

13. GRAEAGLE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

Graeagle Fire Protection District (GFPD) provides fire protection, rescue, emergency medical, hazardous material emergency response and some fire prevention services. The previous Abbreviated Municipal Service Review for the District was conducted in 2003.

AGENCY OVERVIEW

Background

GFPD was formed in 1967 as an independent special district.²⁶¹ The formation followed the Graeagle Land and Water Company purchase of the town of Graeagle and of the other holdings of the California Fruit Exchange in Plumas County. The District was formed to provide structural fire, emergency medical, and emergency rescue services.²⁶²

The principal act that governs the District is the Fire Protection District Law of 1987.²⁶³ 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.²⁶⁴ 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.

GFPD is located in the eastern part of Plumas County, approximately an hour from the Nevada border. The District includes the Whitehawk Ranch CSD territory in the south and borders the C-Road CSD to the northeast and Plumas-Eureka CSD to the northwest.

Boundaries

GFPD's boundary is entirely within Plumas County. The initial boundaries encompassed all the contiguous lands of the Graeagle Land and Water Company in Mohawk Valley.²⁶⁵ The present bounds include approximately 5,147 acres or eight square miles.²⁶⁶

²⁶¹ County Board of Supervisors Resolution No. 1721.

²⁶² Larry A. Fites, Engineer of Work, Engineers Report: Whitehawk Ranch Annexation to Graeagle Fire Protection District, 2007, Attachment A.

²⁶³ Health and Safety Code §13800-13970.

²⁶⁴ Health and Safety Code §13862.

²⁶⁵ Larry A. Fites, Engineer of Work, Engineers Report: Whitehawk Ranch Annexation to Graeagle Fire Protection District, 2007, Attachment A.

Following formation, the District undertook three small annexations in the 1980s. After that, an annexation that was completed in 2005 added 413 acres to the District. Another annexation was completed in 2006 and brought 501 more acres into the District. The 2007 annexation involved 962 acres where Whitehawk Ranch CSD previously provided services. Since the creation of GFPD through 2007, all of the annexations combined have increased the total area within the District’s boundaries by about two thirds.²⁶⁷ Additionally, in March 2010, the Commission approved the annexation of Feather River Inn—a resort property near the community of Graeagle that consists of 114 acres. The annexation has not gone through as of drafting of this report. The latest annexation to GFPD was approved by LAFCo in January, 2011 and included 89 acres of Tantau Ranch—a five-parcel subdivision.

Figure 13-1: GFPD List of LAFCo Approved Border Changes

<i>Project Name</i>	<i>Type of Action</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Recording Agency</i>
Graeagle Fire Protection District	Formation	1967	LAFCo, SBOE
Dawson Subdivision Area	Annexation	1981	SBOE
Graeagle and Wat. Co. Territory	Annexation	1985	SBOE
Mohawk Development Co. Territory	Annexation	1985	SBOE
North/South Mohawk Valley	Annexation	2005	LAFCo, SBOE
V.R./M.M. Graeagle Creek	Annexation	2006	LAFCo, SBOE
Whitehawk Ranch	Annexation	2007	LAFCo, SBOE
Feather River Inn	Annexation (incomplete)	2010	LAFCo
Tantau Ranch	Annexation	2011	LAFCo

Sphere of Influence

The SOI for GFPD was first adopted on August 26, 1976. The Sphere of Influence was further revised and expanded on March 24, 1983. The next SOI amendment took place in 2003. The new SOI was extended to include Mohawk Valley near Clio, Valley Ranch, territory near the junction of SR 89 and SR 70, and the community of Whitehawk Ranch to accommodate possible future annexations of territory surrounding Graeagle that seek fire protection and potential consolidations or mergers of fire protection providers for the whole Mohawk Valley into GFPD.²⁶⁸ The latest SOI update took place in January 2011 that added 40 more acres to the District’s sphere.

The current SOI is 14 square miles compared to about eight square miles of boundary area.

²⁶⁶ Total agency area calculated in GIS software based on agency boundaries as of July 1, 2011. The data is not considered survey quality.

²⁶⁷ Larry A. Fites, Engineer of Work, *Engineers Report: Whitehawk Ranch Annexation to Graeagle Fire Protection District*, 2007, Attachment A.

²⁶⁸ Plumas LAFCo, *Staff Report*, 2003, p. 2.

Extra-territorial Services

Through an informal agreement with the Sheriff's Office, which is discussed in more detail in the Fire Service Section of this chapter, the District provides services outside of its boundaries. The District's service area extends to the southwest and to the northeast of the boundary and encompasses about 49 square miles compared to eight square miles of boundary area.

The District is currently working on an Out-of-Area Service agreement with Clio PUD.

Areas of Interest

One of the areas of interest is the community of Johnsville, which is located north of GFPD. Johnsville is not currently within a fire district's boundaries; however, the understanding of Graeagle FPD is that the community would like to be annexed by GFPD.²⁶⁹ Plumas-Eureka CSD also reported that residents of Johnsville wish to join PECSD for fire services. PECSD expressed desire to include the community into its SOI.

