

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: Draft Feasibility Study for Eastern Plumas County New Fire Protection District

Background

The council is to receive a draft report on the Eastern Plumas County New Fire Protection District Feasibility Study presented by the ad hoc Fire Committee.

Recommendation:

Council is recommended to accept the draft feasibility study as presented. Council is also recommended to approve the preparation of an application to LAFCo for the creation of a New Fire District as described in the Feasibility Study and approve engagement by the LESSG with the public to provide information and receive comments regarding the formation of a New Fire District.

Attachments:

Eastern Plumas Fire Public Review Draft

EASTERN PLUMAS COUNTY

NEW FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

FEASIBILITY STUDY &

PLAN FOR SERVICES

- Draft -

September 27, 2022

LOCAL EMERGENCY SERVICES STUDY GROUP

Beckwourth Fire Protection District

Gold Mountain Community Services District

Sierra Valley Fire Protection District

City of Portola



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INTRODUCTION

Eastern Plumas County is served by a number of small fire protection agencies that have been established over time to provide fire and emergency response services to communities. Over the last decade, the rising costs of equipment, increase in severe wildfires, and decline of volunteers has made it more and more difficult to provide services in many rural areas including those located in eastern Plumas County. Continued growth and scattered residential development has also resulted in dispersed areas that demand services but are currently outside of any local jurisdiction that is responsible for providing fire services. Local fire agencies often respond to calls in these non-jurisdictional “no-man’s-land” areas but do not receive property tax or other consistent and reliable revenue to support the service. Due to this, the agencies in this region have come together to research and identify the best course of action to ensure the safety of all communities through adequate and sustainable provision of emergency response services.

In January 2020, a Local Emergency Services Study Group (LESSG) was created to explore ways to strengthen and improve the provision of fire and emergency services throughout the region. The LESSG is comprised of representatives from each participating agency. After collecting information on the status of the existing districts and robust discussion with stakeholders, the LESSG recommended that the best course of action was to form a new fire protection district that would consolidate services in the region. This Plan for Service details establishment of the New Fire District including how services will be provided upon formation and how services will be funded.

Existing Agencies

Currently, eastern Plumas County is served by a network of small fire-related districts that out of necessity have well-coordinated mutual aid relationships. The agencies included in the current proposal are:

- ✕ Beckwourth Fire Protection District (FPD): Provides services to the greater Beckwourth community and as of 2021 provides contract services within the incorporated area of the City of Portola.
- ✕ Gold Mountain Community Services District (CSD): Previously contracted with the City of Portola fire department and is currently in a three-year contract with Eastern Plumas Rural FPD to provide fire protection and EMS services.
- ✕ Sierra Valley FPD: Formed in 1948, Sierra Valley serves a 220 square mile area and also provides services by contract to Hallelujah Junction FPD in Lassen County.
- ✕ City of Portola: Currently has two modern stations in the city limits and contracts with Beckwourth FPD.

Upon approval of the formation, the New Fire District will maintain the fire protection services that are currently provided by the existing departments as specified in Health and Safety Code Section 13862, which include:

- ✕ Fire protection services
- ✕ Rescue services
- ✕ Emergency medical services
- ✕ Hazardous material emergency response services
- ✕ Other services relating to the protection of lives and property

The proposed formation will officially merge the operations of four different agencies currently providing fire services into one efficient, effective, and sustainable emergency services system. This will provide a proactive, sustainable solution for future fire and emergency service needs for the area by creating a regional district with an improved economy of scale and associated benefits.

Plan for Service

This plan for services has been prepared to support the proposed district formation and detail how services will be provided and funded by the New Fire District. It has been prepared according to the information required by §56653(b) of the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000 (CKH act) which states:

(b) The plan for providing services shall include all of the following information and any additional information required by the commission or the executive officer:

- (1) An enumeration and description of the services currently provided or to be extended to the affected territory.
- (2) The level and range of those services.
- (3) An indication of when those services can feasibly be extended to the affected territory, if new services are proposed.
- (4) An indication of any improvement or upgrading of structures, roads, sewer or water facilities, or other conditions the local agency would impose or require within the affected territory if the change of organization or reorganization is completed.
- (5) Information with respect to how those services will be financed.

A plan for services takes into account the services, capacity, cost and adequacy of services within an area and how those services would be affected by the proposed action.

Proposed Reorganization/Formation

The proposed formation would serve to consolidate services into a regional district and establish a reliable source of revenue to support services. The New Fire District will be governed by a five-member board of directors elected by the registered voters residing within the boundaries of the new district. The formation will result in the concurrent dissolution of the Beckwourth FPD and the Sierra Valley FPD, the divestiture of power to provide fire protection by Gold Mountain CSD, and the transfer of responsibility for providing fire protection by the City of Portola (also known as a “reorganization”). All remaining assets will be transferred to the New Fire District as the successor agency.

Table 1: Proposed Reorganization/Formation

Affected Agency	Proposed Change
New Fire Protection District	Formation and Successor Agency
Beckwourth FPD	Dissolution and transfer of assets to the NFD
Sierra Valley FPD	Dissolution and transfer of assets to the NFD
Gold Mountain CSD	“Divestiture of power” to provide fire protection services
City of Portola	Transfer of Responsibility to provide fire protection services and transfer of assets to the NFD

Definitions

“Affected local agency” means any local agency that contains, or would contain, or whose sphere of influence contains or would contain, any territory for which a change of organization is proposed or ordered, either singularly or as part of a reorganization or for which a study is to be reviewed by the commission (Government Code section 56014).

“Commission” means a local agency formation commission (Government Code section 56027).

“Formation” means the creation of a district (Government Code section 56039).

“Dissolution” means the disincorporation, extinguishment, or termination of the existence of a district and the cessation of all its corporate powers, except as the commission may otherwise provide pursuant to Section 56886 or for the purpose of winding up the affairs of the district (Government Code section 56035).

“Divestiture of power” means the termination of the power and authority to provide particular functions or classes of services within all or part of the jurisdictional boundaries of a special district (Government Code section 56037.2).

“Principal act” means, in the case of a district, the law under which the district was formed and, in the case of a city, the general laws or the city charter (Government Code section 56065).

“Reorganization” means two or more changes (i.e., formation, dissolution, divestiture, etc.) of organization contained within a single proposal (Government Code section 56073).

Proposed Terms and Conditions

The proposed reorganization/formation will be subject to the following terms and conditions:

- ✕ The approval of the district formation would be subject to a two-thirds majority vote by the registered voters within the proposed district boundaries in favor of a special tax.
- ✕ The approval of the district formation would be subject to a property tax sharing agreement with Plumas County.

Any change of organization or reorganization may provide for or be made subject to one or more terms and conditions. However, no terms and conditions shall directly regulate land use, property development, or subdivision requirements (Government Code Section 56886).

CURRENT CHALLENGES

Eastern Plumas communities are served by a network of small fire agencies which, out of necessity, have well-coordinated mutual aid relationships. Beckwourth FPD and Sierra Valley FPD, along with other local mutual aid partners, are the first responders to all fire and emergency response services, including wildland and structure fires, car accidents, medical emergencies, as well as public assistance calls. Local fire agencies provide and receive mutual aid when needed, providing sufficient resources to each incident, regardless of whose jurisdiction it is in. While these agencies are already working together and training together, the proposed formation would serve to formalize services into a regional district model, with an improved economy of scale and associated benefits. A consolidated district would address significant financial challenges each agency is experiencing and address sustainability as it relates to shared needs and challenges related to the following:

- ✘ **Aging Infrastructure and Equipment** - Agencies are for the most part 70+ years old with aging infrastructure and equipment. Unfortunately, with the rising cost of new and even used fire apparatus, it is becoming increasingly difficult for volunteer departments to maintain a strong apparatus fleet. For instance, a used Type 1 Engine purchased in good condition can cost up to \$150,000 or more. In addition, there is a need to address deferred maintenance at some stations and expand the headquarters station to include additional apparatus bays and classrooms.
- ✘ **Increasing Demand for Services:** Firefighting and EMS requirements continue to grow along with increasing demand for services that exists with an aging population, increased visitors to the county, unprecedented fire risk, and greatly increased vehicular traffic on regional highways.
- ✘ **Volunteer Recruitment and Retention:** Society is changing, people no longer volunteer like they once did. Requirements for volunteers are now much more stringent and demanding making it even harder to attract volunteers. The region needs standardization and a volunteer training model that provides various tiers of involvement and engagement. Consolidation provides opportunity to enhance volunteer recruitment and retention programs, offer reimbursements for training or service calls, and better utilize volunteer resources.
- ✘ **Daytime Staffing:** Changes in laws, OSHA requirements, time commitment and other limitations, has resulted in a significant reduction in the number of volunteer firefighters. In particular, daytime response can be challenging as volunteers are at work or have other commitments. As the call volume continues to increase, there is a need to have daytime staffing coverage to supplement volunteer response and increase response times.
- ✘ **Strain on existing agencies:** Currently 155,029 acres or 51% of the land area of the New Fire District currently falls outside of established fire districts with no guarantee of structural fire and EMS protection. Fire districts were formed to provide structure fire and all risk services within a specific jurisdictional boundary where services are supported by revenue from a combination of taxes, fees, and fundraising. Many of these jurisdictional boundaries were created as far back as the 1940's. Since that time, neighborhoods, scattered subdivisions, and rural residential development have emerged outside of district boundaries. These developed areas require year-round fire protection and emergency services. Providing goodwill service to these areas is not supported by any sustainable revenue source and puts additional strain on already overburdened resources.

