

SPHERE OF INFLUENCE UPDATE
PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT

*Beckwourth Peak Fire Protection District +
Easter Plumas Rural Fire Protection District*

October 1, 2024

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1. BECKWOURTH PEAK FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT (BECKWOURTH PEAK FPD)

Beckwourth Peak FPD was formed on January 1, 2024. A feasibility study was conducted in 2022 as part of the formation process that met the requirements of a municipal service review (MSR) used to inform this Sphere of Influence Update for the District.

EXISTING SPHERE OF INFLUENCE BOUNDARY

The Beckwourth Peak FPD 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 boundary excludes areas within Eastern Plumas Rural Fire Protection District's (EPRFPD) boundaries; however, EPRFPD is entirely surrounded by Beckwourth Peak FPD's service boundaries.¹

As part of the formation resolution, LAFCO adopted a sphere of influence that is coterminous with BPFDP's boundaries.

SOI OPTIONS

Option #1: Expanded SOI — It is recommended that an expanded SOI that includes EPRFPD's boundaries is adopted. This option indicates that LAFCO anticipates the annexation of EPRFPD to Beckwourth Peak FPD, and the subsequent dissolution of EPRFPD, due to the challenges identified in providing services.

Option #2: Approve with no change — Given the lack of other supported options, the Commission may wish to consider no changes Beckwourth Peak FPD's SOI.

RECOMMENDED SPHERE OF INFLUENCE BOUNDARY

It is recommended that the Commission adopt Option #1, in light of receiving a resolution of application (Resolution No. 2024-01) for annexation from EPRFPD and the adoption of similar resolution of annexation (Resolution No. 2024-05) by the Beckwourth Peak FPD, as well as an application packet for the change of organization.

¹ Resolution No.. 2024.05. p. 5.

PROPOSED SPHERE OF INFLUENCE DETERMINATIONS

LAFCO is required to prepare a written statement of determinations with respect to the following areas when updating a special district's Sphere of Influence, as specified by Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000. The following determinations are proposed for Beckwourth Peak FPD.

PRESENT AND PLANNED LAND USES IN THE AREA, INCLUDING AGRICULTURAL AND OPEN-SPACE LANDS

- 1-1: Land within the Beckwourth Peak FPD is predominantly designated as Timber Resource Land and Agricultural Preserve. Unincorporated portions within the District feature a mix of land uses, including Industrial, Rural Residential, and Suburban Residential. In the City of Portola, land use is regulated by the City's General Plan and Zoning Code. The City center consists primarily of low to medium-density residential areas, with commercial, professional, and light industrial uses concentrated along CA-70 and the Union Pacific Railroad. The outer edges of the City include significant open space and parkland.

PRESENT AND PROBABLE NEED FOR PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES IN THE AREA

- 1-2: Based on the 2020 census estimates, population within the proposed Beckwourth Peak FPD is approximately 3,815. This consists of the estimated population for each consolidated agency — City of Portola, Beckwourth FPD, Sierra Valley FPD, and Gold Mountain CSD— and the remaining population for areas historically outside of any district responsible for providing community fire protection services.
- 1-3: The Department of Finance (DOF) projects a 34 percent decline in Plumas County's population from 2020 (19,847) to 2060 (13,025). This represents an average annual growth rate (AAGR) of negative one percent, indicating an approximate one percent annual population decline from 2020 through 2060. Utilizing the County's AAGR and 2020 population estimates for Beckwourth Peak FPD's service area, the population within the District is anticipated to decrease to approximately 2,503 by 2060.

- 1-4: Although population is projected to decline overall in the District's service area, there are various planned developments the City of Portola, Gold Mountain FPD, and Beckwourth FPD that could significantly increase the population, necessitating a continued need for fire protection and emergency medical services in the area.
- 1-5: Additionally, enhanced demand is probable as there is a significant seasonal variation in population, particularly as it relates to tourists and resort facilities.

PRESENT CAPACITY OF PUBLIC FACILITIES AND ADEQUACY OF PUBLIC SERVICES THAT THE AGENCY PROVIDES OR IS AUTHORIZED TO PROVIDE

- 1-6: The formation of Beckwourth Peak FPD merged the fire and EMS operations of four different agencies (City of Portola, Beckwourth FPD, Sierra Valley FPD, and Gold Mountain CSD) previously providing fire services into one regional efficient, effective, and sustainable emergency services system.
- 1-7: The Beckwourth Peak FPD 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. The remainder of the positions will be supported by volunteers.
- 1-8: 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. Additionally, it is anticipated that each division will be served by at least 10 volunteers.
- 1-9: Since Beckwourth Peak FPD will be formed through the consolidation of several existing agencies, all current apparatus, vehicles, and equipment will be transferred to the district. Most of the equipment will be stationed at one of the six fire stations throughout the district. However, some equipment, including four response vehicles and one command vehicle, will be strategically placed around the district to reduce response times in remote areas. This non-stationed equipment is considered to be in fair condition and is planned for replacement within the next five to ten years.
- 1-10: Beckwourth Peak FPD's revenue sources will include a new special tax on properties within its boundary and a property tax exchange agreement with Plumas County.

