

11. EASTERN PLUMAS RURAL FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

Eastern Plumas Rural Fire Protection District (EPRFPD) provides structural fire suppression, wildland fire suppression, emergency response, basic life support, rescue and occasional fire prevention programs.¹⁸⁴ A municipal service review was last completed for the District in May 2007.

AGENCY OVERVIEW

Background

EPRFPD was formed in 1975 as an independent special district to provide structural fire, emergency medical and emergency rescue services.¹⁸⁵ The reason for its formation was the need to provide fire protection to the growing urban areas around the City of Portola. For the first few years EPRFPD contracted with the City of Portola for the provision of fire and emergency services within the District's boundaries.¹⁸⁶ Eventually, EPRFPD started providing fire suppression, emergency services, rescue and some fire prevention programs on its own.

The principal act that governs the District is the Fire Protection District Law of 1987.¹⁸⁷ 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.¹⁸⁸ Districts must apply and obtain LAFCo approval to exercise services authorized by the principal act but not already provided (i.e., latent powers) by the district at the end of 2000.

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

¹⁸⁴ Trent Saxton, *FEMA Fire House Grant Application*, 2009, Fire Department Characteristics Part I, p. 1.

¹⁸⁵ Plumas LAFCo, Resolution No. 75-2766.

¹⁸⁶ John Gullixson, Plumas LAFCo, *EPRFPD Municipal Service Review & Sphere of Influence Amendment*, 2007, p. 7.

¹⁸⁷ Health and Safety Code §13800-13970.

¹⁸⁸ Health and Safety Code §13862.

Boundaries

EPRFPD’s boundary is entirely within Plumas County. The initial boundaries extended north to the Carmichael Ranch, south to Iron Horse Rancho, east to Grizzly Road, and west to include the Maybe area. The present bounds encompass approximately eight square miles,¹⁸⁹ 98 percent of which is rural and wild land.¹⁹⁰ The boundary area consists of two non-contiguous parts. The larger part surrounds the City of Portola and stretches from Willow Creek in the west to Grizzly Ranch in the east. The smaller of the two areas is located by Lake Davis. The existing boundaries of the District are shown in Figure 11-2.

Plumas LAFCo and Board of Equalization records indicate there have been five annexations to the District and six detachments from the District, since EPRFPD was formed. All recorded boundary changes are shown in Figure 11-1. The most recent annexation took place in 2010 and involved 93.6 acres of the Ridges Properties.¹⁹¹ Although LAFCo has concluded its hearing on it, this annexation has not been finished or recorded by the BOE. The detachment for the portion of Grizzly Ranch property also only appear in LAFCo archives, and have not been recorded by the BOE. EPRFPD and LAFCo should work together to complete the annexation ,submit it for recording by the State, determine whether the detachment was satisfactorily completed, and ensure that the District’s Tax Rate Area is consistent with BOE records.

Figure 11-1: EPRFPD Boundary History

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

¹⁸⁹ Total agency area calculated in GIS software based on agency boundaries as of July 1, 2011. The data is not considered survey quality.

¹⁹⁰ Trent Saxton, *FEMA Fire House Grant Application*, 2009, Fire Department Characteristics Part I, p. 1.

¹⁹¹ The Ridges Annexation has been approved by LAFCo but not yet been annexed or recorded. The LAFCo approval will expire if annexation is not completed within one year of commission approval.

Sphere of Influence

The SOI for EPRFPD was first adopted in 1975. The District's SOI was amended in 2007. The new SOI includes areas southeast of its boundary along A-15, west along SR 70 to Mohawk Vista, and north of SR 70. In addition, the Gold Mountain Community Service District (GMCSO) territory was included in the District's updated SOI.¹⁹² EPRFPD's existing SOI also encompasses the entire City of Portola. According to the EPRFPD 2007 MSR, the reason for the inclusion of these communities and private developments into the District's SOI was that this extension would allow for a "streamlined approach for future annexations to the most logical service provider."

The current SOI encompasses 28 square miles, of which approximately one-third is within the District's boundaries.

Extra-territorial Services

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

Prior to the annexation of The Ridges project, the District provided extra-territorial fire and emergency services to the property via an Out-of-Area Service contract with Sweetwater Investments, LLC., John and Colleen Chase, and Christopher and Kathleen Hall. These areas are shown in Figure 11-2. OASA with Sweetwater Investments, LLC has been canceled due to non-payment. EPRFPD also provides occasional fire and emergency services within the boundaries of Beckwourth FPD through a mutual aid agreement.

Areas of Interest

EPRFPD reported a number of areas of interest where there were 1) challenges due to limited access, 2) areas lacking a designated service provider, 3) areas with the potential for miscommunication regarding the proper first responder, or 4) overlapping service providers:¹⁹³

- ❖ The area between the border of the City of Portola along Lake Davis Road and the border of the District has no designated provider.
- ❖ During incidents, there is sometime confusion regarding who serves the finger areas in the northeastern part of the City of Portola along Manzanita Street, Chaparral Street, Loyalton Avenue, Magnolia Avenue, and Sagebrush Avenue.