- ✘ **Underserved Residents:** Approximately 15% of the estimated population within the New Fire District currently falls outside of established fire districts with no guarantee of structural fire and EMS protection. A wide variety of circumstances account for non-inclusion in a fire district. Historically lots were created without regards to fire protection and residents may not be aware that they are not in a fire district. In response to severe wildfire impacts and changes to state law, property can only be subdivided if it is located within the boundaries of a fire-related district. Being located within a fire district will allow subdivision to occur consistent with Plumas County General Plan and Zoning requirements.
- ✘ **Irregular Boundaries:** 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 is plagued by a disjointed service delivery structure that lends itself to duplication of efforts and expenses related to administration, training, and operations. The lack of coordination and collaboration limits the agencies' ability to plan at a regional level and to leverage additional resources, grant funding, strategic partnerships, or influence policy changes at the local or regional levels.
- ✘ **Insufficient Funding:** Funding is fractured and supported by a combination of inequitable property tax sharing, special taxes, and local fundraising opportunities. Property tax sharing is based on 1975 models which does not appreciate as quickly as ongoing expenses such as diesel fuel, insurance, fire engine replacement, firefighting and medical equipment, and equipment and supplies that expire and must be replaced on a regular basis. The New Fire District would be funded by a combination of property taxes and a new Special Tax that would be levied consistently throughout the district based on land use types provided by the Assessor's Office.
- ✘ **Board Vacancies:** Generally, 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 find it challenging to recruit new board members when there are vacancies. This struggle is amplified in areas with very low populations. The New Fire District would be served by a five-member board of directors that would have a larger population base to recruit new directors. Furthermore, a single leadership body overseeing fire protection services in the region would better sustain participation from the larger community.

The New Fire District will help build and sustain adequate community fire and rescue services for the entire region that is equitably supported by the communities served. Increased funding is needed to improve current training, personal protective equipment, emergency medical and firefighting equipment, and apparatus replacement, as well as to improve response times and operational capacity by supporting volunteer recruitment and retention programs and providing enhanced daytime coverage during business hours. The overall objective is to provide a cost effective, well trained, and professional volunteer fire agency for years to come through the implementation of modern and efficient programs and providing opportunities to our volunteers.

REGIONAL OVERVIEW

Plumas County is located on the eastern edge of California within the Sierra Nevada Mountain range approximately 40 miles northwest of Lake Tahoe. Major access roads include the Feather River Highway (SR70), Highway 89, and State Route 36 near Lake Almanor. The focus of this study is eastern Plumas County including areas east of Highway 89 and Lake Davis and north of Frenchman Lake.

Land Use

Land uses within the proposed New Fire District boundary are predominantly Timber Resource Land and Agricultural Preserve (see Figure 1). As noted in Table 2 below, additional land uses in unincorporated portions of the proposed district include Industrial, Rural Residential, Suburban Residential, and other use types. Land uses within the City of Portola are regulated by the City's General Plan and Zoning Code. Land uses in the City center are primarily low to medium residential with commercial, professional, and light industrial uses generally focused along CA-70 and the Union Pacific Railroad. There is also considerable open space and park land uses on the outer edges of the city. Formation of the New Fire District is intended to support the needs of the current community and is not intended to induce growth or convert any agricultural or open space lands. No changes in land use types or intensities are included as part of this proposed formation.

Table 2: County Land Use Designations in Proposed District Boundary

Land Use Designations	Total Acres
Agricultural Preserve	77,815.39
Agriculture and Grazing	2,191.08
Commercial	256.31
Industrial	821.97
Lake	5,228.88
Limited Access Rural Residential	7,218.45
Mining Resource	134.70
Resort and Recreation	447.03
Rural Residential	11,977.63
Secondary Suburban Residential	6,597.42
Single-Family Residential	0.01
Suburban Residential	2,662.02
Timber Resource Land	180,107.36
City of Portola	3,490.21
TOTAL	298,948.47

Source: GIS County Land Use data

Table 3: Assessor's Land Use Types in Proposed District Boundary

Land Use Type	Total Acres
USA Federal	147,718.02
LCA Contracts	40,811.48
LCA Contract w/Impr	27,833.16
Vacant Land Non-Taxable	25,793.23
Mineral Rights	21,577.97

Vacant Lot Residential	10,658.77
Vacant Land Rural	8,899.59
Single Family Residential	5,628.19
LCA/TPZ Non-Contract Acres	4,729.77
TPZ Contract Land	2,984.52
Vacant Rural W/Misc Imps	2,648.48
Vacant Lot W/Misc Imp	2,460.89
Rural W/Residence	2,196.95
Subdivision Undev	629.51
LCA/TPZ Combined	560.00
Golf Course Parcel	437.80
Vacant Comm w/Misc Imp	425.22
TPZ Contract w/ Res	320.00
Commercial Improved	317.23
Manufactured Homes	179.73
Vacant Land Multiple	176.91
Recreational	150.71
Industrial	126.88
Vacant Land Industrial	92.15
Vacant Land Commercial	90.14
Manufactured Home Parks	87.17
Condomin/Townhouse Common Area	75.38
Imprvd Land Non-Taxable	65.82
Multiple Residential	35.61
RV Park	25.90
Ministorage Units	22.36
20 to 49 Apartment Units	12.41
Vacant Ind w/Misc Imps	11.95
Religious	7.66
Club House Parcel	7.43
Timeshares	1.93
Two Dwelling Units	1.32
Vacant Land Valued by S.B.E.	0.76
Office	0.66
Duplex	0.61
Assessed by S B E	0.43
Multiple Residential Misc	0.32
Retail	0.30
10 to 19 Apartment Units	0.19
Food Store or Grocery Store	0.08
TOTAL	298,035.71

Source: Assessor's Land Use data

Population and Growth

As of the 2020 decennial census, Plumas County had an estimated population of 19,790. This is a slight decrease from the 2010 decennial estimate of 20,007. While the census had reported a population decline over the last decade, the California Department of Finance projects that Plumas County will have an almost 1.0% increase over the next decade.

The current population within the New Fire District is approximately 3,815 based on 2020 census estimates. This consists of the estimated population for each existing fire agency as provided in Table 4, and the remaining population for areas historically outside of any district responsible for providing community fire protection services. The area has observed slow residential growth in last the ten years. It should also be noted that there is a significant seasonal variation in population, particularly as it relates to tourists and resort facilities within the area.

Table 4: 2020 Population

Affected Agency	Population
City of Portola	1,916
Beckwourth FPD	618
Sierra Valley FPD	600
Gold Mountain CSD	76
Non-district	605
Total Population of NFD	3,815 residents

Source: LAFCo 2022 Municipal Service Reviews; 2020 Census

The City of Portola General Plan discusses the fact that population growth in Portola and surrounding area is likely to come from three primary sources described as follows:

- (1) Population growth in California and northern Nevada will generate a spillover 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.

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. There are also existing planned developments in Gold Mountain and Beckwourth that are not fully constructed. Given the existing and planned growth in the region, there is a continued need for fire and emergency response services into the future. It is important to note that additional stations may need to be strategically located as planned developments are built out. For instance Beckwourth FPD has previously 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.

Disadvantaged Communities

Disadvantaged unincorporated communities, or “DUCs,” are inhabited territories (containing 12 or more registered voters) where the annual median household income (MHI) is less than 80 percent of the statewide annual MHI. DUCs are recognized as social and economic communities of interest for purposes of recommending SOI determinations pursuant to Section 56425(c). As of the 2020 Census, the California MHI was \$78,672. In order to qualify as disadvantaged, communities would need to have a MHI of less than \$62,937.

In addition to the incorporated City of Portola, there are several Census Designated Places (CDP) that exist in or near the proposed New Fire District boundary. CDPs are a statistical geography representing closely settled, unincorporated communities that are locally recognized and identified by name. Table 5 shows the American Community Survey 2020 5-year Estimates for the City of Portola and three CDPs in the region. While other CDPs exist in the area such as Chilcoot-Vinton, Gold Mountain, Iron Horse, and Mabie CDPs, there is no reported MHI for these areas. This is likely due to limited population and survey responses.

Table 5: Reported 2020 MHIs for Portola and Nearby CDPs

Census Designated Place	2020 MHI
Beckwourth CDP	\$101,273
Delleker CDP	\$82,969
Lake Davis CDP	\$73,523
City of Portola	\$46,667

Source: 2020 U.S. Census Bureau

While the MHI for the CDPs appears to be greater than the DUC limit of \$62,937, there may still be DUCs in the area. Looking at census block group data, there are several areas in the region that may be considered DUCs. This includes areas outside of the incorporated Portola city limits. The existence of DUCs in the region indicates that there may be communities in need of vital services, including emergency and fire response, that may not have another means of obtaining these services. The proposed new district would enable these areas to secure these services and have a broader economic based to support the department.

Wildfires

Over the last ten years, the frequency and intensity of wildfires has increased dramatically. Large tracts of dense forest have become dryer and more susceptible to fires due to droughts and increasing temperatures. This has led to some of the largest and most destructive fires the state has ever seen such as the August Complex and North Complex fires in 2020, and the Dixie fire in 2021. As temperatures rise and the risk of wildfire increases, it will be more important than ever to have a reliable fire department that can quickly respond to incidents before they escalate to unmanageable levels.

