

13. WEST ALMANOR COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT

West Almanor Community Services District (WACSD) provides emergency medical response, fire protection and suppression, fire prevention, other emergency support such as rescue and hazmat incidents, groundwater quality monitoring, and effluent collection.

This is the first municipal service review for WACSD.

AGENCY OVERVIEW

Background

WACSD was originally formed as Plumas County Service Area (CSA) #2 in 1974¹⁷⁶ by the Plumas County Board of Supervisors, at the request of the developer of the Lake Almanor West subdivision, Mr. Edward C. Clifford. The CSA was a division of county government and controlled by the Board of Supervisors. A local advisory board was appointed to oversee daily operations and report back to the County Board.

The services authorized were “extended county services” which included over 15 types of services. From the outset, services were limited to fire protection, emergency medical services, auto accidents, well testing, hazardous materials limited security (fire chief patrolling the area), and mainlining the septic system for eight lots on Osprey Loop.

After some years of consideration, CSA #2 was reorganized on September 24, 1993, as West Almanor CSD. There were no changes to district boundaries or authorized services. The purpose of the reorganization was to provide services more efficiently in the West Almanor area by reducing duplication of administrative services, improving the utilization of equipment, decreasing overall costs, and expanding services that can be provided to residents of the District.

The principal act that governs the District is the State of California Community Services District Law.¹⁷⁷ CSDs may potentially provide a wide array of services, including water supply, wastewater, solid waste, police and fire protection, street lighting and landscaping, airport, recreation and parks, mosquito abatement, library services; street maintenance and drainage services, ambulance service, utility undergrounding, transportation, abate graffiti, flood protection, weed abatement, hydroelectric power, among various other

¹⁷⁶ LAFCo Resolution 74-2583.

¹⁷⁷ Government Code §61000-61226.5.

services. CSDs are required to gain LAFCo approval to provide those services permitted by the principal act but not performed by the end of 2005 (i.e., latent powers).¹⁷⁸

WACSD is located within the community of Lake Almanor West which is situated along the western shore of Lake Almanor in northern Plumas County. It lies immediately east of SR 89. The District does not border any other fire districts in the County, because it is surrounded by forest. Prattville-Almanor FPD is located south of WACSD.

Boundaries

WACSD's boundary is entirely within Plumas County. The boundaries of CSA #2 were set up to be those of the Lake Almanor West subdivision. The current boundaries of WACSD are the same as the initial boundaries of CSA #2 at formation. The District's bounds encompass approximately 0.96 square miles.

Following formation, the CSA did not undertake any annexations or detachments. In 1993, CSA #2 was reorganized into West Almanor CSD. Since the reorganization there have been no annexations to or detachments from the CSD.

Sphere of Influence

The Sphere of Influence for the District was first adopted on August 26, 1976.¹⁷⁹ The SOI was further revised on January 21, 1983.¹⁸⁰ The sphere of influence was made coterminous with the District's boundaries, since the majority of WACSD bordered along the lake and the remaining boundaries abutted areas which were not thought to allow further development.¹⁸¹ No other changes to the District's SOI have been made since the 1983 update.

Extra-territorial Services

Through automatic aid and mutual aid agreements, WACSD provides services outside of its bounds. WACSD has a formal automatic aid agreement with Prattville-Almanor FPD (PAFPD). WACSD also maintains informal mutual aid agreements with all fire service providers in Plumas County and makes itself available to CalFire and USFS as needed.

Additionally, each fire provider in Plumas County has informally agreed to a service area that extends outside of their LAFCo-approved boundaries, in order to minimize those areas without a defined first responder. In the case of WACSD, the District is aware of its service area as per the Emergency Response Area map, but does not recognize that the

¹⁷⁸ Government Code §61106.

¹⁷⁹ LAFCo resolution 76-35.

¹⁸⁰ LAFCo resolution 83-06.

¹⁸¹ Letter from Plumas County Planning Department to LAFCo, *Sphere of Influence Recommendation Basis, Peninsula Fire Protection District*, January 3, 1983.