¹⁹² Plumas LAFCO, *Eastern Plumas Rural Fire Protection District Municipal Service Review and Sphere of Influence Amendment*, 2007, p. 28.

¹⁹³ Interview with Keith Clark, EPRFPD Fire Chief, November 7, 2010.

- ❖ Although the areas of Rocky Point Road and Portola Heights are within EPRFPD's boundaries, the District reported that the City of Portola has an Out of Area Service Agreement with these communities to provide water services and along with that it provides fire services there as well.
- ❖ EPRFPD reported that they would like to have the rectangular area along Grizzly road detached from the District.
- ❖ The District is concerned that other fire service providers are providing service within the District's SOI without proper authorization.
- ❖ Some property owners in eastern Plumas reportedly claim to be served by the District for insurance purposes, although they are not within the District's boundaries.
- ❖ Gold Mountain CSD, which is in EPRFPD SOI, currently receives fire services from the City of Portola under contract. In 2009, Gold Mountain CSD conducted a study with the purpose of choosing a long-term fire service provider. EPRFPD was considered as one the options. GMCSO concluded that EPRFPD was the closest fire district and the most affordable option. However, limited financing resources of EPRFPD may present a problem.

11-2 Eastern Plumas Rural Fire Protection District

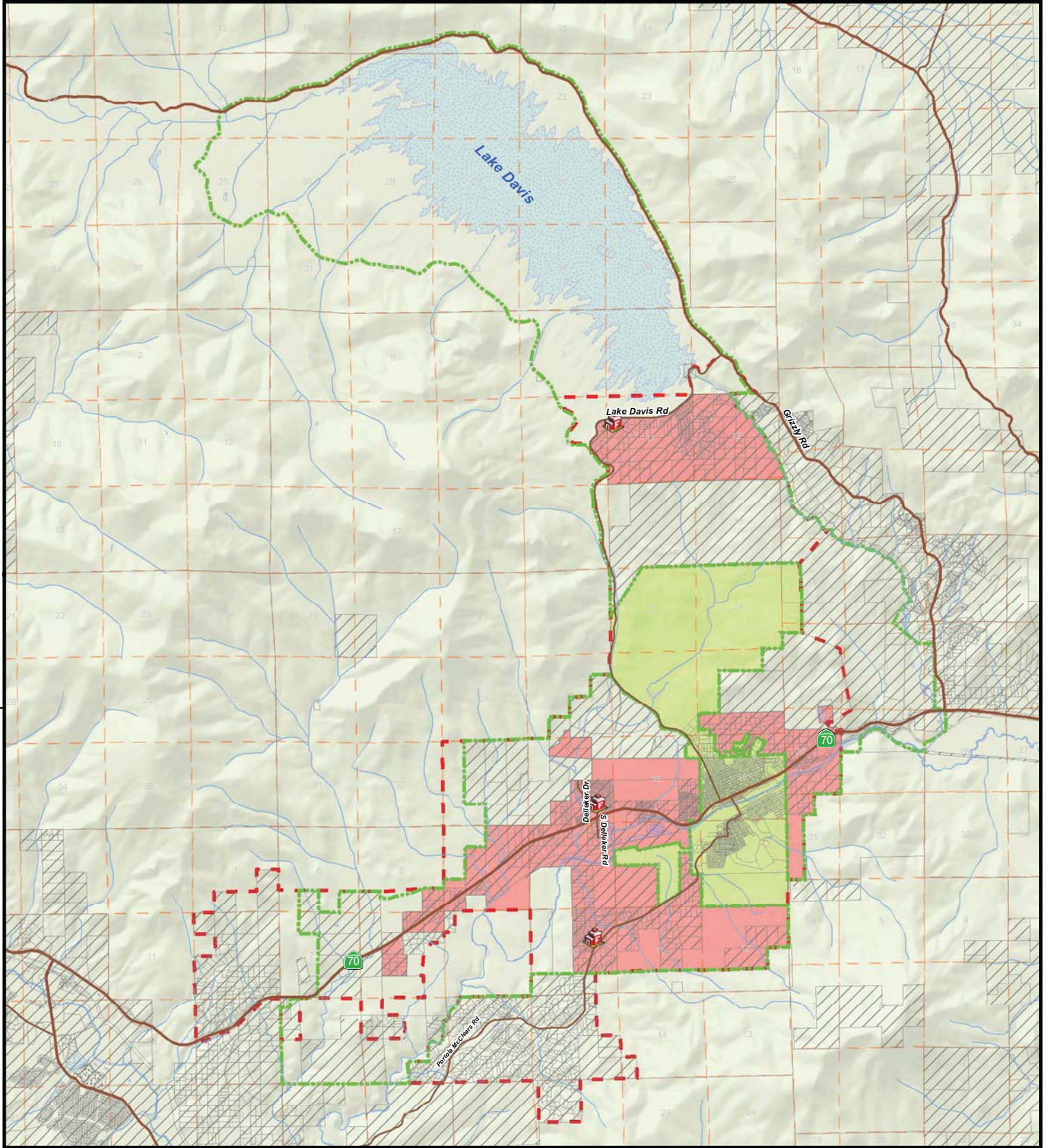
Range 12 East

Range 13 East













Range 14 East

Township 23 North

Township 22 North



Legend

-  Major Roads
-  CA State Highway
-  Stream / River
-  Waterbodies
-  Fire Stations
-  Parcels
-  City of Portola Local Responsibility Area
-  State Responsibility Area (Federal Responsibility lies outside hatched area.)
-  Eastern Plumas Rural FPD
-  Eastern Plumas Rural FPD (SOI)
-  FPD Service Area
-  Sectional Grid (MDB&M)



0 0.5 1 2 Miles

Eastern Plumas Rural FPD
Resolution: 75-2766
Adopted: 9/10/1975

Eastern Plumas Rural FPD (SOI)
Resolution: 2007-006
Adopted:

Source: Plumas LAFCo Map Created 3/21/2011

Accountability and Governance

The principal act orders that the governing body of a fire protection district must have an odd number of members, with a minimum of three and a maximum of 11 members. Directors may be appointed or elected.¹⁹⁴ EPRFPD is governed by a five-member board of directors who are elected to staggered four-year terms. Two Board Members were elected and three were appointed by the County Board of Supervisors to fill the vacancies. There has never been a contested election. Current board member names, positions, and term expiration dates are shown in Figure 11-3.

The Board meets once a month on the first Monday at the Delleker station. Board meeting agendas are posted on the bulletin board outside of the station and at the thrift store. Minutes of every board meeting are available upon request from the secretary. The District does not have a website, so its documents are not available online.

Figure 11-3: EPRFPD Governing Body

Eastern Plumas Rural Fire Protection District				
<i>District Contact Information</i>				
Contact:	Fire Chief, Kieth Clark			
Address:	141 Delleker Road, Portola, CA 96122			
Telephone:	(530)832-5626			
Fax:	(530)832-5446			
Email/website:	eprfpd@att.net			
<i>Board of Directors</i>				