Although local fire departments are called upon to assist with wildfire suppression and are often the first to scene to ensure a fast and effective first engagement of any fire, the U.S. Forest Service is responsible for wildland fire suppression in the State Responsibility Area (SRA) and National Forest lands in Eastern Plumas County that are classified as Federal Responsibility Area (FRA). The U.S. Forest Service will respond to all fires in the SRA/FRA during fire season that represents a threat to the wildland. However, structure fire protection and rescue services are local responsibilities and not a U.S. Forest Service responsibility. In areas classified as Local Responsibility Area (LRA), which includes the incorporated area within the City of Portola as well as an unincorporated area south of Highway 70, local fire departments have the responsibility for suppressing wildfire. The U.S. Forest Service may

assist local districts with the management of wildfires in the LRA based on mutual-aid agreements. As a result of the widespread wildfires experienced the last couple of years, fire insurance is getting more difficult to obtain if someone chooses to live in a rural area. Being located within the boundaries of a fire district may greatly benefit landowners' ability to obtain fire insurance or keep the policy they already have. In addition, there have been changes in state law, so that property can only be subdivided if it is located within the boundaries of a fire-related district. Being located within a fire district will allow a property owner to develop or subdivide their parcel, if they choose to do so, and it is consistent with county General Plan and Zoning requirements.

EXISTING FIRE AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE AGENCIES

As the demands on local fire and rescue service providers are increasing, it's getting harder to justify providing services in a patchwork way with limited budgets and growing demand for services. In 2021 alone, Beckwourth and Sierra Valley volunteer departments responded to over 500 emergency incidents within the proposed boundary of the new district. Approximately 70% of the total annual call volume are medical related (including vehicle accidents). Critical non-fire life safety calls have increased over time and require more resources to adequately serve those in need.

Like many other fire departments, Beckwourth and Sierra Valley are facing growing challenges that include:

- ✂ Ever increasing mandatory requirements and standards.
- ✂ Limited volunteer recruitment and retention programs and incentives.
- ✂ Inadequate levels and types of training opportunities.
- ✂ Limited administrative capacity to address growing organizational requirements.
- ✂ Insufficient funding to cover growing expenses, including:
 - The replacement of aging safety equipment and apparatus,
 - Communication equipment and infrastructure improvements,
 - Insurance and worker's compensation,
 - Training and certification for volunteers, and
 - Fire station maintenance and the growing need for an additional strategically placed station to improve response times.

Beckwourth and Sierra Valley are also struggling under the pressure of ever-increasing training and performance demands on volunteers and an increasing volume of calls. None of these challenges will be easily overcome but members of Beckwourth and Sierra Valley are continually working to prepare themselves and their equipment to improve levels of community fire and rescue services and coordinated wildfire prevention and suppression to meet demand.

The following section provides a background summary of each participating agency. More information can also be found in the Eastern Plumas Fire Municipal Service Review prepared by Plumas LAFCo (www.plumaslafco.org/msrs-and-soi-updates).

Beckwourth FPD

Beckwourth FPD was formed in 1948 and became a special district in 1949. The District was established to provide services to the Beckwourth community. The District has a five-person board of directors that meets on the third Wednesday of each month. The District's main sources of revenue are property taxes, special assessments, federal income, contract fire fees, and state grants. The FPD provides services outside of the boundary on a goodwill basis and through out-of-area service agreements with individual customers, with annual contract fees of \$200 for commercial uses and \$100 for residential. The District also has an existing out-of-area service agreement with Sierra Health Foundation. As of 2021, the District provides contract fire services to the City of Portola, which includes operating and staffing two city-owned stations within the incorporated limits. Beckwourth FPD is occasionally called upon to assist with wildland fire suppression within the SRA and FRA, and relies on seasonal reimbursements for strike team response, assistance by hire, or equipment rentals. While the reimbursements provide some relief, the wildfire season is unpredictable and is not a reliable source of funding to support the District.

Beckwourth FPD is considered a volunteer agency supplemented by paid staff. This includes a part-time fire chief, a part-time administrative officer, two volunteer division chiefs, two part-time captains, five part-time duty officers, and twenty volunteer fire fighters. The District operates two fire stations in the boundary and two stations in the City of Portola by contract. The main station within the boundary houses two engines, two Patrols, and one water tender. The main station currently has offices and will serve as the headquarters station for the New Fire District. The second station is shared with the United States Forest Service (USFS) and houses one engine, one wildland engine, a support vehicle and a trailer. More information on the city stations is provided below.

As the demand for services increases, Beckwourth FPD continues to look for opportunities to enhance services and expand volunteer recruitment and retention efforts. They are currently working with the County Sheriff's Office and local ambulance service to create a dispatch protocol for the volunteer fire service. The department works hard to make the most of its limited funding which is used to cover all aspects of fire response, including engines, water tenders, rescue vehicles, medical supplies, equipment, station maintenance, training, fuel, insurance, and more. While the current financing levels are adequate to deliver services, they continue to search for long-term funding opportunities that will support increased administrative capacity, volunteer staffing programs, apparatus and equipment replacement, and training/certification.

City of Portola

The City of Portola incorporated in 1946 and was formed as a general law city. Though it is the only city in Plumas County, there have been two attempts to disincorporate, but neither were approved by LAFCo. The adjacent unincorporated communities Lake Davis, Grizzly Ranch, Iron Horse, Gold Mountain, and Delleker all impact the City, particularly services related to fire, safety, traffic, and the environment. Historically, the City's population has experienced periods of decline and periods of growth. The 2020 census showed the City had a population of 2,100 which is similar to the reported 2010 population¹.

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. Previous to its fire department's stand-down, the City was the long-term contract provider of fire and EMS to the Gold Mountain CSD. Subsequently, Gold Mountain CSD also entered into a contract with EPRFPD for services.

In 2021, the City of Portola began contracting with Beckwourth FPD to provide fire protection services. This contract was put into effect on February 1, 2021, and lasts for two years. The contract is for \$73,000 per year and is paid in two semiannual installments. The City of Portola is also directly responsible for other billable expenses such as utilities, taxes, building upkeep, insurance, equipment repair and purchases for both city stations. The two city stations are staffed by part time duty officers and volunteer firefighters. In 2021 the Beckwourth FPD responded to 24 alarm calls, 22 fire, 10 hazard, 231 medical, 4 service and 3 vehicle calls in the City totaling 294 responses. Together the two stations house three engines, one water tender, and one support vehicle (an old ambulance). Both stations were recently renovated in 2021 and are in good condition.

The City reports a possible fire flow deficiency in a few areas resulting from the elevation and distance relative to their south water tank. For now, the City will activate two water wells for fire incidents in those areas. The City has reported the current funding levels are adequate, but recent declines in revenue meant trimming expenditures.

Gold Mountain CSD

Gold Mountain CSD was formed in 1996 to serve the Gold Mountain Planned Development. The District received voter approval to elect an independent five-member board of directors in 2005. The bankruptcy of the original housing developer forced the board to overcome many challenges. The water and wastewater infrastructure were only partially built and no “as built” drawings were given to the CSD. The District now must continually develop plans and find financing for significant system improvements. This was due to construction defects that resulted in failing infrastructure that required replacement or remediation on an emergency basis. The District also had to rebuild a leach field and remediate landslide damage above the water storage tanks. This caused the initial reserves to be depleted in the first two years of being an independent district. The District’s underfunding was caused by subsidized water and sewer rates that were never adjusted, the developer’s delinquent payments on over 30 properties, no property tax funding for fire services, and no requirement for the developer to finish infrastructure buildout. The District lost a large amount of money while suing the developer for ownership of the infrastructure and water rights.

As mentioned above, Gold Mountain CSD previously had a contract with the City of Portola to provide fire services. They first entered into this contract in 1997 and the City continued to provide services until the City’s fire department disbanded in 2017. The District currently contracts with East Plumas Rural FPD (EPRFPD) to provide fire suppression, emergency medical, and fire prevention services. The original contract was one year for \$35,000. In 2019, the District agreed to renew to a three year contract for \$36,050 with an annual 3 percent escalation option. The EPRFPD has a facility in Iron Horse that is not a full fire house, but it houses two pieces of equipment for the volunteer firefighters. The nearest full fire house is approximately 8 miles away. Although far, the EPRFPD has provided reliable services and met every call for service. The City of Portola’s South Side station is three miles from Gold Mountain and provides mutual aid to Gold Mountain as needed.

Sierra Valley FPD

Sierra Valley FPD was formed in 1948 to provide structural fire and basic life support services for the communities of Vinton and Chilcoot. The District encompasses approximately 220 square miles and is the largest in the County in terms of the total area within the boundary. It is located in the eastern part of the county and is surrounded by USFS and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land. The District borders Beckwourth FPD and the Hallelujah Junction FPD (HJFPD) in Lassen County. The District contracts with HJFPD and responds to calls along both sides of SR 395 and both sides of SR 70 in Lassen County. The contract was voted to be extended in 2020. It is valid for three years with an automatic two-year extension.

The District’s highest call demand happens during the winter when they respond to and increased number of vehicle incidents typically caused by ice and snow conditions. There has been little change in service demand from 2017 to 2021. Currently, the finance levels are adequate to cover basic services, but the District would like to increase funding to increase its capacity and be prepared for larger emergency incidents. As of now, they are not in a position to handle large wildfires. Greater effectiveness and efficient service delivery by the District may be gained from expanded shared resources, such as training, shared administrative functions, or collectively pursuing grants with adjacent service providers. The District relies almost exclusively on property taxes, seasonal wildfire reimbursements from the federal government, and fundraising (no special tax or assessment is in place). They currently partner with a fundraising auxiliary to raise money for its operations.

PROPOSED REORGANIZATION

To help address some of the challenges mentioned above, a Local Emergency Services Study Group (LESSG) was created in January 2020, as a framework for cooperative and collaborative action to explore ways to strengthen and improve the provision of fire and emergency services throughout the region. The group came to a consensus to begin the process of creating a new single fire district that will provide fire and emergency medical response services for the region.

