent), state and federal aid (three percent), and other revenue (27 percent).

A portion of the District’s revenue is donated by the Sierra Valley Fire Auxiliary—a fundraising organization that does its own accounting. In FY 20-21, the Auxiliary’s total revenue from donations and fundraisers was \$6,000, \$6,000 of which was donated to the District.

SVVFD provides out-of-area services to HJFPD for which it charges \$100 for each residential structure and no more than \$500 per parcel. Commercial and industrial parcels are charged \$200 per structure but no more than \$1,000 per parcel. Both charges increase two percent annually. The payments are made by HJFPD twice a year.

The District responds to wildland fires when requested. It is reimbursed by the federal government if the firefighters are on the fire for more than four hours.

Sierra Valley Fire Protection District is authorized to collect a fee for each new parcel approved by the County within its boundaries by County Ordinance (PCC 9-3.314) and by District resolution, although neither the Planning Department nor the District have a copy of the resolution. The purpose of the fee is to mitigate the impacts of development to the fire district.

The District’s expenditures in FY 20-21 were \$45,228.

The District had no long-term debt at the end of FY 20-21.

The District performs no formal capital improvement planning. Immediate capital improvement projects are included in the annual budget. Most of the projects include repair and maintenance of equipment and vehicles. In 2021, SVVFD applied, in cooperation with several area fire agencies, for a federal grant through the Assistance to Firefighter Grants and

requested, among other grant activities, funds for firefighting equipment acquisition. The District is awaiting a decision, but believes that it will be awarded the grant.⁸³

The District currently does not have a financial reserve or reserve policy. The District relies on its fundraising auxiliary for an emergency reserve.

The District does not participate in any joint power authorities (JPAs) or joint financing mechanisms.

⁸³ Assistance to Firefighter Grants, *Sierra Valley FPD Grant Application*, 2021.

FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

Service Overview

SVVFD provides fire protection and basic life support response. The District has limited prevention programs that mostly concentrate on medical services. The District also conducts some fire inspections on buildings. Ambulance service is provided by Eastern Plumas Healthcare District (EPHCD). Care Flight and My Life Flight provide air ambulance services. Fire helicopter services are provided by USFS and CalFire.

Collaboration

SVVFD has informal mutual aid agreements with Beckwourth FPD, Loyalton FD and EPRFPD. The District has an automatic aid agreement with EPHCD. EPHCD provides ambulance services to SVVFD. In return, the District provides fire services to EPHCD when the need arises. The District is also a member of the Fire Chief's Association. It participates in quarterly meetings with other fire agencies and fire chiefs. The District collaborates with USFS and CalFire, which provide fire services within the District's boundaries.

Dispatch

The County Sheriff is the Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP); consequently, most land line emergency calls (9-1-1 calls) are directed to the Sheriff. Most cell phone emergency calls (9-1-1 calls) are answered by CHP and redirected to the Sheriff. The Sheriff provides dispatching for most fire providers in the County except for the ones in the northern part of the County, which are served by the CHP Susanville Dispatch Center. The Forest Service has its own dispatch. The Sheriff Dispatch Center has a first responder map, which it uses to identify what provider to dispatch to an incident. All territory within the County has a determined first responder; although, many areas lie outside the LAFCo-approved boundary of the districts and lack an officially designated fire provider.

SVVFD shares the same dispatch and radio frequencies with adjacent providers. The District reported that dispatch can occasionally be slow causing delayed response.

Staffing

SVVFD has 11 sworn personnel—one fire chief, three captains and seven firefighters. None of the personnel are paid. The median age of the fire fighters is 48, with a range from 20 to 70.

The District reports that its staffing levels have decreased in the last few years. Due to the recession, people have moved out of the County. The District is in constant search of new firefighters. It tries to recruit volunteers through posting signs.