Member Name	Position	Term Expiration	Manner of Selection	Length of Term
W. Trent Saxton	Chair	December 2011	Elected	4 years
Marcia Dickinson	Director	December 2013	Elected	4 years
Kimberly Burnett	Director	December 2013	Appointed	4 years
Jeanne Graham	Director	December 2011	Appointed	4 years
Dale Dankbar	Director	December 2011	Appointed	4 years
<i>Meetings</i>				
Date:	First Monday of every month			
Location:	Delleker Station			
Agenda Distribution:	Posted on the bulletin board outside of the Delleker Station and in the thrift store.			
Minutes Distribution:	Provided upon request			

In addition to the required agendas and minutes, the District does public outreach through fundraisers and food drives for those in need. EPRFPD focuses much of its outreach on children. Young fire explorers train with the District's volunteer fire fighters on occasional Thursdays. Previous efforts to reach out to kids also include involvement

¹⁹⁴ Health and Safety Code §13842.

with the boy scouts and showing of fire trucks at a preschool. The EPRFPD's thrift store, which is run by volunteers, assists people who have lost their houses due to fire, raises money for the District and puts out a newsletter for the fire department. The District also organized a campaign to encourage the public to buy reflective signs to make it easier to identify the correct location in case of an emergency.

If a customer is dissatisfied with District's services, complaints may be submitted to the fire chief. In the past, most of EPRFPD's complaints were regarding former staff. The District reported that no complaints were submitted in 2009 and 2010.

EPRFPD demonstrated accountability and transparency 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 secretary. There are 22 staff, of which, only the secretary and fire chief are paid. The fire chief dedicates about 15 hours a week to district operations. The secretary puts in approximately six to 10 hours per week. The rest of the personnel are volunteers. They include one assistant fire chief, three captains, 13 volunteer fire fighters, and three non-safety volunteers perform building maintenance.

Personnel are accountable to the chief. The chief reports to the Board of Directors at meetings. The chief does not perform formal employee evaluations. He makes himself available to discuss any issues on an as-needed basis. Volunteer firefighters receive an end-of-the-year bonus when they are frequently available to respond throughout the year, and notify the chief when they leave the area and are unavailable to respond.

The District tracks its staff workload by incident and by person responding. Personnel also track equipment and its maintenance by recording it in logs. EPRFPD records training hours for each volunteer.

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

The District's financial planning efforts include an annually adopted budget and occasional audits by the County. The latest audit took place in 2009. The District provided two adopted budgets: one for FY2009-2010 and another for FY2010-2011. EPRFPD does not adopt other planning documents, such as a capital improvement plan or master plan. The District previously attempted to develop further planning tools, but reported that limited funding posed a challenge.