Another area of importance is the community of Gold Mountain. Currently, the City of Portola provides fire services to the area by contract with Gold Mountain CSD. In 2009, GMCSO conducted a study with the purpose of choosing a long-term fire service provider. Graeagle FPD was considered as one of the options. GMCSO concluded that GFPD was "the most established, best managed, most financially sound department," but was the highest cost alternative and farthest away from the Gold Mountain community (12 minutes or almost nine miles).

Additionally, there is one more area of interest. Eagle Ridge RV Park is a newly developed recreational area located within GFPD SOI. However, GFPD thought that it was going to be placed in PECSD SOI which created confusion about which agency would be serving the new recreation area.

²⁶⁹ Interview with GFPD fire chief.

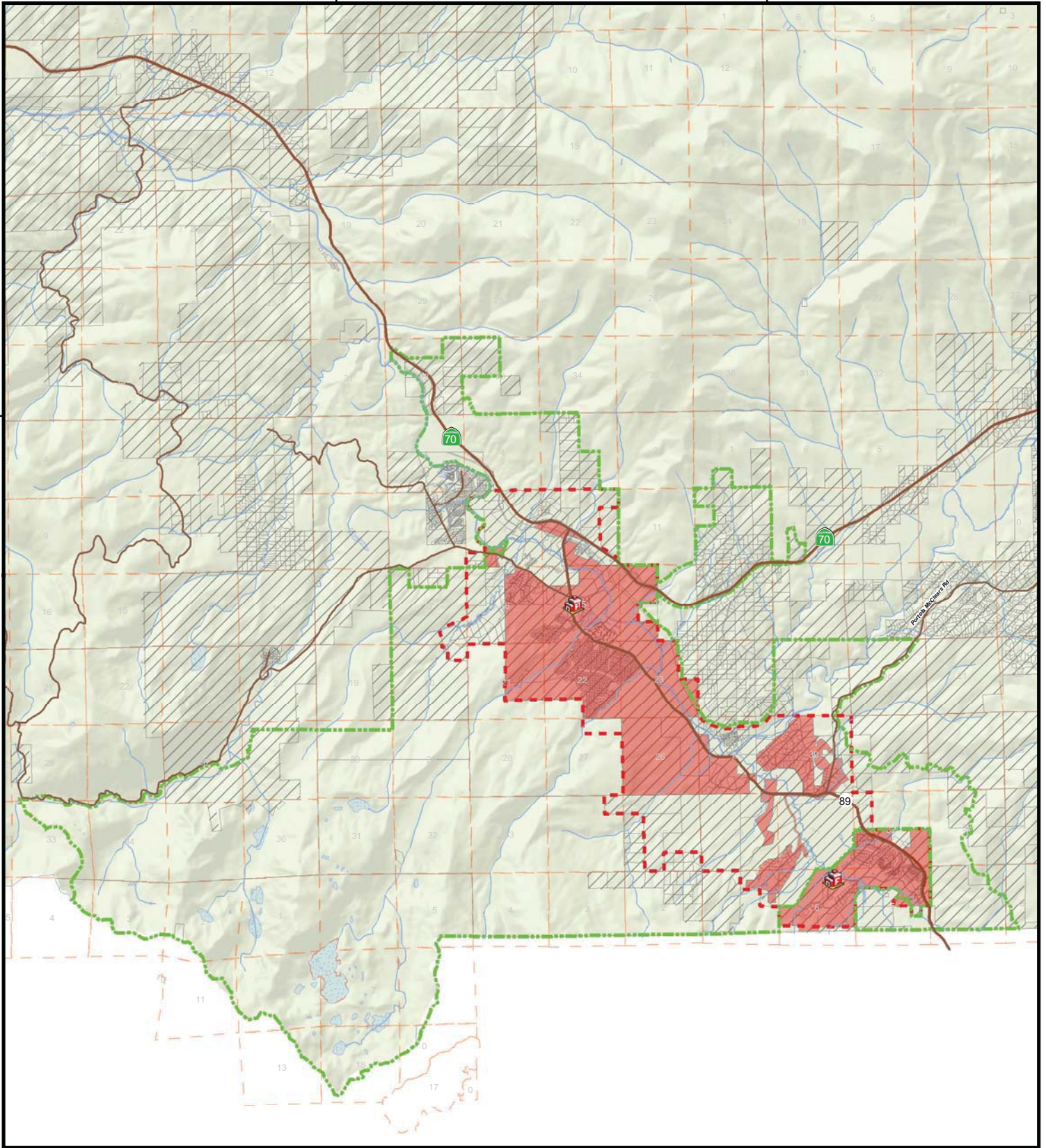
Range 11 East

Range 12 East

Range 13 East

Township 23 North

Township 22 North

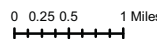


Legend

- Major Roads
- CA State Highway
- Stream / River
- Waterbodies

- Parcels
- State Responsibility Area (Federal Responsibility lies outside hatched area.)
- Sectional Grid (MDB&M)

- Graeagle FPD
- Graeagle FPD (SOI)
- Graeagle FPD Service Area
- Fire Stations



Graeagle FPD
Resolution: 1721
Adopted: 6/19/1967

Graeagle FPD (SOI)
Resolution: 2003-007
Adopted:

Source: Plumas LAFCo Map Created 5/6/2011

Accountability and Governance

The principal act orders that the board of directors 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.²⁷⁰ GFPD is governed by a five-member board of directors elected to staggered four year terms. All current members were elected; there are no vacancies. There has never been a contested election. Current board member names, positions, and term expiration dates are shown in Figure 13-3.