Currently the City of Portola, Beckwourth FPD, Gold Mountain CSD, and Sierra Valley FPD are participating in the process to create a New Fire District. Early in the process, the participating agencies also reached out to C-Road CSD and Eastern Plumas Rural FPD. However, at this time those agencies are not participating in the process to create a New Fire District.

In order to provide adequate and sustainable fire protection services long-term in the east Plumas County region, the New Fire District is proposed as outlined in the following sections.

Formation of New Fire Protection District

The New Fire District is proposed to be formed under Fire District Law of 1987 (Health & Safety Code §13800, et seq.) in order to provide fire protection services, rescue services, emergency medical services, hazardous material emergency response services, and other services relating to the protection of lives and property. The new 468 square mile district will be governed by a five-member board of directors initially elected at-large from within the District by registered voters residing within the boundaries of the District. Directors will serve staggered four-year terms with two directors initially being elected for a two-year term. As a special district, the New Fire District would be supported by revenue from a combination of taxes, fees, grants, and fundraising.

Formation of the New Fire District will be contingent upon establishment of a special tax and successful negotiation of a property tax exchange agreement with Plumas County. Combined, these two revenue sources could provide up to \$600,000 in annual revenue to the support the New Fire District. This will allow the District to hire dedicated full-time and part-time emergency responders in addition to administrative support staff. It will also allow the District to provide the necessary training for staff and volunteers, purchase and maintain equipment, and improve and expand fire stations in the region.

District Dissolutions

Concurrent with formation of the New Fire District, the Beckwourth and Sierra Valley FPDs will be dissolved. All assets belonging to these districts will be transferred to the New Fire District and as such, the New Fire District will be the successor for the dissolved districts in accordance with §57451(d) of the CKH Act. Upon dissolution, all existing special taxes and assessments used to fund community fire protection and rescue services will terminate and the new voter-approved special tax would be levied in their place.

Should the New Fire District be unsuccessful in establishing a new special tax and/or negotiating a tax exchange agreement with Plumas County or otherwise fail to meet the conditions of approval for formation of the District, then the Beckwourth and Sierra Valley FPDs will not be dissolved. They will retain their assets and powers to provide fire and emergency response services. Additionally, any special taxes and assessments for the Districts will continued to be levied.

Divestiture of Powers

Concurrent with the formation of the New Fire District, the Gold Mountain CSD will proceed with a divestiture of power to provide fire protection, and the City of Portola will transfer responsibility for providing fire protection to the New Fire District. Gold Mountain CSD will maintain its powers to provide wildland fire response and hazardous fuels reduction and will continue to levy a reduced special tax to support these services. The City of Portola will transfer all responsibility and assets related to fire protection services to the New Fire District.

In the event the formation of the New Fire District fails as discussed under dissolutions, then the Gold Mountain CSD and City of Portola will retain their powers to provide community fire protection and emergency response and continue to levy all associated special taxes, assessments, and fees.

PROPOSED BOUNDARY

The proposed New Fire District boundary encompasses 468 square miles (approximately 300,000 acres) in eastern Plumas County and includes the communities of Portola, Beckwourth, Gold Mountain, Vinton, and Chilcoat. The proposed boundary as shown in Figure 2 generally follows the existing spheres of influence and goodwill response areas for the participating agencies with some revisions to better follow parcel lines. The boundary also includes the sphere of influence for the East Plumas Rural FPD but it excludes lands included in their district boundary. The proposed boundary includes all of the parcels where the New Fire District is most likely to be called as the primary local responder.

An online map of the proposed boundary can also be accessed at this link: <https://arcg.is/G05yD>.

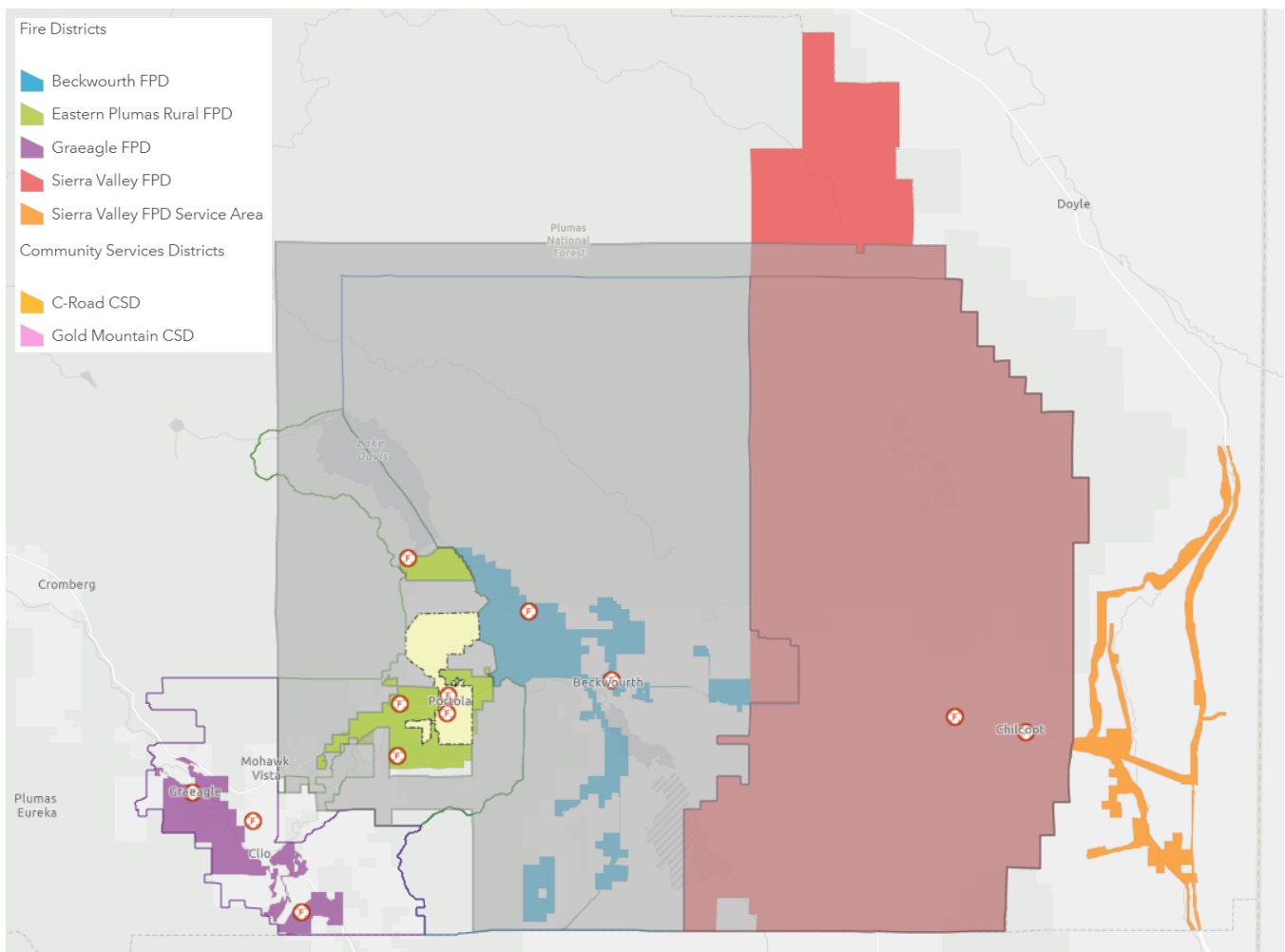
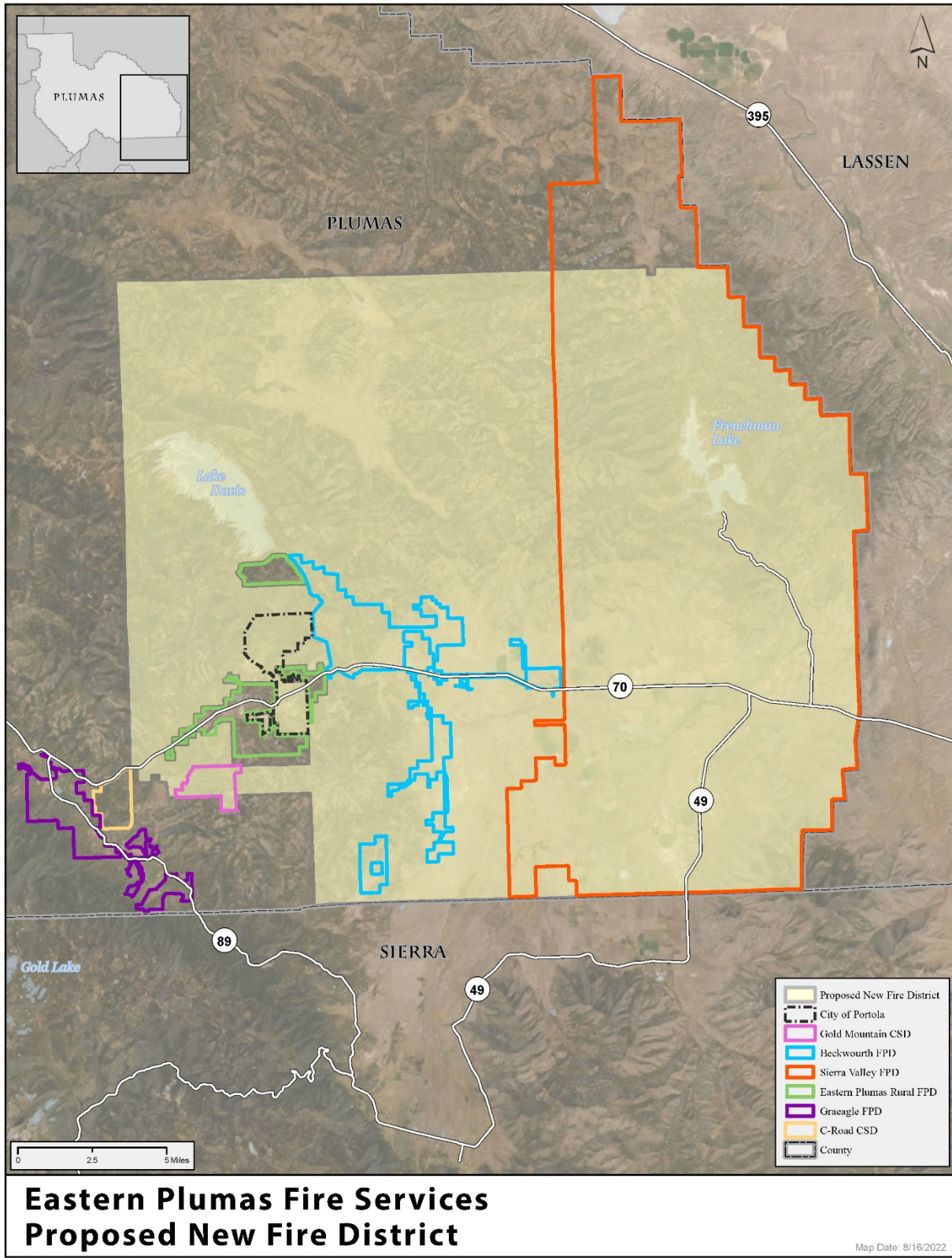