Existing Demand and Growth Projections

Ninety-eight percent of the existing land uses within the District's boundary area are agricultural and undeveloped properties, with some forest zones. Residential, commercial and industrial uses are mostly concentrated around the City of Portola. There are some residential and recreational areas in the Lake Davis portion of the District.¹⁹⁵ The District's boundaries encompass a total of nine square miles.

Population

As of 2008, the District's boundary area included 5,284 acres, 1,486 residential unit equivalents, 827 structures, and 1,443 lots.¹⁹⁶

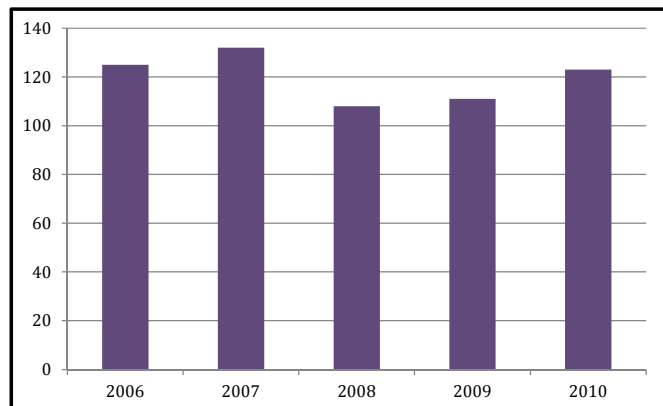
Out of 827 structures, 98 are commercial. Based on average household size throughout the County of 1.9 people, the estimated population of EPRFPD is 1,385. According to grant application prepared by the District, there are nearly 5,000 more residents within its SOI. Through mutual aid agreements, the District estimates it provides fire and emergency services to about 400 square miles with a population of more than 22,000 people.¹⁹⁷

Existing Demand

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

The District experienced growth in service demand until 2007. In the last three years, between 2007 and 2010, the District experienced a decline in population, which resulted in a subsequent drop in demand as well. The agency experienced a large drop in calls in 2008, at the peak of the recession, and a slight increase the following two years.

Figure 11-4: EPRFPD Number of Calls by Year



¹⁹⁵ Plumas County Online Parcel Application.

¹⁹⁶ Eastern Plumas Rural Fire Protection District- 2008 Annexations, Analysis of Fiscal Effects, 2008, Attachment 1.

¹⁹⁷ Trent Saxton, FEMA Fire Tender Grant Application, 2009, Narrative Statement, p. 1.

Projected Growth and Development

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

The State Department of Finance (DOF) projects that the population of Plumas County will 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 1,385 in 2010 to approximately 1,456 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 reported that to their knowledge there are no new or proposed developments within EPRFPD's boundaries. There are four proposed developments within EPRFPD's SOI, three of which are in the City of Portola. The Portola 192 development, comprised of 200 dwellings on 192 acres, is located in the very western part of the City of Portola and is almost completely surrounded by the District's boundaries. The Woodbridge development consists of 1,005 dwelling units on 398 acres and extends from the Portola High School in the north to the southern boundary of the city. Mountain View Estates contains 15 dwelling units on 8 acres. Willow Creek development, which is comprised of 210 residential units and located on the north side of SR 70 about three and a half miles west of Delleker, is currently on hold due to negotiations with the County. EPRFPD anticipates providing service to the Willow Creek development. Since the City provides its own fire service it is unlikely that the District will be providing service to Woodbridge, Portola 192 and Mountain View Estates.

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

Growth Strategies

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

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

The proposals for new developments are sent for review to the appropriate fire provider if a development is within district's boundaries. 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.¹⁹⁸

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.¹⁹⁹
- 2) The County encourages development to be located adjacent to or within areas where fire services already exist or can be efficiently provided.²⁰⁰
- 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.²⁰¹
- 4) Sustainable timber and biomass production and harvesting as well as intensive forest management practices are encouraged to reduce the danger of catastrophic wildfires.²⁰²
- 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.²⁰³
- 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.²⁰⁴
- 7) Bridges are required to be designed for an 80,000 pound vehicle load.²⁰⁵

¹⁹⁸ Correspondence with Becky Herrin, Plumas County Senior Planner, September 8, 2011.

¹⁹⁹ Plumas County Code of Ordinances, Title 9 Section 9-4.604 (k).

²⁰⁰ Plumas County, *General Plan*, 1984, pp. 28 & 29.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 32.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*,

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

- 8) All access roads must be marked with an approved sign; and all lots must be identified by an address.²⁰⁶
- 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.²⁰⁷
- 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.²⁰⁸
- 11) The County encourages biomass thinning programs in high fire risk areas.²⁰⁹

The District reported concerns that new developments in the County were not being required to comply with existing requirements.²¹⁰ 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.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Plumas County Code of Ordinances, Title 9 Section 9-4.601.