The Board meets once a month on the third Thursday of every month at nine in the morning at the Graeagle Fire Station 1. Board meeting agendas are posted on the door of the fire station, the Graeagle post office and the Clio post office. Minutes of every board meeting are available upon request from the administrative assistant. The District currently does not have a website, so its documents are not available online.

Figure: 13-3: GFPD Governing Body

Graeagle Fire Protection District				
<i>District Contact Information</i>				
Contact:	Fire Chief, Ed Ward			
Address:	7620 SR 89, Graeagle, CA 96103			
Telephone:	(530)836-1340			
Fax:	(530)836-2645			
Email/website:	gfpd@psln.com			
<i>Board of Directors</i>				
Member Name	Position	Term Expiration	Manner of Selection	Length of Term
John Sciborski	Chair	December 2013	Elected	4 years
Teri Skutt	Member	December 2013	Elected	4 years
Dan West	Member	December 2011	Elected	4 years
Don Clark	Member	December 2011	Elected	4 years
Bob Anderson	Member	December 2011	Elected	4 years
<i>Meetings</i>				
Date:	Third Thursday of every month at 9am			
Location:	Graeagle station #1			
Agenda Distribution:	Posted on the door of the Graeagle station, Graeagle post office and Clio post office.			
Minutes Distribution:	Provided upon request			

In addition to the required agendas and minutes, the District tries to reach its constituents through various programs. GFPD administers public CPR classes. It frequently works with children at the preschool in Graeagle. The District had a live Burn Trailer event where numerous communities came together to watch and learn. The

²⁷⁰ Health and Safety Code §13842.

District worked with the community on wildfire prevention and has become recognized as a Firewise Community for creating a wildfire action plan and conducting a “Firewise Day” event. The District is in the process of setting up a website through which it plans to keep its customers informed about its activities.

If a customer is dissatisfied with District’s services, the complaints may be submitted over the phone to the administrative assistant, who would then communicate them to the fire chief. In addition, the complaint should be submitted in writing to the District. The chief is responsible for handling complaints for the District. Most of the complaints received are from individuals within the District’s SOI, but outside of its boundaries, who are charged for fire services after GFPD responds to an incident on their property. The District reported that there was one complaint in 2009.

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

Planning and Management Practices

Daily operations are managed by the chief and the administrative assistant. The total number of staff is 21. The administrative assistant, fire chief, assistant chief and three captains are paid staff. The assistant chief and three captains are paid a limited stipend. The rest of the 15 firefighters are volunteers. In addition, the District had an Incident Management Team that it contracted out to the federal government to respond to national forest fires. The District recently decided to disband the team.

Administrative staff and the assistant chief are accountable to the chief. The EMS and Fire personnel are accountable to the assistant chief. The chief reports to the Board of Directors at meetings. The Board of Directors evaluates the chief annually. The chief evaluates his employees annually as well. The District just started the process of formal evaluations and put together an evaluation form. The Incident Management Team was also evaluated annually. The members of the team filled out job performance forms for every incident.

GFPD reported performing no evaluations for the District as a whole, such as benchmarking or annual reports.

The District’s financial planning efforts include an annually adopted budget. The District’s financial statements are audited every two years. GFPD does not adopt any other planning documents. The District provided two adopted budgets: one for FY 09-10 and another for FY 10-11, audited financial statements for FY 08 and FY 09, and unaudited financial statements for FY 09-10. The District does capital improvement planning during each annexation process through the District’s contract engineer.

Existing Demand and Growth Projections

Most of the land uses within the District are residential, suburban and recreational. The densest residential areas are located around the communities of Graeagle and Blairsden. The central part of the District is primarily timberland production zone. The communities of Valley Ranch and Whitehawk Ranch include suburban land uses.²⁷¹ The District's bounds encompass approximately eight square miles.

Population

As of 2007, the District served 4,878 acres, 1,579 lots, 1,187 structures and 1,730 residential unit equivalents.

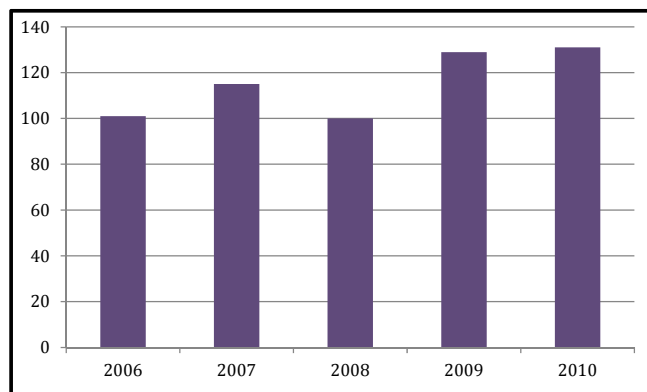
Currently, there are approximately 1,019 residents within the District, based on census designated place population in the 2000 census.²⁷² Population information at the census designated place level was not yet available for the 2010 census, as of the drafting of this report; however, based on the lack of growth experienced throughout the County over the last decade, and in some cases population decline, it can be assumed that the approximate population has not changed significantly since 2000. According to the District, the population goes up to 3,000 people in summer months.