According to the California State Fire Marshal, all volunteer and call firefighters must acquire Firefighter I certification; however, there is no time limit as to how long they may work before attaining certification. Firefighter I certification requires completion of the 259-hour Firefighter I course, which includes training on various fireground tasks, rescue operations, fire prevention and investigation techniques, and inspection and maintenance of equipment. In addition to this course, Firefighter I certification also requires that the

applicant have a minimum of six months of volunteer or call experience in a California fire department as a firefighter performing suppression duties.⁸⁴ SVVFD has two Firefighter I certified personnel.

The District has an officer who is in charge of training. SVVFD conducts training drills once or twice a week. The volunteers are required to attend a minimum of four hours per month of training. The District requires Firefighter I and II, medical EMT first responder and EMT 1 trainings.⁸⁵

Facilities and Capacity

SVVFD operates two fire stations—one in Chilcoot built in 1970, and the second one in Vinton built in 1940. The District owns both stations.⁸⁶ There are no set hours when the stations are staffed. Volunteers are always on call.

The Chilcoot Station, which is the main station, was reported to be in good condition. The Vinton Station was reported to be in poor condition.⁸⁷ Both are used to house vehicles and equipment. The Chilcoot Station houses seven vehicles—one rescue, one Type 3 brush engine, one water tender, two Type 1 engines, one air trailer, and one small Type 4 brush truck. Vinton station houses two vehicles—one water tender and one Type 3 brush truck.

The District's water reserves are represented by four 30,000-gallon buried tanks.

Infrastructure Needs

The Vinton Station requires upgrades. The District also identified a need for a new training facility and office space. There are currently no specific plans for facility upgrades or construction.

With regard to equipment and vehicles, SVVFD reported that it needed a new water tender. In addition, the District reported a general need for more fire hydrants throughout its territory, similar to other rural fire districts. The District regularly applies for grants to upgrade existing equipment and purchase new equipment and vehicles.

Challenges

The District reported several constraints to providing adequate services:

- ❖ Lack of fire hydrants within boundaries and SOI,
- ❖ A potential for fires as CalFire allows burn barrels in certain zip codes,

⁸⁴ State Fire Marshall, Course Information and Required Materials, 2007, p. 44

⁸⁵ Interview with Russ Dickman, the treasurer and Tom, assistant chief of SVVFD, November 10, 2010.

⁸⁶ 2005-OASA-002.

⁸⁷ Facility condition definitions: Excellent-relatively new (less than 10 years old) and requires minimal maintenance. Good-provides reliable operation in accordance with design parameters and requires only routine maintenance. Fair- operating at or near design levels; however, non-routine renovation, upgrading and repairs are needed to ensure continued reliable operation. Poor- cannot be operated within design parameters; major renovations are required to restore the facility and ensure reliable operation.

- ❖ During the snow season, access to about 45 residences is completely cut off north of Frenchman Lake,
- ❖ Acquiring and retaining well trained personnel, and
- ❖ Obtaining costly newer equipment.

Some of the opportunities for service improvement mentioned by the District include looking for additional grants and possible consolidation with three other fire providers. In 2019, the District executed an MOU with the other local fire providers in Eastern Plumas County. That committee has made significant progress in evaluating consolidation. A consultant has been selected to conduct a feasibility study in order to provide information needed for LAFCo to approve a new district formation.

Service Adequacy

While there are several benchmarks that may define the level of fire service provided by an agency, indicators of service adequacy discussed here include ISO ratings, response times, and level of staffing and station resources for the service area.

Fire services in the communities are classified by the Insurance Service Office (ISO), an advisory organization. This classification indicates the general adequacy of coverage. Communities with the best fire department facilities, systems for water distribution, fire alarms and communications, and equipment and personnel receive a rating of 1. SVVFD has an ISO rating 8B. The District was last evaluated in 2021.