Figure 2: Proposed New Fire District Boundary

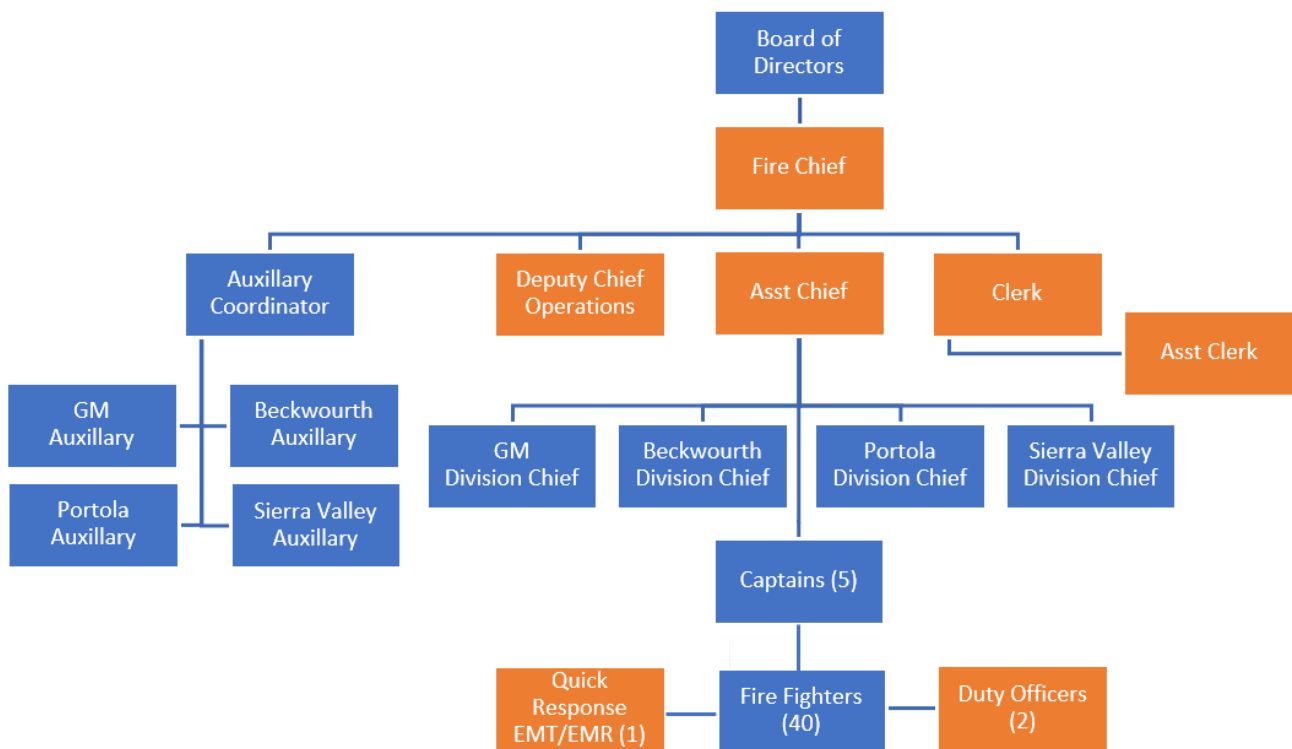


ORGANIZATION AND STAFFING

The New Fire District will be governed by a five-member Board of Directors elected by registered voters residing within the boundaries of the District. Directors will be elected at large from within the District in order to encourage more participation and interest in serving on the board. In order to establish staggered terms of office for directors, the initial board will have three directors elected to a four-year term and two directors elected to a two-year term. After the initial two-year term, all directors will be elected to four-year terms with no limit on the number of terms that can be served.

The New Fire District will be served by a full time Fire Chief and Assistant Chief that oversee operations for the entire district, with support from a part time Deputy Chief. In addition, a part time Administrative Clerk and Assistant Clerk will provide administrative support for the District. Initially, there will be four divisions including Gold Mountain, Beckwourth, Portola, and Sierra Valley, each with its own Division Chief that will oversee the fire fighters, duty offices, and quick response EMT/EMRs assigned to that division. The organization chart below shows the general chain of command for the New Fire District. Positions shown in orange are paid positions and include full-time and part-time positions.

Figure 3: New Fire District Organizational Chart



The New Fire District is planned to have 2 full time paid positions (Chief and Assistant Chief) and 6 part time paid positions. The remainder of the positions will be supported by volunteers. Volunteers are vital to the successful and continued operation of the District as they will be the main responders to calls and oversee day to day operations of the District. It is anticipated that each division will be served by at least 10 volunteer firefighters along with a volunteer fire captain for each station and overseen by a division chief. The district will field a dedicated duty officer each day, who will be responsible for monitoring the radio at all times and ensuring an

appropriate response to all calls for service as well as required documentation of the department's activities. Within the first five years, a second part time duty officer position will be added.

Every firefighter must pass a comprehensive training program (basic firefighter academy) and may be qualified in multiple positions. Training focuses on knowledge and skills of the many tasks a firefighter must be proficient in to effectively do their job including but not limited to structural, wildland, and vehicle fire tactics and safety, hose and nozzle evolutions, structural fire ventilation, forcible entry, search and rescue, low and high angle technical and rope rescue, vehicle extrication and rescue, and traffic control techniques and safety. Medical training involves CPR certification, basic first aid and Emergency Medical Responder (EMR) certification, with some members going on to Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) training and certification. Members are also trained in firefighter safety and emergency scene assessment identifying potential hazards for the responder.

Training is also provided in Rapid Intervention Crew Tactics in support of United States Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) policy 29 CFR 1910.134(g)(4)(i) which requires a dedicated exterior two-person firefighter rescue team when firefighters are operating inside a structure fire or other hazard area considered to be "Immediately Dangerous to Life or Health." The only exception to establishing a Rapid Intervention Crew is during actual rescue operations of a victim. This exterior crew is the rescue crew for the interior firefighters, and must be proficient at search and rescue, forcible entry, remote filling of self-contained breathing apparatus, and methods to quickly remove a downed firefighter.

As the volunteer firefighters become proficient, they begin to take on other skills, such as training to be certified as a Driver/Operator to begin driving and pumping fire apparatus. As they become skilled, firefighters may promote to Engineer as openings become available. From Engineer, one can later promote to Captain. As a Captain, one can initiate a Duty Officer Taskbook to build skills as a duty officer and assist with duty officer vacancies as needed. From Captain, members can also promote to Division Chief as vacancies permit.

EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES

Since the New Fire District will be formed through consolidation of several existing agencies, all existing apparatus and other vehicles and equipment will be transferred to the New Fire District upon formation. The majority of the equipment will be located at one of six stations throughout the district. However, some of the equipment will not be located at a station but will instead be positioned at locations around the district that help reduce response times in the more remote areas of the district. This non-stationed equipment includes four response vehicles and one command vehicle. These are all considered to be in Fair condition and are planned for replacement in the next five to ten years.

The rest of the New Fire District equipment will be located at the various stations as outlined below.

Beckwourth Division

The Beckwourth Division will consist of a Division Chief, a captain, and numerous other first responders. This division will operate out of two stations located 180 Main Street, Beckwourth and 4076 Grizzly Road, Portola. The equipment available at each station is listed below.

Station 1 - Headquarters (180 Main St, Beckwourth)

- Type 1 Engine (2007): 750 gal water tank and 1,500 gpm pump
- Water Tender (2003): 1,500 gal water tank and 500 gpm pump (on loan from the USFS)
- Rescue Vehicle (1996): 5 seats, 3 scba seats
- Type 3 Wildland Engine (1999): 500 gal water tank and 500 gpm pump
- Type 7 Engine: 150 gal water tank and 150 gpm pump

Station 2 (4076 Grizzly Rd, Portola)

- Type 1 Engine (2000): 800 gal water tank and 1,250 gpm pump
- Type 3 Wildland Engine (1996): 500 gal water tank and 500 gpm pump
- Support Vehicle: Retired ambulance
- Response/utility vehicle 2011 F-250
- MCI Trailer

Most of the equipment at these two stations is considered to be in good condition and will likely not need to be replaced for another 15 years. However, the Type 3 Wildland Engine at Station 2 is considered to be in Fair condition and is planned for replacement in the next three years. Response times for this division will vary greatly based on location of the call and weather conditions.