Existing Demand

The peak demand times for the District are in the summer months when the area experiences an influx of tourists and seasonal residents. The calls for medical emergencies are consistently high in volume throughout the year, similar to other fire districts in the region.

The District reported a recent increase in demand for services, due to an increase in new developments and existing lot build-outs. The number of calls increased from 2006 to 2007; in 2008 the District experienced a drop in demand similar to EPRFPD; the increase reported by GPFD occurred in 2009 and 2010.

Figure 13-4: GPFD Number of Calls by Year



²⁷¹ Plumas County Parcel Application.

²⁷² Census designated places Graeagle, Whitehawk and Valley Ranch in Plumas County.

Projected Growth and Development

GFPD anticipates some growth in population and similarly in service demand within the District in the next few years. No formal population projections, however, have been made by the District. The District estimates service demand through its annexation studies done by the District's contract engineer.

The State Department of Finance (DOF) projects that the population of Plumas County will grow by five percent in the next 10 years. Thus, the average annual population growth in the County is anticipated to be approximately 0.5 percent. Based on these projections, the District's population would increase from 1,019 in 2010 to approximately 1,071 in 2020. It is anticipated that demand for service within the District will increase minimally based on the DOF population growth projections through 2020.

The District identified one proposed development within its boundaries and one within its SOI. The area within the SOI is called A-15 and is located to the southeast of Valley Ranch. Another area of anticipated growth, which is within the District's boundaries, is in the northeastern part of Whitehawk Ranch. In addition, according to the County, there is one approved development in Graeagle which consists of 99 lots, that has not begun construction. The development was approved about eight years ago; and the developers are waiting for the economy to improve before beginning construction. The District believes that these new developments will increase service demand. Currently, the District appears to have the capacity to serve its future growth area. GFPD did not identify any areas within its 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. The County reported that as SOI maps have not been digitized, it has been challenging to ensure that proposals go to the appropriate district if a proposed development was within that district's SOI but outside its boundaries. The County and Plumas LAFCo are working together on a process to ensure

that all appropriate districts are contacted for review of proposed developments. The County Board of Supervisors is discussing a possibility of hiring a fire marshal, part of whose responsibilities may be code enforcement and building inspections. However, thus far, no decision has been made on the responsibilities of the position.²⁷³

The County has several policies in the existing general plan, which impact the fire providers of new developments.

- 1) Turnouts are now required in every new development.²⁷⁴
- 2) The County encourages development to be located adjacent to or within areas where fire services already exist or can be efficiently provided.²⁷⁵
- 3) The County requires new developments within areas not currently served by a fire provider to be annexed into an existing fire district or create a funding mechanism, such as a CSD, to cover the costs of fire service provision.²⁷⁶
- 4) Sustainable timber and biomass production and harvesting as well as intensive forest management practices are encouraged to reduce the danger of catastrophic wildfires.²⁷⁷
- 5) There is a minimum requirement of two roadway access points, which are maintained on a year-round basis by the County or the State.²⁷⁸
- 6) Minimum public and private road standards: roads providing access to two or more lots have to conform to a two-lane standard of no less than 16-foot traveled way.²⁷⁹
- 7) Bridges are required to be designed for an 80,000 pound vehicle load.²⁸⁰
- 8) All access roads must be marked with an approved sign; and all lots must be identified by an address.²⁸¹

²⁷³ Correspondence with Becky Herrin, Plumas County Senior Planner, September 8, 2011.

²⁷⁴ Plumas County Code of Ordinances, Title 9 Section 9-4.604 (k).

²⁷⁵ Plumas County, *General Plan*, 1984, pp. 28 & 29.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*,

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*

- 9) All developments within boundaries of a structural fire service provider may be required to contribute to the maintenance of the structural service proportionate to the increase in demand for fire service resulting from the development.²⁸²
- 10) As a condition of development it is required to provide long-term maintenance of private roads to the standards of original improvements, including roadside vegetation management.²⁸³
- 11) The County encourages biomass thinning programs in high fire risk areas.²⁸⁴

The District reported concerns that new developments in the County were not being required to comply with existing requirements.²⁸⁵ 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.

The County is in the process of updating its general plan. The suggested new policies in the General Plan update that would impact fire service providers, but had not yet been adopted as of the drafting of this report, include:

- 12) 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.
- 13) The County will consult Fire Hazard Severity Zone Maps during the review of all projects. The County will work with fire protection agencies to develop community fire plans and require appropriate building setbacks and fuel modification requirements within fire hazard zones.
- 14) In order for the new development to be approved, the County must conclude that adequate emergency water flow, fire access and firefighters and equipment are available.
- 15) New developments have to show that they have adequate access for emergency vehicles to access the site and for private vehicles to evacuate the area.
- 16) New developments within high and very high fire hazard areas are required to designate fuel break zones that comply with fire safe requirements.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Plumas County Code of Ordinances, Title 9 Section 9-4.601.

²⁸⁴ Plumas County Code of Ordinances, Title 4 Section 4-2.101.

²⁸⁵ Profile comments from Chief Greg McCaffrey, May 3, 2011.