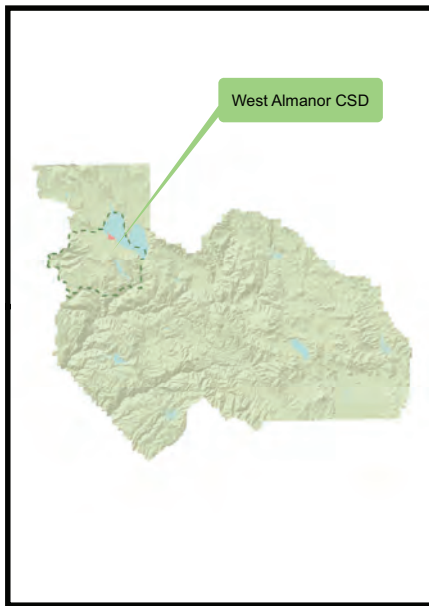
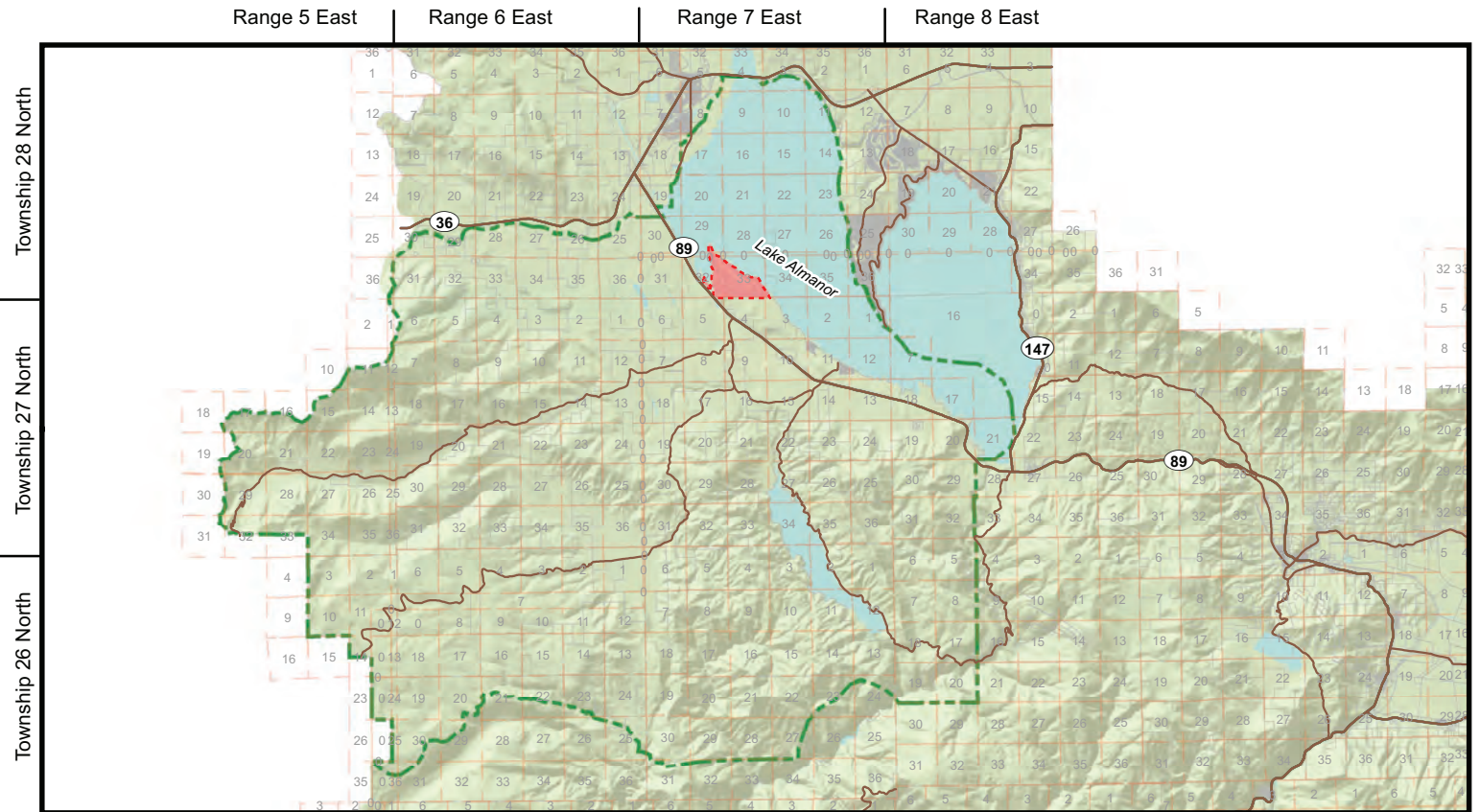
District entered into the agreement. WACSD reported that it would only provide services outside of its boundaries if resources were available to ensure that services could still be provided within its bounds. The service area for WACSD is the same as PAFPD's service area and includes the western portion of Lake Almanor and extends south and southwest to include a large territory that spreads all the way to Butte County. The service area encompasses about 198 square miles compared to 0.96 square miles of boundary area. WACSD does not receive property tax revenue in the territory that lies outside of its bounds, and in effect would provide free services, if it responded to these areas without reimbursement.

