

PLUMAS LAFCo

MEMORANDUM
October 15, 2018

To: Plumas LAFCo Commissioners
From: Jennifer Stephenson, Executive Officer
Subject: Fire Service Provision Status and Service Structure Options

There are 20 agencies authorized to provide local fire services in Plumas County, as follows:

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| 1. City of Portola* | 11. Indian Valley CSD |
| 2. Beckwourth FPD | 12. La Porte FPD |
| 3. C-Road CSD* | 13. Long Valley CSD |
| 4. Chester PUD | 14. Meadow Valley FPD |
| 5. Crescent Mills FPD | 15. Peninsula FPD |
| 6. Eastern Plumas Rural FPD | 16. Plumas Eureka CSD |
| 7. Gold Mountain CSD* | 17. Prattville-Almanor FPD* |
| 8. Graeagle FPD | 18. Quincy FPD |
| 9. Greenhorn Creek CSD | 19. Sierra Valley FPD |
| 10. Hamilton Branch FPD* | 20. West Almanor CSD |

Of these, five agencies contract with other service providers. These include Prattville-Almanor, contracted with West Almanor CSD for management services; Hamilton Branch FPD, contracted with Peninsula FPD for management services; and City of Portola, Gold Mountain CSD, and C-Road CSD, contracted for fire and management services with Eastern Plumas Rural FPD.

While not all territory within the County has a designated local fire protection provider, all territory within the County has a determined first responder for dispatch and response as staffing resources allow. These fire agencies have agreed to respond outside of their LAFCo-approved boundary to provide fire and medical emergency response when an incident is not within the purview of the U.S. Forest Service. Providers do not receive compensation for these responses outside of their bounds unless the agency has a fee system in place to charge the caller for the response. Of the County's total population, approximately 4.56 percent of residents live in areas without structural fire protection services—primarily in existing communities established from the late 1800's through the 1960's. These areas appear to be the result of historic settlement patterns rather than planned communities. Larger communities not in a fire district are: Belden, Caribou, Storrie, Twain, Mohawk Vista, Keddie, Clio, Blairsden, Canyon Dam, Johnsville, Bucks Lake, Little Grass Valley, and Warner Valley.

Fire providers around the State have faced several challenges over the decade in providing an adequate and sustainable level of services, primarily a result of ever increasing costs associated with equipment, training requirements, gas, etc., combined with severely constrained funding from declining tax revenues, State tax shifts, and lack of support for new tax measures. Providers that rely heavily on volunteer firefighters and administration have been most impacted by these constraints.

Given the rural nature of Plumas County and structure of several small fire districts developed around individual communities, fire providers face these challenges, as well as several others, including but not limited to:

- Lack of sufficient funding
- Declining volunteerism
- Disjointed services with lack of consistency amongst providers
- Areas outside of boundaries of designated local fire provider, yet receiving services
- Duplication of services – administration, governance etc.
- Divided voices, which limits influence (i.e., grant funding)
- Lack of regional planning for location and type of facilities and equipment

LAFCo has become aware that several fire agencies are struggling to address these issues and are searching for service structure changes to manage or, at the least, alleviate some of the burden created by these challenges. At the last meeting of the Commission, it was requested that discussion regarding fire services be continued to the October 15th meeting in order to include the various fire providers in the conversation and receive input regarding existing efforts to address these challenges.

Past actions conducted by LAFCo to enhance efficiency of fire services and promote logical boundaries consist of the following:

- Completed MSRs and SOI updates on all of the fire providers in the County to indicate areas in need of annexation
- Identified concerns of structures/communities outside of a designated fire provider
- Aided in the correction of dispatch inconsistencies with provider boundaries
- Decreased the application fee for those desiring to annex into a fire provider's boundaries to promote inclusion of all territory within a designated fire provider
- Attended and presented service structure options at board meetings and townhalls

No action is required on this item at this time, and this discussion is for informational purposes only. Further efforts within the purview of LAFCo to assist the agencies in addressing these issues may include:

- Continued support in the form of staff presence at meetings for informational purposes
- Continued support of Commissioners fostering discussions amongst the agencies
- A reduction in reorganization fees for fire service providers only
- A special study to do a more detailed review of governance structure options
- Initiation of a reorganization