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) has issued a performance standard for volunteer and combination fire departments (NFPA 1720). This standard, among other guidelines, identifies target response time performance for structure fires. The response time is measured from the completion of the dispatch notification to the arrival time of the first-responder at the scene. Though not a legal mandate, NFPA 1720 does provide a useful benchmark against which to measure fire department performance. NFPA 1720 recommends that the response times for structure fire be nine minutes in urban demand zones at least 90 percent of the time, 10 minutes in suburban zones at least 80 percent of the time and 14 minutes in rural zones at least 80 percent of the time. Response times in remote zones are directly dependent on travel distances.⁸⁸

Emergency response time standards vary by level of urbanization of an area: the more urban an area, the faster a response has to be. The California EMS Agency established the following response time guidelines: five minutes in urban areas, 15 minutes in suburban or rural areas, and as quickly as possible in wildland areas. The District's response zones include rural and wildland classifications. The District reports that its response times vary due to the fact that all firefighters are volunteers and it usually takes them extra time to respond from home or work place. An area that SVVFD can improve upon is tracking of its response time for each incident, as it was unable to provide exact response times.

⁸⁸ Urban demand zone has population density of more than 1,000 people per square mile; suburban zone—between 500 and 1,000 people per square mile, rural zone—less than 500 people per square mile, and remote zone is identified by eight or more miles of travel distance to an incident.

The service area size⁸⁹ for each fire station varies between fire districts. The median fire station in eastern Plumas serves approximately 20 square miles. Sierra Valley FPD serves the most expansive area, with 111 square miles served per station on average. Densely populated areas tend to have smaller service areas. For example, the average service area for the City of Portola is 3.8 square miles.

The number of firefighters serving within a particular jurisdiction is another indicator of level of service; however, it is approximate. The providers' call firefighters may have differing availability and reliability. A district with more firefighters could have fewer resources if scheduling availability is restricted. Staffing levels in Eastern Plumas vary., SVVFD has approximately 18 firefighters per 1,000 residents.

Figure 8-5: Sierra Valley Fire Protection District Fire Profile

Sierra Valley Fire Protection District					
Facilities					
Firestation	Location	Condition	Staff per Shift	Vehicles	
Chicoot Station	SR 70, Chicoot, CA	Good	Unstaffed	1 rescue, 1 Type 3 Brush Engine, 1 water tender, 2 Type 1 Engines, 1 air trailer, 1 small Type 4 brush truck.	
Vinton Station	Vinton, CA	Poor	Unstaffed	1 out-of-service water tender; 1 Type 3 Brush Engine	
Facility Sharing					
Current Practices: The District does not currently share its facilities with other agencies.					
Future opportunities: The District is participating in an MOU to evaluate the potential for reorganization of four fire providers in eastern Plumas.					
Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies The District identified a need for a new training facility, office space and a water tender.					
District Resource Statistics		Service Configuration		Service Demand	
Staffing Base Year	2021	Configuration Base Year	2021	Statistical Base Year	2021
Fire Stations in District	2	Fire Suppression	Direct	Total Service Calls	est. 105
Stations Serving District	2	EMS	Direct	% EMS	80%
Sq. Miles Served per Station ¹	111	Ambulance Transport	EPBCD	% Fire/Hazardous Materials	18%
Total Staff ²	11	Hazardous Materials	Direct	% False	2%
Total Full-time Firefighters	0	Air Rescue/Ambulance Helicopter	CareFlight	% Misc. emergency	0%
Total Call Firefighters	11	Fire Suppression Helicopter	USPS, CalFire	% Non-emergency	0%
Total Sworn Staff per Station ³	5.5	Public Safety Answering Point	Sheriff	% Mutual Aid Calls	11%
Total Sworn Staff per 1,000	18	Fire/EMS Dispatch	Sheriff	Calls per 1,000 people	175
Service Adequacy			Service Challenges		
Response Time Base Year	2021	Lack of fire hydrants. Limited access areas. Burn barrels. Lack of new equipment. Lack of qualified personnel.			
Median Response Time (min)	NP	Training			
90th Percentile Response Time (min)	NP	Training takes place once or twice a week. The training officer is in charge of training sessions. Volunteers are required to attend at least 2.5 hours per week. The District requires Firefighter I and II, medical EMT first responder and EMT 1 trainings.			
ISO Rating	BF				
Mutual & Automatic Aid Agreements					
SVVFD has informal agreements with Beckwouth FPD, Laylaton FD and DPRFPD.					
Notes: 1) Primary service area (square miles) per station. 2) Total staff includes sworn and non-sworn personnel. 3) Based on ratio of sworn full-time and call staff to the number of stations. Actual staffing levels of each station vary.					