17)The County will work with Forest Service and fire districts in developing fire prevention programs, identifying opportunities for fuel breaks in zones of high and very high fire hazard and educating public.

18)Fire, law enforcement, EMS, resource management, and public health response partners are encouraged to conduct joint training exercises.²⁸⁶

The County has not adopted the new standards for development yet. The revised General Plan may be adopted towards the end of 2012. County zoning code will then go through a revision process in order for the zoning code to implement the General Plan.

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. Most recently, 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 is considering annexing all territory within the Clio PUD in the future. Clio, as a public utility district, has the latent power to provide fire services, but currently does not do so. GFPD provides extra-territorial fire services in Clio and charges service fees for responding to incidents outside of its bounds. It is likely that Clio PUD will give up this latent power, continue providing water services, and annex the territory into GFPD for fire services. Currently, the two parties are working on a fire services contract and are having discussions about annexation. In fact, it is planned to be included in the contract that the Districts will start working towards and preparing for the annexation process.

Financing

The District reports that current financing levels are adequate to deliver services. GFPD has enough funding to provide sufficient services to its existing and anticipated developments.

The County keeps accounts for the District’s finances and tracks revenue and expenditures. The District’s total revenues for FY 09-10 were \$507,935. Revenue sources included tax revenue (48 percent), charges for services (47 percent), use of money and properties (two percent), state and federal aid (one percent), and other revenue (two percent).

The majority of the District’s income came from the fees and charges for services. Most of the funds within this revenue source were charges for services by the Incident

²⁸⁶ Plumas County General Plan, Draft Goals, Policies and Implementation Measures, 2010.

Management Team, which has subsequently been disbanded. The remaining revenue from charges was from contract and service fees to the properties outside of the District's boundaries. The hourly rates for vehicles and equipment involved in an incident are based on the 2007 GFPD apparatus and equipment rates. The service fees paid to the District for responding to a federal incident as a Cooperating Agency under Assistance by Hire were provided to the District in 2007 and 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 receives property tax revenues from the County for the territory included within the District's boundaries prior to 2005. The properties annexed by the District in 2005, 2006 and 2007 paid "buy in" fees, compensation for the annual expense of the District's operations and maintenance, a share of the anticipated cost of future capital investments, and financed annexation proceedings. The newly annexed communities also pay an annual per-parcel special benefit assessment.²⁸⁷ Special assessment income constitutes almost 40 percent of all tax revenue for the District.

The District also receives comparatively insignificant amounts from its investments and from state and federal awards and grants. Awards and grants are awarded for specific purposes and are subject to review and audit by the grantor agencies.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁷ Larry A. Fites, Engineer of Work, *Engineers Report: Whitehawk Ranch Annexation to Graeagle Fire Protection District, 2007* and John Gullixson, Plumas LAFCO Executive Officer, *Graeagle Fire Protection District Abbreviated Municipal Service Review Five-Year Sphere of Influence, 2003*.

²⁸⁸ D.R. Watts Accountancy Corporation, *Graeagle Fire Protection District Financial Statements and Independent Auditors' Report, June 30, 2009 and June 30, 2008*.

Figure 13-5: GFPD Revenues and Expenditures

<i>Income/Expenses</i>	<i>FY 09-10 Budgeted</i>		<i>FY 09-10 Actual</i>		<i>FY 10-11 Budgeted</i>	
<i>Income</i>						
Tax Revenue	\$253,125	33%	\$242,593	48%	\$239,585	42%
Use of Money	\$10,250	1%	\$10,643	2%	\$10,250	2%
State and Federal Aid	\$2,200	0.3%	\$1,296	1%	\$2,200	1%
Charges for Services	\$511,250	66%	\$240,572	47%	\$311,750	55%
Other Revenue	\$0	0%	\$12,832	2%	\$0	0%
Total Income	\$776,825	100%	\$507,935	100%	\$563,785	100%
<i>Expenses</i>						
Salaries & Benefits	\$518,000	67%	\$284,650	61%	\$402,500	71%
Services & Supplies	\$203,825	26%	\$133,019	29%	\$145,285	26%
Other Charges	\$0	0%	\$12,813	3%	\$0	0%
Fixed Assets	\$57,000	7%	\$35,538	7%	\$16,000	3%
Total Expense	\$778,825	100%	\$466,021	100%	\$563,785	100%
Net Income	-\$2,000		\$41,914		\$0	

GFPD's expenditures were \$466,021 in FY 09-10. Of this amount, 61 percent was spent on salaries and benefits, 29 percent on services and supplies, three percent on other charges, and seven percent on fixed assets and capital improvements.

The District performs capital improvement planning through engineer's reports made prior to annexations. The last two such engineer's reports were done in 2007 for the Whitehawk Ranch CSD and Feather River Inn annexations. Capital expenditures were projected for a 20 year planning horizon and took depreciation value in to account when being calculated. None of the areas annexed to the District before Whitehawk Ranch required additional equipment purchases or significant increases in operating expenses. The annual increases have been covered by increases in tax income, fees and inflation adjustments. When Whitehawk Ranch was annexed to the District, it brought its existing inventory into the District. A new capital improvement schedule was created as part of Whitehawk Ranch annexation engineer's report and updated in the Feather River Inn annexation engineers report. This 2007 capital improvement plan serves as the basis for the future cost component of new annexations.²⁸⁹

Until this year, the District had long-term debt on which it was making annual payments. Annual payments included interest paid to Plumas Bank and fixed payment on a capital lease agreement paid to Federal Signal. The loan was taken out to finance a fire truck. The last payment was made in FY 09-10.