WACSD has a functional consolidation contract with Prattville-Almanor FPD according to which identities and budgets for the two districts remain separate. West Almanor CSD provides PAFPD operations, training and automatic aid services. The WACSD fire chief or assigned duty officer is in charge of all operations on emergency responses within either district. West Almanor CSD is responsible for training all paid and volunteer personnel. And in addition, WACSD responds to all emergency calls and incident in the Prattville-Almanor FPD as part of automatic aid.

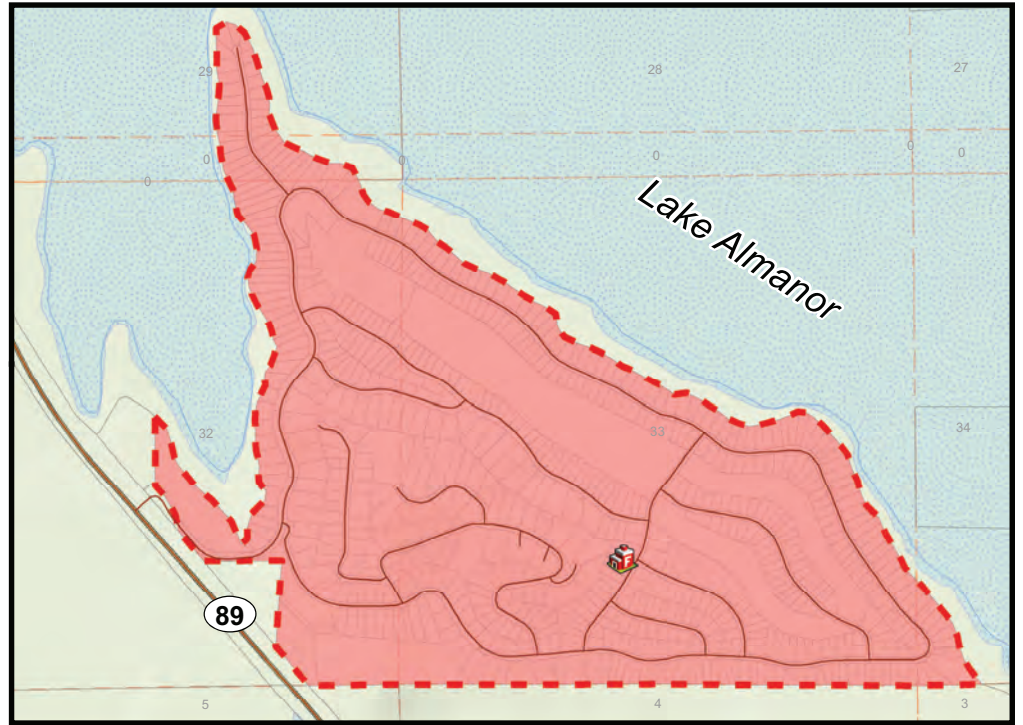
Areas of Interest

The area of Prattville-Almanor FPD is of a particular interest to WACSD. The functional consolidation contract expired on June 30, 2012, and while both districts are strongly considering consolidation, it has been postponed at this time. Instead, the districts will expand their contract; under the new agreement WACSD will take over administration duties for PAFPD.

West Almanor Community Services District



Location Map (Not to Scale)



0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles

Legend

- Highways
- Major Roads
- Stream / River
- Waterbodies

- Parcels
- Sectional Grid (MDB&M)
- Fire Station

- West Almanor CSD
- West Almanor CSD (SOI)
- Fire Department Service Area



West Almanor CSD
Resolution: 74-01
Formed: January 25, 1974

West Almanor CSD (SOI)
Resolution: 83-06
Adopted: January 21, 1983

Source: Plumas LAFCo Map Created 4/25/2012

Accountability and Governance

WACSD is governed by a five-member board of directors who are to be elected at large by community residents to staggered four-year terms. There are currently five Directors, all of whom were elected at large. There has not been a contested election in the last few years. Current board member names, positions, and term expiration dates are shown in Figure 13-2.