Portola Division

The Portola Division will consist of a Division Chief, a captain, and numerous other first responders. This division will primarily operate out of the North Side Portola fire station located at 420 North Gulling Street, Portola. The equipment available at each station is listed below.

Station 3 - North Side (420 North Gulling St, Portola)

- Type 1 Engine (2008): 850 gal water tank and 1500 gpm pump
- Water Tender (1976): 3,000 gal tank
- Type 6 Engine - Medical (2017): 450 gal water tank and 300 gpm pump
- Medical Response Vehicle (2005)
- Type 3 Wildland Engine (1996): 500 gal water tank and 500 gpm pump (Belongs to Beckwourth Fire, on loan from the USFS)

Station 4 - South Side (316 First Avenue, Portola)

- Type 1 Engine (2001): 750 gal water tank and 1250 gpm pump
- Response Vehicle: 5 seats

The water tender is considered to be in poor condition and is planned for replacement within the first year of formation of the New Fire District. The other equipment at these stations are considered to be in fair to good condition and are planned for replacement in 5-10 years. Response times from this station to the surrounding city areas are anticipated to be 5 to 10 minutes based on call location and weather conditions.



Sierra Valley Division

The Sierra Valley Division will consist of a Division Chief, a captain, and numerous other first responders. This division will primarily operate out of the Chilcoot fire station located on the eastern edge of the New Fire District. The Vinton station is in poor condition and will require upgrades. The equipment available is listed below.

Station 5 - Chilcoot Station (94362 CA-70, Chilcoot)

- Rescue Vehicle (1993)
- Type 3 Brush Engine (2004)
- Water Tender (1991)
- Type 1 Engine (1998)
- Type 1 Engine (1987)

- Utility Truck (1991)
- Air Trailer (2003)
- Type 4 Brush Truck (1969)

The equipment for the Sierra Valley Division is generally considered to be in fair condition and planned for replacement in the next five to ten years except for the Air Trailer which should be replaced within the next year. The Type 4 Brush Truck is considered to be in poor condition and should also be replaced in the next year. The Type 3 Brush Engine is considered to be in good condition and will not be replaced for approximately 15 years. Response times for this division will vary greatly based on location of the call and weather conditions.



Gold Mountain Division

Gold Mountain has a very active Firewise community focused on training residents on prevention, home hardening, and evacuation. Gold Mountain CSD has a paid Fire Coordinator position and a Quick Attack Vehicle (QAV) during the summer fire season. 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. As mentioned previously, Gold Mountain CSD will maintain its powers to provide wildland fire response and hazardous fuels reduction and will continue to levy a reduced special tax to support these services.

The Gold Mountain Division will ultimately consist of a Division Chief, a captain, and numerous other first responders once a new fire station in Gold Mountain is constructed. Initially the New Fire District will operate out of South Side Portola fire station which is located 3 miles from Gold Mountain and support capacity building for improved response in that area of the district. Response times to the Gold Mountain area are anticipated to be 10 to 15 minutes depending on location of the call and weather conditions. There is also opportunity to strategically place a fire engine at a residence or other secure location to allow a quicker response to incidents in the community should any volunteers be recruited that live and/or work in the Gold Mountain area.

FINANCIAL PLAN

Fire districts are becoming more costly to operate as prices rise for workers comp, insurance, fuel, personal protection equipment, apparatus, and other district needs. The sections below discuss the proposed budget for operation of the New Fire District and the revenue sources proposed to support ongoing operations. This includes a new special tax that will be applied to properties within the New Fire District boundary and a property tax exchange agreement with Plumas County.

The approval of a new special tax by the registered voters and the successful execution of a tax exchange agreement with the County are conditions of reorganization/formation approval. The revenue generated by these two key funding sources and continued fundraising, donations and grants will establish a reliable budget for which the New Fire District will need to maintain and improve its capacity to provide the services.

The increased revenue will be used by the New Fire District to sustain and improve community fire and rescue services by establishing the following ongoing programs and actions:

- ✘ A comprehensive volunteer recruitment and retention program to ensure that volunteer firefighters will continue to be available to support high quality fire protection services.
- ✘ Key staff to ensure operational and administrative effectiveness, including:
 - Hiring a Fire Chief, Assistant Chief, and part time administrative staffing to properly lead and direct the volunteer organization as well as manage records and expenditures.
 - Hiring a Deputy Chief that would partially be funded by strike team revenues and would maximize strike team effectiveness.
 - Hiring part time Duty Officers (firefighter/EMT) to ensure reduced response times (note that most of the calls are for emergency medical services such as vehicle accidents and general medical aid). Duty officers would be hired to provide daytime coverage at primary stations.
 - Hiring a part time Quick Response EMR to be on call (standby).
- ✘ Create a reserve fund that will support the regular replacement of apparatus and equipment, to ensure operational safety and effectiveness. This will ensure long-term stability and provide for consistent, high-quality provision of services for the New Fire District.
- ✘ Improve and expand the headquarters station in Beckwourth and support capacity building for improved response.
- ✘ Improve equipment staging and quick response in the western part of the New Fire District and support capacity building for improved response in that area of the expanded District.

Proposed Budget

The proposed budget considers several factors including consolidation of assets from the existing agencies, need to replace aging equipment and improve facilities, inflation rates, and the need for additional personnel. In order to create the proposed budget and 10-year projection for the New Fire District, the prior expenditures for each individual agency currently providing fire and emergency response services were reviewed.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2019-20, the four agencies had combined annual expenditures of approximately \$549,590 as shown in Table 6. The combined four-year average (FY 2016-17 through 2019-20) for the four agencies was \$509,892 in expenditures and \$720,269 in revenues as shown in Table 7. The largest expense is salaries and wages and services and supplies, which includes uniforms, maintenance, fuel, office expenses, professional services (such as auditors), strike team wages, medical supplies, and other costs associated with providing services. It is anticipated that these two categories will continue to make up the majority of expenses for the New Fire District upon formation.

Table 6: Historical Financial Data (FY2019-20)

	Beckwouth Fire Protection District	Gold Mountain Community Services District	Sierra Valley Fire Protection District	City of Portola	Total
Year	2020	2020	2020	2020	
Property Tax	74,701	-	39,604	-	114,305
Parcel Tax	98,667	118,000	-	17,708	234,375
Prior Year Taxes & Assessments	33	-	17	-	50
General Government Revenues	-	-	-	69,930	69,930
Total Taxes and Assessments	173,401	118,000	39,621	87,638	418,660
Licenses, Permits, Franchises	-	-	-	-	-
Fines, Forfeitures, and Penalties	-	-	-	-	-
Use of Money	4,671	2,464	1,119	-	8,254
Timber Yield	4	-	185	-	189
Total Federal Intergovernmental	274,265	-	-	-	274,265
Total State Intergovernmental	-	-	450	-	450
Other Intergovernmental	-	-	-	-	-
Charges for Current Services	14,535	-	1,428	-	15,963
Other Revenues	59,256	-	26,508	-	85,764
Fire Revenues	-	-	-	-	-
Total Revenues	526,132	120,464	69,311	87,638	803,545
Salaries and Wages	(114,325)	-	-	-	(114,325)
Employee Benefits	(46,871)	-	-	-	(46,871)
Services and Supplies	(106,178)	(75,557)	(58,320)	-	(240,055)
Capital Outlay	(50,851)	(9,850)	-	-	(60,701)
Fire Expenses	-	-	-	(87,638)	(87,638)
Total Expenditures	(318,225)	(85,407)	(58,320)	(87,638)	(549,590)
Excess/(Deficiency)	207,907	35,057	10,991	-	253,955

Source: California State Controller's Office (2019-20)

Table 7: Historical Financial Data (FY 2016-17 through 2019-20)

	Beckwourth Fire Protection District	Gold Mountain Community Services District	Sierra Valley Fire Protection District	City of Portola	Total
Year	Avg Last 4 FY	Avg Last 4 FY	Avg Last 4 FY	Avg Last 4 FY	
Property Tax	67,406	-	37,386	75,436	180,228
Parcel Tax	101,490	118,000	-	18,500	237,990
Prior Year Taxes & Assessments	37	-	20	-	57
General Government Revenues	-	-	-	-	-
Total Taxes and Assessments	168,933	118,000	37,406	93,936	418,275
Licenses, Permits, Franchises	-	-	-	-	-
Fines, Forfeitures, and Penalties	-	-	-	-	-
Use of Money	2,534	996	599	-	4,129
Timber Yield	4	-	183	-	187
Total Federal Intergovernmental	230,202	-	5,015	-	235,217
Total State Intergovernmental	-	-	349	-	349
Other Intergovernmental	-	-	-	-	-
Charges for Current Services	15,438	-	357	-	15,795
Other Revenues	26,812	-	19,504	-	46,316
Fire Revenues	-	-	-	-	-
Total Revenues	443,924	118,996	63,413	93,936	720,269
Salaries and Wages	(98,489)	-	-	-	(98,489)
Employee Benefits	(37,296)	-	-	-	(37,296)
Services and Supplies	(89,352)	(65,589)	(46,408)	-	(201,348)
Capital Outlay	(27,477)	(4,620)	(46,727)	-	(78,824)
Fire Expenses	-	-	-	(93,936)	(93,936)
Total Expenditures	(252,614)	(70,209)	(93,134)	(93,936)	(509,892)
Excess/(Deficiency)	191,310	48,787	(29,721)	-	210,376

Source: California State Controller's Office (2017-2020)

Utilizing the prior expenditures as a baseline, the New Fire Protection District budget was prepared. This included comprehensive review of staffing and operational needs for the New Fire District, including salary and personnel cost projections, facility and capital improvement needs and costs, and equipment and apparatus replacement and reserve estimates. A detailed 10-year phased budget projection was developed for the New Fire District as shown in Table 8. The first year after formation (projected to be FY2022-23) will largely consist of transferring assets and setting up the New Fire District. As such, expenses are projected to be minimal. During the first year of operation, the expected cost (total expenditures) for running the New Fire District is projected to be approximately \$641,000. This will increase over time as additional staff is hired and upgrades are made to existing equipment and structures. Each subsequent year includes adjustments for inflation, purchase of new equipment, and bringing on additional personnel to support the District. At the end of the project 10-year period, the cost for running the New Fire District is estimated to be approximately \$866,000. The projected budget, as proposed, would allow the New Fire District to build up a healthy reserve balance to support the District for up to eight months in the event of a fiscal emergency.