²⁸⁹ Larry A. Fites, Engineer of Work, *Engineers Report: Whitehawk Ranch Annexation to Graeagle Fire Protection District and Feather River Inn Annexation Preliminary Analysis of Fiscal Effects*, 2007.

The District does not have a formal reserve policy; however, the budget includes a reserve category for vehicles, equipment and building. This reserve fund is mainly financed through benefit assessments, which are escalated by two percent per year. The reserve balance for FY 09-10 was \$35,538 and for FY 10-11 it was budgeted to be \$16,000. The District also plans for contingencies. The FY 09-10 budget planned for five percent of total expenditures for contingencies, and FY 10-11 planned for 0.1 percent of total expenditures for contingencies.

The District participates in a joint venture under a JPA with the Fire District Association of California, Fire Agency Self-Insurance System (FDAC-FASIS). The JPA is not a component unit of the District. The goal of this JPA is to provide workers' compensation insurance coverage to its members, pay the administration costs of the JPA and pay for the excess insurance and risk management costs. Each member of the JPA pays an annual premium based on the number of personnel, estimated payroll and experience.²⁹⁰

FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

Service Overview

GFPD provides fire protection, rescue, emergency medical, hazardous material emergency response and some fire prevention services. The fire prevention efforts of the District include fire education of the population through the website, which is currently being developed. The District is also in the process of developing a fire prevention program.

The District experiences the highest occurrence of service calls in summer months due to tourist influx, especially in July when most of the community events take place.

Collaboration

It is currently working on signing a contract with Clio PUD. The District has formal mutual aid agreements with Sierra Valley FPD and Plumas Eureka FPD. The District was also contracted by the federal government for the Incident Management Team that served as a backup team for national fires.

There are opportunities to increase efficiency through collaboration. The District reports that fire providers need to stop duplicating services and start saving money by helping each other and making bulk purchases.

Dispatch and Communications

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

²⁹⁰ D.R. Watts Accountancy Corporation, *Graeagle Fire Protection District Financial Statements and Independent Auditors' Report*, June 30, 2009 and June 30, 2008.

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 identified some areas where dispatch and response coordination could be improved. If there were a dispatcher at the sheriff's office solely dedicated to EMS, dispatching in the County would be a lot more effective. In addition, the whole infrastructure of communication system (i.e., repeaters) needs to be updated. The main obstacle to both improvements is lack of funding.

Staffing

GFPD has 20 sworn personnel—one fire chief, one assistant fire chief, three captains, and 15 volunteer firefighters. In 2010 the District had 27 sworn personnel; seven firefighters recently resigned. The fire chief, assistant fire chief and three captains are paid staff. The median age of the fire fighters is 55, with a range from 20 to 77.

The District reports that while it makes provisional staffing need projections in the engineering reports, future staffing needs will largely be dictated by growth, revenues and service demands. In 2010, the District had 27 sworn firefighters; however, it had been anticipated in the engineer's report that 37 sworn personnel would be necessary in that year. The same study projects the need for a total of 37 and 45 sworn staff in 2015 and 2020, respectively.²⁹¹ Over time, the District is hoping to increase its full time, paid staffing levels.

Each of the three shifts are assigned a chief, a captain and firefighters. Each firefighter is assigned to a voluntary two days on and four days off schedule. The shift members usually only respond on their scheduled days; however, if a large incident occurs, all personnel are encouraged to respond.²⁹²

Qualified volunteers are required to attend at least three Fire or Medical meetings and are voted into the District by the firefighters. After that they receive training in fire and medical emergency response.²⁹³ Volunteers train four times a month for three hours. In addition to the 12 hours of training at the fire station, they are required to fulfill four to eight hours a month of online training. The District's goal is to get all of its firefighters Fire

²⁹¹ Whitehawk Ranch CSD and Graeagle Fire Protection District Annexation 2006, *Plan for Providing Services*, 2007, p. 5.

²⁹² Whitehawk Ranch CSD and Graeagle Fire Protection District Annexation 2006, *Plan for Providing Services*, 2007, pp. 4-5.

²⁹³ Whitehawk Ranch CSD and Graeagle Fire Protection District Annexation 2006, *Plan for Providing Services*, 2007, p. 5.

Fighter I certified. GFPD uses NFPA guidelines for firefighter training and local guidelines for EMS training.

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.²⁹⁴ GFPD has two Volunteer Firefighter I certified personnel and 12 BLS I certified personnel. Eighteen firefighters are certified as Volunteer Firefighters. Everybody is certified as First Responder; the chief is a paramedic.