²⁰⁹ Plumas County Code of Ordinances, Title 4 Section 4-2.101.

²¹⁰ Profile comments from Chief Greg McCaffrey, May 3, 2011.

- 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.
- 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.²¹¹

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 reported that it is considering annexing Mohawk Vista. In addition, there are tentative plans to consolidate with C-Road Community Service District. In 2010, EPRFPD considered consolidation with Beckwourth FPD. An ad hoc committee consisting of Beckwourth FPD members conducted the consolidation study and concluded that although the eventual consolidation is inevitable it may take a few years before all parties involved are ready for it. The District would also like to annex Gold Mountain CSD.

Financing

The District reports that current financing levels are not adequate to deliver services.²¹² According to the District, additional funding is needed to provide for enhanced staffing levels, new vehicles, new equipment, and a new fire station to ensure adequate service levels to meet existing and future demand.

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

²¹¹ Plumas County General Plan, Draft Goals, Policies and Implementation Measures, 2010.

²¹² Interview with Keith Clark, EPRFPD Fire Chief, November 7, 2010.

- ❖ Ninety percent of the District's budget is derived from taxes and ten percent from donations. Approximately 85 percent of the whole budget is spent to ensure that the public gets emergency response staffing 24 hours a day. The remaining 15 percent pays for day-to-day operations and small purchases. Therefore, there is inadequate financing for large purchases and improvements.²¹³
- ❖ Another challenge to financing is that 300 lots, which were annexed before 2002 (subdivisions on the south side of Lake Davis and some small lots at Maybe), do not pay property tax to EPRFPD. They pay a modest annual property assessment that is only a small fraction of the amount of taxes that original properties pay to the District in taxes.²¹⁴
- ❖ While some other fire districts in the County are charging for providing services to the population within their SOI but outside of their boundaries, EPRFPD has not been doing so, and is just getting ready to start the process.
- ❖ The recession is another factor that negatively impacted the District's financing level. There has been a reduction in new developments within the District's boundaries and consequently less growth than anticipated in property tax income for the District.

Currently, it is challenging to maintain adequate service levels, especially with the effects of the recession. It is essential for the District to find ways to increase its funding. The District hopes to increase funding by way of conducting a district-wide lot assessment.²¹⁵ Options for additional funding may also include 1) a retroactive tax sharing agreement with the County for the 300 lots for which District is not receiving compensation for providing services, 2) fees for services provided outside of bounds, which the District is in the process of implementing, and 3) grant funds.

The County keeps accounts for the District's finances and tracks revenue and expenditures. The District's total revenues for FY 09-10 were \$78,663. Revenue sources include property taxes and benefit assessments (88 percent), State and Federal aid (two percent), and interest (one percent). Approximately nine percent of revenue is from miscellaneous sources, such as donations and reimbursements. The District charges a benefit assessment on the properties that were annexed in 2007 and 2008.²¹⁶ In addition,

²¹³ Trent Saxton, *FEMA Fire House Grant Application*, 2009, Narrative Statement, p. 3.

²¹⁴ Eastern Plumas Rural Fire Protection District, *2008 Annexations, Analysis of Fiscal Effects*, 2008, Attachment 1.

²¹⁵ Interview with Keith Clark, EPRFPD Fire Chief, November 7, 2010.

²¹⁶ Eastern Plumas Rural Fire Protection District, *2008 Annexations Analysis of Fiscal Effects*, 2008.

there is a \$20 special assessment on the properties at Lake Davis.²¹⁷ Assessment revenues are categorized as part of the property taxes in the District's financial report.

During the annexation of the Joy Properties (2007) and The Ridges (2010), the County agreed to a redistribution of a portion of the property tax increment to the District (seven percent of the total tax increment) and a benefit assessment of \$157.40 per residential unit equivalent per parcel that increases by two and a half percent annually.

Until now, the District was not charging fees for service; however, the agency recently set up a system to start charging residents within its SOI, but outside of its boundaries. Accordingly, the fee schedule was produced in 2010. The District will be charging hourly fees for every staff member and equipment piece involved in an incident. The rates will be renewed annually.²¹⁸ The District has a written service agreement with Fire Recovery USA, LLC that performs billing services on behalf of the fire agency for motor vehicle incidents and other emergency incidents at which the District provides emergency services.

The District's expenditures in FY 09-10 were \$74,919. Expenditures were composed of employee compensation (18 percent), services and supplies (75 percent), and the Proposition 1A loan to the State (seven percent). Debt repayments were 18 percent of the total expenditures.