Table 8: Phased 10-Year Budget Projection

Fiscal Year	Proposed	Transition	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32	2032-33
Projection Year		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
REVENUES												
Property Taxes												
Current Secured Taxes	\$200,000	\$0	\$200,000	\$204,000	\$208,080	\$212,242	\$216,486	\$220,816	\$225,232	\$229,737	\$234,332	\$239,019
Special Assessments/Special	405,181	0	405,181	417,336	429,857	442,752	456,035	469,716	483,807	498,322	513,271	528,669
Subtotal Tax Revenues		\$0	\$605,181	\$621,336	\$637,937	\$654,994	\$672,521	\$690,532	\$709,040	\$728,059	\$747,603	\$767,688
Other Revenues												
Federal - FS Grizzly Rent	\$5,400	\$0	\$5,400	\$5,400	\$5,400	\$5,400	\$5,400	\$5,400	\$5,400	\$5,400	\$5,400	\$5,400
Federal - FEMA Strike Team	262,000	0	262,000	262,000	262,000	262,000	262,000	262,000	262,000	262,000	262,000	262,000
Contract Revenue - Hallelujah	11,000	0	11,000	11,000	11,000	11,000	11,000	11,000	11,000	11,000	11,000	11,000
State - Other	10,000	0	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
Training Class	5,000	0	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
Other Revenue	25,000	0	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000
Inspection Revenue	2,500	0	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500
Interest Income	2,000	0	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000
Reimbursements/Refunds	2,000	0	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000
Donations/Grants	20,000	0	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000
Subtotal Other Revenues		\$0	\$344,900	\$344,900	\$344,900	\$344,900	\$344,900	\$344,900	\$344,900	\$344,900	\$344,900	\$344,900
Total Revenues		\$0	\$950,081	\$966,236	\$982,837	\$999,894	\$1,017,421	\$1,035,432	\$1,053,940	\$1,072,959	\$1,092,503	\$1,112,588
EXPENDITURES												
Salaries/Benefits												
Fire Chief	\$93,558	\$0	\$96,364	\$99,255	\$102,233	\$105,300	\$108,459	\$111,713	\$115,064	\$118,516	\$122,071	\$125,734
Assistant Chief	46,779	0	48,182	49,628	51,116	52,650	54,229	55,856	57,532	59,258	61,036	62,867
Deputy Chief ST	10,338	0	10,648	10,968	11,297	11,636	11,985	12,344	12,715	13,096	13,489	13,894
Admin Clerk	20,146	0	20,750	21,373	22,014	22,675	23,355	24,055	24,777	25,520	26,286	27,075
Assistant Clerk	18,961	0	19,530	20,116	20,719	21,341	21,981	22,640	23,320	24,019	24,740	25,482
Duty Officer-1	20,676	0	21,297	21,935	22,593	23,271	23,969	24,688	25,429	26,192	26,978	27,787
Duty Officer-2	20,676	0	21,297	21,935	22,593	23,271	23,969	24,688	25,429	26,192	26,978	27,787
Duty Officer-3	20,676	0	0	0	0	0	23,969	24,688	25,429	26,192	26,978	27,787
Duty Officer-4	20,676	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Duty Officer-5	20,676	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Quick Response EMR-1	20,676	0	21,297	21,935	22,593	23,271	23,969	24,688	25,429	26,192	26,978	27,787
Quick Response EMR-2	20,676	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Salaries/Benefits Contingency	5.00%	0	12,968	13,357	13,758	14,171	15,794	16,268	16,756	17,259	17,777	18,310
Pay Per Call	500 calls/yr	0	5,150	5,305	5,464	5,628	5,796	5,970	6,149	6,334	6,524	6,720
Subtotal Salaries/Benefits		\$0	\$277,483	\$285,807	\$294,381	\$303,213	\$337,477	\$347,601	\$358,029	\$368,770	\$379,833	\$391,228

Fiscal Year	Proposed	Transition 2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32	2032-33
Projection Year		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Services & Supplies												
Clothing - Personal Supply	\$5,000	\$0	\$5,000	\$5,150	\$5,305	\$5,464	\$5,628	\$5,796	\$5,970	\$6,149	\$6,334	\$6,524
Clothing - Wildlands/Shelters	3,000	0	3,000	3,090	3,183	3,278	3,377	3,478	3,582	3,690	3,800	3,914
Communications	10,000	0	10,000	10,300	10,609	10,927	11,255	11,593	11,941	12,299	12,668	13,048
Household Expense	2,500	0	2,500	2,575	2,652	2,732	2,814	2,898	2,985	3,075	3,167	3,262
Insurance Veh/Liab/Prop	50,000	0	50,000	51,500	53,045	54,636	56,275	57,964	59,703	61,494	63,339	65,239
Maintenance - Equip	10,000	0	10,000	10,300	10,609	10,927	11,255	11,593	11,941	12,299	12,668	13,048
Maintenance - Vehicles	15,000	0	15,000	15,450	15,914	16,391	16,883	17,389	17,911	18,448	19,002	19,572
Maintenance - Safety Equip	2,500	0	2,500	2,575	2,652	2,732	2,814	2,898	2,985	3,075	3,167	3,262
Maintenance - Tools	2,500	0	2,500	2,575	2,652	2,732	2,814	2,898	2,985	3,075	3,167	3,262
Maintenance - Bldg/Grounds	20,000	0	20,000	20,600	21,218	21,855	22,510	23,185	23,881	24,597	25,335	26,095
Vehicle Fuel	20,000	0	20,000	20,600	21,218	21,855	22,510	23,185	23,881	24,597	25,335	26,095
Snow Removal	2,500	0	2,500	2,575	2,652	2,732	2,814	2,898	2,985	3,075	3,167	3,262
Memberships	1,500	0	1,500	1,545	1,591	1,639	1,688	1,739	1,791	1,845	1,900	1,957
Misc Expense	2,000	0	2,000	2,060	2,122	2,185	2,251	2,319	2,388	2,460	2,534	2,610
Office Expense	3,500	0	3,500	3,605	3,713	3,825	3,939	4,057	4,179	4,305	4,434	4,567
Professional Services	10,000	50,000	10,000	10,300	10,609	10,927	11,255	11,593	11,941	12,299	12,668	13,048
Strike Team Wages	157,200	0	157,200	161,916	166,773	171,777	176,930	182,238	187,705	193,336	199,136	205,110
Petty Cash	500	0	500	515	530	546	563	580	597	615	633	652
Spec. Dept. Tax Admin Fee	2,000	0	2,000	2,060	2,122	2,185	2,251	2,319	2,388	2,460	2,534	2,610
Spec. Dept. Fire Prevention	2,000	0	2,000	2,060	2,122	2,185	2,251	2,319	2,388	2,460	2,534	2,610
Spec. Dept. Training/Edu	5,500	0	5,500	5,665	5,835	6,010	6,190	6,376	6,567	6,764	6,967	7,176
Spec. Dept. Medical Supplies	5,000	0	5,000	5,150	5,305	5,464	5,628	5,796	5,970	6,149	6,334	6,524
Travel	1,500	0	1,500	1,545	1,591	1,639	1,688	1,739	1,791	1,845	1,900	1,957
Utilities/Trash Collection	25,000	0	25,000	25,750	26,523	27,318	28,138	28,982	29,851	30,747	31,669	32,619
Legal	5,000	0	5,000	5,150	5,305	5,464	5,628	5,796	5,970	6,149	6,334	6,524
Subtotal Services & Supplies		\$50,000	\$363,700	\$374,611	\$385,849	\$397,425	\$409,348	\$421,628	\$434,277	\$447,305	\$460,724	\$474,546
Total Expenditures		\$50,000	\$641,183	\$660,418	\$680,231	\$700,638	\$746,825	\$769,229	\$792,306	\$816,075	\$840,558	\$865,774
Surplus/(Deficit)		-\$50,000	\$308,898	\$305,818	\$302,606	\$299,256	\$270,597	\$266,203	\$261,634	\$256,883	\$251,945	\$246,813
Beginning Cash, Before Reserve	\$535,000	\$485,000	\$793,898	\$626,117	\$702,122	\$767,981	\$798,177	\$816,768	\$823,361	\$817,553	\$798,926	\$767,050
Headquarters Expansion	\$203,600	\$0	\$203,600	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Equipment Upgrades	50,000	0	50,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Capital Reserve												
Structures	\$109,000	\$0	\$109,000	\$112,270	\$115,638	\$119,107	\$122,680	\$126,361	\$130,152	\$134,056	\$138,078	\$142,220
Equipment	111,000	0	111,000	114,330	117,760	121,293	124,931	128,679	132,540	136,516	140,611	144,830
Emergency Fund	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Reserve Strike Team Fund	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Reserve Balance (Before Expenditures)</i>		<i>0</i>	<i>220,000</i>	<i>446,600</i>	<i>679,998</i>	<i>920,398</i>	<i>1,168,010</i>	<i>1,423,050</i>	<i>1,685,742</i>	<i>1,956,314</i>	<i>2,235,003</i>	<i>2,522,053</i>
Ending Cash		\$485,000	\$320,298	\$399,517	\$468,724	\$527,581	\$550,565	\$561,728	\$560,670	\$546,981	\$520,237	\$480,000

SPECIAL TAX

A new revenue source will be required to support the New Fire District's ability to build and sustain adequate community fire and rescue services for the entire service area. To this end, an annual special tax will be proposed for Assessor's Parcels located entirely or partially within the New Fire District boundary, based on land use types provided by the Assessor's Office. The following table shows the division of land use types along with base rates and maximum rates.