Graeagle Firefighter's Association, which is a 501(c) 3 nonprofit corporation, is involved in recruitment of firefighters and determining the rank structure at the District. Every two years the rank of fire chief down to captain is voted on by the members following a nomination process.²⁹⁵ The District tries to recruit volunteers mostly through word of mouth. It posts ads on local community boards and at restaurants and recruits through newspaper articles. In addition, it participates in the statewide program California State Firefighter's Association (CSFA) FireLine.org, which encourages people to volunteer for local fire departments. Although the District is planning to increase the number of paid full-time staff in the future, it will not eliminate the need for volunteer firefighters. The volunteer firefighters will continue to be an essential pool for all emergency incidents.²⁹⁶

Facilities and Capacity

Originally, GFPD housed its engine in and operated out of a leased building. In 1989, the Graeagle Fire Station was constructed and donated to the District. Currently, the District operates two fire stations- the Graeagle Station #1 in Graeagle and the Graeagle Station #2, located in Whitehawk Ranch, both of which were reported to be in good condition.²⁹⁷ Graeagle Station #1 is owned by GFPD.²⁹⁸ It is used as an office, for training purposes, and to

²⁹⁴ State Fire Marshall, *Course Information and Required Materials*, 2007, p. 44

²⁹⁵ Whitehawk Ranch CSD and Graeagle Fire Protection District Annexation 2006, *Plan for Providing Services*, 2007, p. 5.

²⁹⁶ Whitehawk Ranch CSD and Graeagle Fire Protection District Annexation 2006, *Plan for Providing Services*, 2007, p. 5.

²⁹⁷ 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.

²⁹⁸ Larry A. Fites, Engineer of Work, *Engineers Report: Whitehawk Ranch Annexation to Graeagle Fire Protection District*, 2007 and Whitehawk Ranch CSD and Graeagle Fire Protection District Annexation 2006, *Plan for Providing Services*, 2007.

house vehicles. Graeagle Station #2 is in use by the District as a result of the 2007 Whitehawk Ranch annexation and is owned by Whitehawk Ranch CSD. It is currently used only as a garage for the vehicles.

Graeagle Station #1 houses one Type I engine, one Type III engine, one Type 5 ALS Rescue, and one Type 1 Water Tender. The District plans to add other resources to its fleet as dictated by growth, revenue and service demand. Graeagle Station #2 has one Type II engine, which is owned by GFPD, and one Type 5 ALS rescue vehicle.²⁹⁹ Command vehicle is in the possession of the chief at all times.

The District's water reserves are represented by a 750,000 gallon tank and a one million gallon tank.

The District has adequate capacity to provide fire service to its current service area and planned development in its future growth area.

Infrastructure Needs

The capital improvement plan in the 2007 engineer's report proposes the following purchases: land for another firehouse and a structure in 2009, an assistant chief's vehicle in 2010, a wildland engine in 2011, a wildland engine in 2012, an engine in 2015, a rescue vehicle in 2015, a chief's vehicle in 2016, a rescue vehicle that would replace the one in Station in 2017, another engine in 2023, a tender in 2025 and an assistant chief's vehicle replacement in 2025.³⁰⁰ The total value of planned purchases was estimated to be \$3,890,700, with the annual average of \$137,560 for 20 years. The assistant chief's vehicle was not purchased in 2010.

The District has plans to replace Station #2. The District purchased property in the fall of 2010; and construction is to start by the end of 2012. GFPD is in need of a new full fire station, due to the growth of the District and its vast territory. The construction will be financed through bank loans and local financing.

The immediate vehicle need is replacement of the second Type I engine for Station 2. The District will use its equipment and apparatus replacement reserve for 50 percent down payment; the rest of the cost will be financed.

There is also a longer term need for Type III engine since the current one is outdated. It will be financed the same way as Type I engine described above.

²⁹⁹ Larry A. Fites, Engineer of Work, *Engineers Report: Whitehawk Ranch Annexation to Graeagle Fire Protection District*, 2007.

³⁰⁰ Larry A. Fites, Engineer of Work, *Engineers Report: Whitehawk Ranch Annexation to Graeagle Fire Protection District*, 2007.

Challenges

The District reported several constraints to providing services.

- ❖ Territory within the District's service area but outside of its boundaries experiences prolonged response times due to the distance firefighters have to travel to respond to an incident,
- ❖ Keeping and recruiting new volunteers is always a challenge, especially because of current economic condition,
- ❖ Due to the recent recession, the District lost about \$40,000 in secured taxes in the last two years.

Service Adequacy

There are usually two general indicators of service adequacy for municipal fire providers: ISO rating and response times. 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. GFPD has an ISO rating of 4 in the Graeagle and Whitehawk Ranch areas and 9B in the remaining territory of the District. The District was last evaluated in 2010.

The guideline established by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) for fire response times is six minutes at least 90 percent of the time, with response time measured from the 911-call time to the arrival time of the first-responder at the scene. The fire response time guideline established by the Center for Public Safety Excellence (formerly the Commission on Fire Accreditation International) is 5 minutes 50 seconds at least 90 percent of the time.³⁰¹

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 wilderness classifications. The District reports that its average response time is seven to eight minutes depending on where an incident occurs. An area that GFPD could improve upon is tracking its response times for each incident. The District reported that one of the Captains already started going over this year's calls and making a dispatch time to scene graph. GFPD is planning to keep track of this information in the future.

³⁰¹ Commission on Fire Accreditation International, 2000.

The service area size³⁰² 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 station service area for the City of Portola is 3.8 square miles. By comparison, each station in GFPD serves approximately 25 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 from eight call firefighters per 1,000 residents in City of Portola service area to 42 in Beckwourth FD. By comparison, GFPD has approximately 20 firefighters per 1,000 residents.