Although the Proposition 1A loan is included in the financial statements of the District as part of the expenditures, in reality this loan to the State is not an expense. Due to the State budget crisis, in July 2009, the State legislature voted to suspend Proposition 1A, which ensures local property tax and sales tax revenues remain with the counties, cities and special districts. Consequently, all local agencies were required to loan eight percent of apportioned property tax revenues to the State with repayment plus interest by June 30, 2013. To mitigate the impact of the loss of revenues on the local agencies, the Proposition 1A Securitization Program enables local agencies to sell their Proposition 1A Receivables for cash proceeds to be paid in two installments in January and May 2010. EPRFPD decided not to participate in the securitization program. The District will receive its money back by 2013.

²¹⁷ Beckwourth FPD, *2010 Ad Hoc Committee Report on: Consolidation of the Beckwourth Fire District and Eastern Plumas Rural Fire District*, 2010, p. 2.

²¹⁸ Ordinance No. 2010-001, *An Ordinance of the Eastern Plumas Rural Fire Protection district to Approve and Implement a Master Fee Schedule as Attached in Fee Schedules A, B, C, D, E, and F*, 2010.

Figure 11-5: EPRFPD 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>						
Property Tax	\$63,023	98%	\$69,492	88%	\$70,240	90%
Use of Money	\$450	1%	\$504	1%	\$450	0.5%
State and Federal Aid	\$550	1%	\$1,377	2%	\$550	0.5%
Other Miscellaneous	\$0	0%	\$7,290	9%	\$7,000	9%
Total Income	\$64,023	100%	\$78,663	100%	\$78,240	100%
<i>Expenses</i>						
Salaries & Benefits	\$12,971	11%	\$13,697	18%	\$15,595	13%
Services & Supplies	\$83,316	75%	\$55,976	75%	\$106,243	87%
Loan to State	\$0	0%	\$5,245	7%	\$0	0.0%
Fixed Assets	\$15,500	14%	\$1	0%	\$0	0%
Total Expense	\$111,787	100%	\$74,919	100%	\$121,838	100%
Net Income	-\$47,764		\$3,743		-\$43,598	

The District performs no formal capital improvement planning. Some capital improvement projects were included in the Engineer’s Report for the 2009 Joy Annexation. There are a few capital improvement needs that are currently identified, but the District does not have the ability to finance them. In 2009, EPRFPD applied for two FEMA grants—one for the new fire house and another for a water tender. Both applications were denied. The budgets for FY 09-10 and FY 10-11 do not list any expenditures for capital improvements, except for 0.5 to 2 percent of total expenses for the repair of safety equipment. Previous capital improvements were financed through loans, grants and donations. Wildland turnout equipment was purchased with FEMA grant money a few years ago. Some equipment has been donated to the District in the past.

EPRFPD is paying back two bank loans. The first loan is for the Lake Davis Station and has a remaining balance of about \$25,000 with accumulated interest of \$17,000 as of February 2010. The second loan is for the Iron Horse Station with the remaining balance of approximately \$30,000 and \$13,000 of accumulated interest as of May 2010. Both loans should be repaid by 2021.

The District currently does not have a financial reserve or reserve policy. The net income balance left over at the end of any year rolls over to the next year. At the end of FY 09-10, the District had a balance of nearly \$4,000 compared to budgeted negative net balance of almost \$48,000. At the end of FY 10-11 EPRFPD is anticipating to have a negative net balance of about \$44,000. The District reported that it did not have extra money to keep a reserve fund.

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

FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

Service Overview

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

Service Agreements

EPRFPD has formal mutual aid agreements with the City of Portola, Beckwourth FPD, Graeagle FPD and the U.S. Forest Service. There is an informal mutual aid agreement with the C-Road Community Service District that may turn into a formal automatic aid agreement in the near future. The District also has an informal mutual aid agreement with Plumas Eureka CSD.

Training

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

Dispatch

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

The District reports that the dispatch service is usually fairly adequate; however, sometimes backup is slow when there is a high volume of calls.

Staffing

EPRFPD has 18 sworn personnel—one fire chief, one assistant fire chief, three captains and 13 safety volunteers. The chief receives a small stipend, while the rest of the fire fighters are volunteers. The median age of a fire fighter is 44, with a range from 22 to 64.

The District currently tries to maintain a roster of 16 to 20 firefighters. Based on the District’s projections outlined in the Analysis of Fiscal Effects of 2008 Annexations paper, the EPRFPD anticipates having 31 firefighters in 2013, 37 in 2018 and 43 volunteer firefighters in 2023. Since 2008, there has been a net gain of two firefighters; however, the District reports that there has been a net loss of volunteers when compared to staffing levels prior to the recession.²¹⁹ Most volunteer firefighters get recruited through word of mouth and the current firefighters’ circle of friends. The District tried to use newspaper advertising, but had limited success with these efforts. The District reported that it needed more qualified people, but they are hard to find.

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.²²⁰ EPRFPD did not provide its firefighter certification information.

Qualified volunteers have to attend at least three Fire and Medical meetings and are voted into the District by the firefighters. After they are voted in, they receive training in fire and medical emergency response.²²¹ Volunteers are required to attend at least 50 percent of all trainings. Firefighters train every Thursday for two to three hours and on occasional Saturdays for five to six hours.