These funds, along with continued fundraising, donations, and grants, will provide a stable budget for maintaining and enhancing fire and rescue services. The proposed budget accounts for consolidating assets from existing agencies, replacing outdated equipment, improving facilities, addressing inflation, and hiring additional staff.

EXISTENCE OF ANY SOCIAL OR ECONOMIC COMMUNITIES OF INTEREST IN THE AREA

- 1-11: Beckwourth Peak FPD's boundaries include over 400 parcels that were previously outside any assigned local jurisdictional boundary. These areas, which had been receiving services on a goodwill basis, were not within the boundaries of a local fire service provider. As such, there a need to ensure continued and adequate services to the area following the recent reorganization.
- 1-12: EPRFPD, which has a distinct and separate service area, is surrounded by Beckwourth Peak FPD's service boundaries. EPRFPD has been unable to provide fire protection and emergency medical services within its area since June 2023. As a result, agreements were made with Beckwourth Fire Protection District and Graeagle Fire Protection District to temporarily cover all fire protection, medical, and rescue services in the EPRFPD territory. With Beckwourth Fire Protection District set to be dissolved and Beckwourth Peak FPD designated as the successor agency, the proposed annexation of EPRFPD into Beckwourth Peak FPD is underway. Consequently, EPRFPD is considered a community of interest in this annexation process.

PRESENT AND PROBABLE NEED FOR PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES OF ANY DISADVANTAGED UNINCORPORATED COMMUNITIES WITHIN THE EXISTING SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

- 1-13: According to Census Bureau data, the statewide MHI for 2017- 2021 is estimated at \$84,097, and hence, the calculated threshold of \$67,277 (80 percent) defines whether a community is identified as disadvantaged. Per the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) Mapping Tool, the entirety of the Beckwourth Peak FPD service area is considered a disadvantaged community (DACs).
- 1-14: All territories are afforded the same access to fire and emergency medical services offered by the District, as they are all within the Beckwourth Peak FPD's service area.

2. EASTERN PLUMAS RURAL FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT (EPRFPD)

EXISTING SPHERE OF INFLUENCE BOUNDARY

The Sphere of Influence (SOI) for Eastern Plumas Rural Fire Protection District (EPRFPD) was first adopted in 1975. The District's SOI was amended in 2007, updated in 2012, and most recently updated in 2022.

In the December 2022 SOI update for Eastern Plumas regional fire protection agencies, a Provisional² Zero SOI was adopted for EPRFPD, due to the various challenges faced by EPRFPD, as identified in the Eastern Plumas Fire Municipal Service Review (MSR) adopted in October 2022.

It was recommended that the District address or develop a plan to overcome within a year, the concerns itemized in the MSR and elaborated upon in the SOI update. The District's SOI was planned to be reviewed in December 2023 and an SOI adopted based on the status of the District's efforts in response to LAFCO's concerns.

In January 2020, a Local Emergency Services Study Group (LESSG) was formed by five agencies—Eastern Plumas Rural Fire Protection District (EPRFPD), the City of Portola, Beckwourth FPD, Gold Mountain CSD, and Sierra Valley FPD—to explore improving fire and emergency services in the region. By October 2020, these agencies agreed to create a single regional fire district, Beckwourth Peak Fire Protection District, by dissolving the existing districts. However, quickly after EPRFPD's Board chose to withdraw from the feasibility study, which determined that forming a new district was a practical and affordable solution to regional challenges in providing fire services. The four remaining agencies accepted the study's findings and moved forward with reorganization efforts, applying to LAFCO. On June 26, 2023, a formation resolution was adopted by Plumas LAFCO.

² Provisional Sphere: LAFCO may, at its discretion, adopt a provisional SOI that itemizes issues that must be addressed by the agency prior to the Commission's review of the provisional SOI after a defined time frame from update—typically one year.

This time frame allows the district an opportunity to address issues identified in the MSR determinations prior to LAFCO taking further steps to reorganize the agency if necessary.

The newly formed District excludes the territory within EPRFPD boundaries including territory to the immediate south of EPRFPD to maintain whole parcels for mapping and service clarity.³ EPRFPD's service area remains distinct and separate, though surrounded by Beckwourth Peak FPD's boundaries.⁴

SOI OPTIONS

SOI options for 'EPRFPD consist of the following:

Option #1: Zero SOI — It is recommended that the current Zero SOI for Eastern Plumas Rural Fire Protection District (EPRFPD) no longer be provisional, in anticipation of annexation to an existing regional fire protection district, Beckwourth Peak FPD. A Zero SOI indicates that LAFCO anticipates reorganization will ultimately result in the dissolution of EPRFPD.