Table 9: Proposed Special Tax Fees by Property Type

	Rate ID	Base Rate	% of A	SF incl	Acre incl	Units incl	\$/add SF	\$/Add AC	\$/add Unit	Max Rate
Residential Improved	A	\$110.00		1,800			\$0.02			\$200
Unimproved Land	B	\$55.00	50%		2			\$1.00		\$75
Ag & Timber	C	\$55.00	50%		80			\$0.05		\$75
Multi Residential Improved	D	\$82.50	75%			1		\$82.50		\$3,500
Commercial Improved	E	\$165.00	150%	2,700			\$0.06			\$1,500
Industrial Improved	F	\$192.50	175%	3,150			\$0.07			\$1,500
Religious	G	\$137.50	125%	2,250			\$0.05			\$250
Recreational Improved	H	\$220.00	200%	2,700			\$0.08			\$3,500
Non-Taxable/Exempt	X	\$0								

- A. Residential Improved** – All residential single-family homes and ancillary residential uses will be allocated a base rate of \$110.00 for structures 1,800 square feet or less, with additional \$0.02 cents per square foot charged thereafter, with a maximum not to exceed \$200.00 per parcel.
- B. Unimproved Land** – All vacant/unimproved land will be allocated a base rate of \$55.00 for the first 2 acres, with \$1.00 charged for each acre thereafter, with a maximum not to exceed \$75.00 per parcel.
- C. Ag & Timber** – All agriculture and timber land will be allocated a base rate of \$55.00 for the first 80 acres, with \$0.05 cents charged for each acre thereafter, with a maximum not to exceed \$75.00 per parcel.
- D. Multi Residential Improved** – All multi-family, mobile home, manufactured homes, duplexes, condos, and ancillary residential uses will be allocated a base rate of \$82.50 per unit, with each additional unit charged \$82.50 thereafter, with a maximum not to exceed \$3,500.00 per parcel.
- E. Commercial Improved** – All commercial buildings will be allocated a base rate of \$165.00 for buildings 2,700 square feet or less, with additional \$0.06 cents per square foot charged thereafter, with a maximum not to exceed \$1,500.00 per parcel.
- F. Industrial Improved** - All industrial buildings will be allocated a base rate of \$192.50 for buildings 3,150 square feet or less, with additional \$0.07 cents per square foot charged thereafter, with a maximum not to exceed \$1,500.00 per parcel.
- G. Religious** - All improved religious land will be allocated a base rate of \$137.50 for buildings 2,250 square feet or less, with additional \$0.05 cents per square foot charged thereafter, with a maximum not to exceed \$250.00 per parcel.

- H. Recreational Improved** - All Recreational Improved land will be allocated a base rate of \$220.00 for buildings 2,700 square feet or less, with additional \$0.08 cents per square foot charged thereafter, with a maximum not to exceed \$3,500.00 per parcel.
- I. Non-Taxable/Exempt** – Exempt parcels include public owned parcels (United States of America and State of California, other local governmental agencies) and non-taxable parcels as determined by various statues including, but not limited to, Disabled Veterans, Welfare Exemptions, Cemetery Exemptions, and Low Value exemptions, will not have the special tax imposed.

To support a baseline budget, the proposed special tax will raise approximately \$405,000 annually to plan, finance, implement, manage, own, and operate a regional Fire Protection District to provide community fire and emergency medical response services. The new special tax must be approved by two-thirds of the votes cast by registered voters residing within the New Fire District.

If approved, the tax amount will be included on property owners' annual property tax bill distributed by the County. Although these taxes are collected by the County, they do not go to the state like property taxes; they are deposited in a fund for the sole use of the New Fire District (nominal processing and administration fees are charged by the County).

The New Fire District recognizes the proposed special tax may create a burden for low income property owners in the region. For this reason, the New Fire District will establish procedures for implementing a Low Income Exemption, to allow landowners who fall within the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) income limits for "very low" or "poverty level" to apply for a partial or complete exemption from the tax.

The proposed special tax will also include an inflationary adjustment to account for the ever-increasing costs of fire equipment, apparatus, diesel fuel, and insurance which typically increase at rates that exceed average inflation. To ensure that the proposed special tax will retain its purchasing power in future years, it is proposed to include an inflationary clause which will allow the New Fire District Board, to adjust the tax, if needed, by no more than the cost of living as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for the preceding yearⁱⁱ as prepared by the United States Bureau of Labor. This increase will not exceed 3% and must be approved by resolution at a properly noticed public hearing.

If the new special tax is approved, all existing special taxes and assessments used to fund community fire protection and rescue services by the City of Portola, Beckwourth FPD, and Gold Mountain CSD would terminate and no longer be levied. Gold Mountain CSD will continue to levy a reduced special tax to support wildland fire response and hazardous fuels reduction.

TAX EXCHANGE AGREEMENT

In addition to proposing the establishment of a new special tax, the New Fire District will work with the County to receive a portion of property taxes that are already being collected. If negotiations are successful, the property tax exchange agreement would be approved by the County Board of Supervisors and could initially generate approximately \$200,000 per year. This would increase each year thereafter based on the growth in property value. This revenue will be in addition to the proposed special tax as discussed above. This tax exchange agreement represents a transfer of monies currently paid by the County to the existing agencies. Therefore, there will be no loss of revenue by the County and no additional cost to property owners.

SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS

Forming a New Fire District will establish a consistent, long-term community-based and locally controlled revenue source to support the sustainable delivery of fire protection services in eastern Plumas County. The proposed formation would officially merge the operations of the four fire agencies into one efficient, effective, and sustainable emergency services system. This would make possible a proactive solution for future fire and emergency service needs for the area by creating a regional district, with an improved economy of scale and associated benefits.

The approval of a new special tax by the registered voters AND the successful execution of a tax exchange agreement with the County are conditions of reorganization/formation approval. The revenue generated by these two key funding sources and continued fundraising, donations and grants will establish a reliable budget that will enable the New Fire District to maintain and improve its capacity to provide fire protection services.

A stable, adequately funded district will attract quality volunteers both for firefighting as well as serving on the New Fire District board of directors. The New Fire District will still heavily rely on volunteers, but the new district will have more revenue to support its volunteer firefighters through increased training opportunities and improved equipment. The New Fire District will be eligible to apply for grant funding and access tax revenue that is available only to local government entities like fire districts.

ⁱ US Census Bureau, 2010 & 2020 Decennial Census (DEC Redistricting Data PL 94-171), Table P1 – Race for Portola city, California.

ⁱⁱ CPI, West Region, for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U), not seasonally adjusted.

Eastern Plumas County New Fire Protection District Draft Feasibility Study & Plan for Services Highlights of the effects for the City of Portola

1. The New Fire District will be governed by a five-member board of directors elected by the registered voters residing within the boundaries of the new district.
2. The City will Transfer Responsibility to provide fire protection services and transfer of assets related to fire protection services to the NFD.
3. The proposed reorganization/formation will be subject to the following terms and conditions:
 - a. The approval of the district formation would be subject to a two-thirds majority vote by the registered voters within the proposed district boundaries in favor of a special tax.
 - b. The approval of the district formation would be subject to a property tax-sharing agreement with Plumas County.
 - c. The City will cede to NFD a percentage of its current County Tax Sharing revenues in a present-day amount of approximately \$70,000.
4. Formation of the New Fire District will be contingent upon establishment of a special tax and successful negotiation of a property tax exchange agreement with Plumas County.
5. All existing special taxes and assessments used to fund community fire protection and rescue services will terminate and the new voter-approved special tax would be levied in their place.
6. A new revenue source will be required to support the New Fire District's ability to build and sustain adequate community fire and rescue services for the entire service area. To this end, an annual special tax will be proposed for Assessor's Parcels located entirely or partially within the New Fire District boundary, based on land use types provided by the Assessor's Office. [See table p. 30 of the Feasibility Study]
 - a. The New Fire District recognizes the proposed special tax may create a burden for low income property owners in the region. For this reason, the New Fire District will establish procedures for implementing a Low Income Exemption, to allow landowners who fall within the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) income limits for "very low" or "poverty level" to apply for a partial or complete exemption from the tax.
 - b. To ensure that the proposed special tax will retain its purchasing power in future years, it is proposed to include an inflationary clause which will allow the New Fire District Board, to adjust the tax, if needed, by no more than the cost of living as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for the preceding yearⁱⁱ as prepared by the United States Bureau of Labor. This increase will not exceed 3% and must be approved by resolution at a properly noticed public hearing.
 - c. If the new special tax is approved, all existing special taxes and assessments used to fund community fire protection and rescue services by the City of Portola would terminate and no longer be levied