Facilities and Capacity

EPRFPD operates three fire stations—one in Delleker, the second one in the Lake Davis area, and the third one in the Iron Horse community. The District owns all three stations, all of which were donated to the District.

²¹⁹ Eastern Plumas Rural Fire Protection District, *2008 Annexations, Analysis of Fiscal Effects*, 2008, pp. 3-4.

²²⁰ State Fire Marshall, *Course Information and Required Materials*, 2007, p. 44.

²²¹ Eastern Plumas Rural Fire Protection District, *2008 Annexations, Analysis of Fiscal Effects*, 2008, p. 3.

The Delleker (Station #1) and Lake Davis (Station #2) stations were reported to be in fair condition, and the Iron Horse (Station #3) station was described to be in poor condition.²²²

The Delleker Station, which was built in 1991, was the District's first fire station. It has three vehicles—two to fight structural fires and one for wildland fires. The Lake Davis Station was built in 1998 and the Iron Horse Station in 2002.²²³ The Lake Davis Station has one vehicle to fight structural fires, one for wildland fires and one rescue vehicle. The Iron Horse Station houses two vehicles for structural fires and one for wildland fires.

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

There are no set hours when the stations are staffed. Volunteers are always on call.

Infrastructure Needs

All three facilities require work and need to be updated. The Delleker Station building needs to be expanded. Delleker Station and Iron Horse stations require showers. The Iron Horse station currently is just a garage. It needs to be expanded, heat and a water tank.

Growth in the number of tourists, the public expectation of improved levels of service and aging property owners require EPRFPD to provide a higher level of service which requires a new fire station or a significant expansion of an existing one. The District also would need new fire stations if the communities of Gold Mountain, Willow Creek, and the C-Road CSD are to be annexed into the District.

There are currently no specific plans for facility expansion or construction, because the District lacks funding for large capital projects. EPRFPD applied for a FEMA grant for a new firehouse in 2009, but the application was denied. The estimated project cost to either expand/modify an existing fire station to accommodate 24/7 service demands or to construct a new one was estimated at \$2,691,285.²²⁴

The District needs a water tender, another rescue vehicle, and ideally all five engines need to be upgraded. The District's territory needs more fire hydrants. Only one percent of the area within its boundaries has fire hydrants, which is typical of rural fire districts.

²²² 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.

²²³ Eastern Plumas Rural Fire Protection District, *2008 Annexations, Analysis of Fiscal Effects*, 2008.

²²⁴ Trent Saxton, *Fire House Grant Application*, 2009, Request Details.

Challenges

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

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

Service Adequacy

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

Fire services in the communities are classified by the Insurance Service Office (ISO), an advisory organization. This classification indicates the general adequacy of coverage. Communities with the best fire department facilities, systems for water distribution, fire alarms and communications, and equipment and personnel receive a rating of 1. EPRFPD has an ISO rating of 6 in urban areas and 9 in rural areas. The District was last evaluated in 2004.

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.²²⁵

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

²²⁵ Commission on Fire Accreditation International, 2000.

rural areas, and as quickly as possible in wildland areas. District's response zones include primarily rural classifications. The District reports that its average response time is five to ten minutes depending on where an incident occurs. An area that EPRFPD could improve upon is tracking its response times for each incident.

The service area size²²⁶ for each fire station varies between fire districts. The median fire station in eastern Plumas serves approximately 20 square miles. Sierra Valley FPD serves the most expansive area, with 111 square miles served per station on average. Densely populated areas tend to have smaller service areas. For example, the average service area for the City of Portola is 3.8 square miles. By comparison, each station in EPRFPD serves approximately 12.3 square miles.

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, EPRFPD has approximately 13 firefighters per 1,000 residents.

²²⁶ 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 11-6: Eastern Plumas Rural Fire Protection District Fire Profile