⁸⁹ Service area refers to the area that the agency will respond to, based on a first responder map used by the Sherriff's office.

SIERRA VALLEY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT DETERMINATIONS

Growth and Population Projections

- ❖ There are approximately 600 residents within the District.
- ❖ Over the past decade the District experienced a 34 percent increase in population.
- ❖ The District Fire Chief has observed a significant increase in traffic volume on routes US-395 and also CA-70, which pass through the District. The frequency and severity of calls has increased accordingly.
- ❖ A decline in population is expected within the District over the next 20 years based on the California Department of Finance projections for Plumas County; however, the District anticipates that the population will continue to increase in the future.

The Location and Characteristics of Disadvantaged Unincorporated Communities Within or Contiguous to the Agency's SOI

- ❖ Based on American Community Survey 2016-2020 Census Tract information, the entirety of the study area and the boundaries within and immediately adjacent to each of the five reviewed fire providers is defined as disadvantaged. While the City of Portola is incorporated, the remainder of the territory meets the definition of a disadvantaged unincorporated community as defined in Water Code §79505.5. Census Tract 000300 encompasses the entirety of the service area and has a population of 4,484 comprising 2,051 households with a median income of \$48,238.

Present and Planned Capacity of Public Facilities and Adequacy of Public Services, Including Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies

- ❖ The District's current facilities appear to have the capacity to adequately serve current demand and short-term growth; however, the District's stations serve an expansive 111 square miles, which results in lengthy response times.
- ❖ The District identified a need for a new training facility and office space, as well as a new water tender. SVVFD regularly applies for grants to attempt to address these needs.
- ❖ Currently, capital improvement projects are identified in the annual budget. The District should consider adopting a capital improvement plan to identify financing needs, as well as potential revenue sources and timing to address these needs.
- ❖ As the District presently has two volunteers with Firefighter I certification, SVVFD could improve its level of service by promoting certification.
- ❖ It is recommended that all fire providers track response times for each incident.

Financial Ability of Agencies to Provide Services

- ❖ The District reports that current financing levels are adequate to deliver regular activities, but are not adequate for large emergencies or fires. Current funding levels are not sufficient to ensure sustainable services.
- ❖ The District may require increased revenues to finance upgrades to the Vinton station, which is in poor condition.
- ❖ The District hopes to increase funding by regularly applying for grants.

Status of, and Opportunities for, Shared Facilities

- ❖ SVVFD collaborates with other fire providers in Plumas County, and outside of it, through automatic aid agreements, mutual aid agreements, contracts and membership in the Fire Chiefs Association.
- ❖ The District currently does not share its facilities with other agencies.
- ❖ The assessment of potential reorganization may realize future facility sharing opportunities or other means to better leverage available resources.

Accountability for Community Service Needs, Including Governmental Structure and Operational Efficiencies

- ❖ SVVFD demonstrated accountability and transparency by disclosing financial and service-related information in response to LAFCo requests.
- ❖ Generally, the fire districts have been challenged in maintaining full and legally-seated governing bodies. Over the last decade, the districts have failed to appropriately renew terms for already seated members, have appointed board members that do not meet the legal requirements to sit on the board, and have failed to inform the County Clerk regarding any changes to their board members.
- ❖ A governmental structure option is detachment from the District of the area north of Frenchman Lake, which generally is not accessible during the winter.
- ❖ The District hopes to improve its operational efficiency through applying for grants and purchasing newer equipment.
- ❖ SVVFD is conducting a consolidation study with three other local departments including the City of Portola, Gold Mountain CSD, and Beckwourth FD. The recently completed feasibility study has determined that formation of a new fire district is a practical and affordable solution to many of the challenges faced by fire providers in the region.