Option #2: Approve with no change — Given the lack of other options, the Commission may wish to consider no changes to EPRFPD's provisional SOI.

RECOMMENDED SPHERE OF INFLUENCE BOUNDARY

It is recommended that the Commission adopt Option #1 in light of receiving a resolution of application (Resolution No. 2024-01) for annexation from EPRFPD and the adoption of similar resolution of annexation (Resolution No. 2024-05) by the Beckwourth Peak FPD, along with receipt of an application packet by LAFCO.

³ Plumas LAFCO Hearing Draft Eastern Plumas Fire Agencies, Sphere of Influence Update. December 12, 2022. p.8.

⁴ Resolution No. 2024-05. p. 5.

PROPOSED SPHERE OF INFLUENCE DETERMINATIONS

LAFCO is required to prepare a written statement of determinations with respect to the following areas when updating a special district's Sphere of Influence, as specified by Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000. The following determinations are proposed for Eastern Plumas Rural Fire Protection District (EPRFPD).

PRESENT AND PLANNED LAND USES IN THE AREA, INCLUDING AGRICULTURAL AND OPEN-SPACE LANDS

- 2-1: Ninety-eight percent of the existing land uses within the Eastern Plumas Rural Fire Protection District (EPRFPD)'s boundary area are agricultural and undeveloped properties, with some forest zones. Residential, commercial, and industrial uses are mostly concentrated around the City of Portola. There are some residential and recreational areas in the Lake Davis portion of the District. The District's boundaries encompass a total of nine square miles.

PRESENT AND PROBABLE NEED FOR PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES IN THE AREA

- 2-2: As of 2008, the District's boundary area included 5,284 acres, 1,486 residential unit equivalents, 827 structures, and 1,443 lots. Based on average household size throughout the County of 2.21 people during the period of 2016-2020, the estimated population within EPRFPD's boundaries in 2020 was 3,284.
- 2-3: The Department of Finance (DOF) projects a 34 percent decline in Plumas County's population from 2020 (19,847) to 2060 (13,025). This represents an average annual growth rate (AAGR) of negative one percent, indicating an approximate one percent annual population decline from 2020 through 2060. Utilizing the County's AAGR and 2020 population estimates for EPRFPD's service area, the population within the District is anticipated to decrease to approximately 2,155 by 2060.
- 2-4: The District faces challenges providing adequate services to the existing population and will face similar challenges providing adequate service levels to any increase in demand in the future without additional funding.

- 2-5: EPRFPD has been unable to provide fire protection and emergency medical services within its area since June 2023. Consequently, an agreement was reached with Beckwourth Fire Protection District and Graeagle Fire Protection District to temporarily cover all fire protection, medical, and rescue services in the EPRFPD territory for six months, starting June 22, 2023.
- 2-6: There will be a continued need for fire protection and emergency medical services in the area.

PRESENT CAPACITY OF PUBLIC FACILITIES AND ADEQUACY OF PUBLIC SERVICES THAT THE AGENCY PROVIDES OR IS AUTHORIZED TO PROVIDE

- 2-7: EPRFPD has faced several challenges, including ongoing accountability and transparency concerns, staffing limitations, and financial constraints.
- 2-8: On June 2023, after discovering various issues relating to lack of certifications, lack of volunteers, and inability to provide critical services throughout the district, the EPRFPD board of directors the Board suspended fire response operations to restructure.
- 2-9: Since June of 2023, local fire agencies have been responding to all fire, medical emergency and rescue callouts for EPRFPD and there are no plans under consideration by EPRFPD to restore critical emergency services.
- 2-10: After receiving overwhelming support from constituents, the EPRFPD board unanimously voted on February 19, 2024, to pursue annexation with Beckwourth Peak Fire Protection District. Consequently, EPRFPD has adopted a resolution of application (Resolution No. 2024-01) and Beckwourth Peak FPD has adopted a corresponding resolution of annexation (Resolution No. 2024-05).

EXISTENCE OF ANY SOCIAL OR ECONOMIC COMMUNITIES OF INTEREST IN THE AREA

- 2-11: There are no communities of interest in the EPRFPD service area.

**PRESENT AND PROBABLE NEED FOR PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES
OF ANY DISADVANTAGED UNINCORPORATED COMMUNITIES WITHIN
THE EXISTING SPHERE OF INFLUENCE**

2-12: According to Census Bureau data, the statewide MHI for 2017- 2021 is estimated at \$84,097, and hence, the calculated threshold of \$67,277 (80 percent) defines whether a community is identified as disadvantaged. Per the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) Mapping Tool, the entirety of EPRFPD service area is considered a disadvantaged community (DACs).