Fire Service				
Facilities				
Firestation	Location	Condition	Staff per Shift	Vehicles
#1 Delleker Station	151 Delleker Road, Portola, CA	Fair	Unstaffed	2 Engines for structural fire; 1 Wildland fire engine
#2 Lake Davis Station	Lake Davis Road	Fair	Unstaffed	1 Engine for structural fire; 1 Wildland fire engine; 1 Rescue vehicle
#3 Iron Horse Station	5585 Semiphore Road, Portola, CA	Poor	Unstaffed	2 Engines for structural fire; 1 Wildland fire engine
Facility Sharing				
Current Practices: The District does not currently share its facilities with other agencies. EPRFPD collaborates with other fire districts through Fire Chiefs Association and collective trainings				
Future opportunities: Opportunities for future facility sharing include the expansion of the Delleker station and establishing of a sheriff's sub-station in the facility.				
Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies				
The District identified a need to a new station, expansion of and upgrades to existing ones, new vehicles, and water tank at the Iron Horse station				
District Resource Statistics		Service Configuration		Service Demand
Staffing Base Year	2010	Configuration Base Year	2010	Statistical Base Year
Fire Stations in District	3	Fire Suppression	Direct	Total Service Calls
Stations Serving District	3	EMS	Direct	% EMS
Sq. Miles Served per Station	12	Ambulance Transport	EPHCD	% Fire/Hazardous Materials
Total Staff ²	22	Hazardous Materials	Direct	% False
Total Full-time Firefighters	0	Air Rescue/Ambulance Helicopter CareFlight		% Misc. emergency
Total Call Firefighters	18	Fire Suppression Helicopter	CalFire	% Non-emergency
Total Sworn Staff per Station	6	Public Safety Answering Point	Sheriff	% Mutual Aid Calls
Total Sworn Staff per 1,000	13	Fire/EMS Dispatch	Sheriff	Calls per 1,000 people
Service Adequacy		Service Challenges		
Response Time Base Year	2010	Lack of fire hydrants. No water tank at Iron Horse station. Limited access areas.		
Median Response Time (min)	NP	Training		
90th Percentile Response Time (min)	NP	Volunteers are required to attend at least 50 percent of all trainings and at least three Fire and Medical meetings. Firefighters train every Thursday for two to three hours and on occasional Saturdays for five to six hours.		
ISO Rating	6/9 (2004)			
Mutual & Automatic Aid Agreements				
EPRFPD has mutual aid agreements with the City of Portola, Beckwourth FPD, Graeagle FPD, Plumas Eureka FPD and Forest Service. The District has an informal agreement with the C-Road CSD.				
Notes: 1) Primary service area (square miles) per station. 2) Total staff includes sworn and non-sworn personnel. 3) Based on ratio of sworn full-time and call staff to the number of stations. Actual staffing levels of each station vary.				

EASTERN PLUMAS RURAL FPD DETERMINATIONS

Growth and Population Projections

- ❖ The estimated population of EPRFPD is 1,385.
- ❖ Over the past decade the District has experienced little or no growth in residential population; however, there has been an increase in tourists and related demand.
- ❖ No or slow residential growth is expected within the District, until the proposed Willow Creek development within its SOI is approved and constructed. Although, residential growth is anticipated to be limited, potential growth in the City of Portola could result in an increase in demand for EPRFPD's services, as the City's population rises resulting in increased travel through EPRFPD's service area.

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

- ❖ The District's current facilities do not have capacity to adequately serve current demand. EPRFPD does not have the capacity to serve future growth with existing fire stations and financial resources.
- ❖ The District identified a need for a new station, expansion of and upgrades to existing ones, new vehicles, and a water tank at the Iron Horse station. However, EPRFPD does not have plans to address these needs in the near future due to financing constraints.
- ❖ It is recommended that the County Sheriff's Office work with the fire districts to update the ESN map that is used for dispatching, in order to adequately address any communication concerns and recent boundary changes.
- ❖ The District should consider adopting a capital improvement plan to identify financing needs and potential revenue sources for these needs.
- ❖ It is a recommended practice that fire service providers track response times for each incident.

Financial Ability of Agencies to Provide Services

- ❖ The District reports that current financing levels are not adequate to deliver services, and cannot accommodate any possible increase in demand.
- ❖ The District requires increased revenues to finance facilities and infrastructure needs to address inadequate service financing.

- ❖ The District hopes to increase funding by way of conducting a district-wide lot assessment. Options for additional funding may also include 1) fees for services provided outside of bounds, which the District is in the process of implementing, and 2) grant funds.

Status of, and Opportunities for, Shared Facilities

- ❖ EPRFPD collaborates with other fire providers in Plumas County and outside of it through mutual aid agreements, common trainings and membership in the Fire Chiefs Association.
- ❖ The District currently does not share its facilities with other agencies.
- ❖ Opportunities for future facility sharing include the expansion of the Delleker station and establishment of a Sheriff's sub-station in the facility.

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

- ❖ EPRFPD demonstrated accountability and transparency by disclosing financial and service related information in response to LAFCo requests.
- ❖ The County of Plumas is considering hiring a countywide fire marshal whose responsibilities may include enforcing fire code and conducting building inspections..
- ❖ A governmental structure option is consolidation of the District with C-Road CSD. The two agencies are contemplating consolidation or annexation of C-Road CSD by EPRFPD. Consolidation with other fire districts offers opportunities for shared resources and finances.
- ❖ Beckwourth FD conducted a consolidation study, which explored the possibility of consolidation with EPRFPD. The conclusion reached was that although consolidation is inevitable in the future, presently, all parties are not agreeable on various terms.
- ❖ Other governmental structure options include the annexation of Gold Mountain CSD, as well as the community of Mohawk Vista, which is currently outside of a fire protection district.
- ❖ The District hopes to improve its operational efficiency through increased funding by way of conducting a district-wide lot assessment and charging service fee to residents outside its boundaries.