³⁰² Service area refers to the area that the agency will respond to, based on a first responder map used by the Sherriff's office.

Figure 13-6: Graeagle Fire Protection District Fire Profile

Fire Service				
Facilities				
Firestation	Location	Condition	Staff per Shift	Vehicles
Graeagle Station #1	7620 SR 89, Graeagle, CA	Good	Unstaffed	1 Type I engine, 1 Type III engine, 1 Type 5 ALS Rescue, 1 Type 1 Water Tender
Graeagle Station #2	1127 Whitehawk Drive, Clio, CA	Good	Unstaffed	1 Type II engine (owned by GFPD), 1 Type 5 ALS Rescue
Facility Sharing				
Current Practices: The District shares the Graeagle Station #1 meeting hall for training purposes with Beckwourth Ranger District and other fire service providers in Plumas County. GFPD rents out their meeting hall for community events.				
Future opportunities: The District believes that eventually the whole Mohawk Valley will be in GFPD and there is a high likelihood that one or more of the District's stations will be joint use stations with other service provider(s). A station staffed with ambulance is highly desirable.				
Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies				
The District is in need of a new full fire station. It also needs new Type I and Type III engines.				
District Resource Statistics		Service Configuration		Service Demand
Staffing Base Year	2010	Configuration Base Year	2010	Statistical Base Year
Fire Stations in District	2	Fire Suppression	Direct	Total Service Calls
Stations Serving District	2	EMS	Direct	% EMS
Sq. Miles Served per Station ¹	4	Ambulance Transport	EPHCD	% Fire/Hazardous Materials
Total Staff ²	21	Hazardous Materials	Direct	% False
Total Full-time Firefighters	0	Air Rescue/ Ambulance Helicopter	CareFlight	% Misc. emergency
Total Call Firefighters	20	Fire Suppression Helicopter	CalFire	% Non-emergency
Total Sworn Staff per Station ³	10	Public Safety Answering Point	Sheriff	% Mutual Aid Calls
Total Sworn Staff per 1,000	20	Fire/EMS Dispatch	Sheriff	Calls per 1,000 people
Service Adequacy			Service Challenges	
Response Time Base Year	2010	Prolonged response times outside of District's boundaries in its service area; less tax income due to recession; volunteer recruitment.		
Median Response Time (min)	NP	Training		
90th Percentile Response Time (min)	NP	Volunteers are required to train four times a month for three hours and do four to eight hours of online training. The goal is to have all firefighters Firefighter I certified.		
ISO Rating	4 and 9B			
Mutual & Automatic Aid Agreements				
GFPD has informal mutual aid agreements with all the fire districts in Plumas County.				
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.				

GRAEAGLE FPD DETERMINATIONS

Growth and Population Projections

- ❖ There are approximately 1,019 residents within the District.
- ❖ The District experienced an increase in demand for services in the last few years due to an increase in new developments and existing lot build-outs.
- ❖ Moderate growth in population and in service demand is expected within the District in the next few years.

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

- ❖ The District's existing facilities have the capacity to adequately serve current demand and short-term growth.
- ❖ Infrastructure needs include a new fire station that will be constructed within a year and a half, a new Type I engine and a replacement Type III engine.
- ❖ The District identified a number of future infrastructure needs to address future growth and deterioration of current facilities and equipment.
- ❖ It is recommended that the County Sheriff's Office work with the fire districts to update the ESN map that is used for dispatching, in order to adequately address any communication concerns and recent boundary changes.
- ❖ GFPD could improve its Firefighter I certification rate of about ten percent.
- ❖ An area that GFPD could improve upon is tracking its response times for each incident. The District has started to address this issue.

Financial Ability of Agencies to Provide Services

- ❖ The District reports that current financing levels are adequate to deliver services and accommodate anticipated growth.
- ❖ The District performs capital improvement planning through engineer's reports made prior to annexations. Capital expenditures were projected for a 20-year planning horizon.
- ❖ The District maintains a reserve fund for vehicles, equipment and building, as well as contingency funds equivalent up to five percent of total expenditures.

Status of, and Opportunities for, Shared Facilities

- ❖ GFPD collaborates with other fire providers in Plumas County through informal mutual aid agreements, contracts and common trainings.
- ❖ The District shares the Graeagle Station 1 meeting hall for training purposes with the Beckwourth Ranger District and other fire service providers in Plumas County. GFPD rents out their meeting hall for community events.
- ❖ Opportunities for future facility sharing include a joint-use fire station with another service provider and staffing a station with an ambulance operated by EPHD.

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

- ❖ GFPD demonstrated accountability and transparency by disclosing financial and service related information in response to LAFCo requests.
- ❖ A governmental structure option is consolidation with or annexation of the C-Road CSD. Consolidation with other fire districts offers opportunities for shared resources and finances.
- ❖ Other governmental structure options include annexation of Sierra Pacific Industries, Smith Creek, Clio and Johnsville areas.
- ❖ The District would like to increase its operational efficiency by collaborating with other fire service providers more closely and sharing resources.
- ❖ The County of Plumas is considering establishing a countywide fire marshal whose responsibilities may include enforcing fire code and conducting building inspections.