The Board generally meets on the last Thursday of every month at three in the afternoon at the fire station. Agendas are posted at the fire station, on the website and on the three community bulletin boards located at the post office boxes in the area. Minutes are available upon request.

Figure 13-2: West Almanor CSD Governing Body

West Almanor CSD				
<i>District Contact Information</i>				
Contact:	Fire Chief, General Manager, Randy Fluke			
Address:	947 Long Iron Drive, Chester, CA			
Telephone:	(530)259-5112			
Fax	(530)259-5113			
Email/website:	westalmanorfd@citlink.net , http://www.citlink.net/~westalmanorfd/			
<i>Board of Directors</i>				
Member Name	Position	Term Expiration	Manner of Selection	Length of Term
Thomas Fullerton	Director	December 2015	Elected	4 years
Dale Knutsen	Director	December 2015	Elected	4 years
Richard Fording	Chair	December 2013	Elected	4 year
John Fricke	Director	December 2015	Elected	4 years
John Gonzales	Director	December 2015	Elected	4 years
<i>Meetings</i>				
Date:	Last Thursday of every month at 3pm			
Location:	Meetings are held at the fire station.			
Agenda Distribution:	Posted at the fire station, on website, and on three bulletin boards at PO boxes.			
Minutes Distribution:	Available upon request.			

In addition to the required agendas and minutes, the District tries to reach its constituents through its website. WACSD also holds open houses at the station, offers CPR classes and accommodates children’s educational field trips.

If a customer is dissatisfied with the District’s services, complaints must be submitted in writing to the Board of Directors and signed by the complainant. The Board considers the matter at the next available meeting and places it on the agenda for the following meeting. Upon consideration of the matter, the Board notifies the complainant by certified mail of the outcome and requests a written reply of whether the results are satisfactory or unsatisfactory. The District reported that there had been no complaints in the last few years.

WACSD demonstrated accountability in its disclosure of information and cooperation with Plumas LAFCo during the MSR process. The District responded to the questionnaires and cooperated with interview and document requests.

Planning and Management Practices

The District's fundamental mission is to provide the following services to the Lake Almanor West development: 1) fire protection and fire prevention; 2) emergency medical response; 3) ground water quality monitoring; 4) septic system monitoring; and 5) common leach field and effluent collection system for nine specified residential parcels. WACSD's objective is to provide these services in an effective and affordable manner, placing first priority on the health and safety of those involved.

Daily operations are managed by the general manager who is also the fire chief. The general manager reports to the Board. The secretary reports to the general manager. The assistant chief is accountable to the fire chief; and all captains are under the supervision of the assistant chief. The firefighters report to the captain.

The District has one full-time paid chief. The assistant chief and captain are part-time employees who receive per-diems. There is one paid secretary and ten volunteer firefighters. The Board evaluates the general manager/chief annually. The chief is currently in the process of developing an annual employee evaluation form for both, paid staff and volunteers. The chief/general manager manages the wastewater system; however, due to the small size and type of the system, it generally only requires limited occasional maintenance.

The District tracks the workload handled by its staff through incident and training logs. WACSD also tracks paid employee work hours. The District reported that it did not perform evaluations for the District as a whole, such as benchmarking or annual reports. However, WACSD attempts to monitor itself through board meeting discussions, and review of the policy and procedures manual.

The District's financial planning efforts include an annually adopted budget. The District's financial statements are audited every two years. WACSD adopts a ten-year master plan. The last master plan was adopted in 2002. The District conducts capital improvement planning informally during Board meetings on an as-needed basis.

The District achieved the designation of a Firewise Community, as is documented in the 2009 community assessment report.¹⁸²

¹⁸² The Firewise Communities/USA program is a nationwide effort to provide an effective management approach for preserving Wildland living aesthetics. Its focus is on communities that exist in the midst of or in close proximity to areas that can be characterized as "wild" and undeveloped, typically containing large amounts of natural fuels such as trees, brush or heavy grass.

Existing Demand and Growth Projections

Land uses within the District are residential and recreational. The District's bounds encompass nearly one square mile.

Population

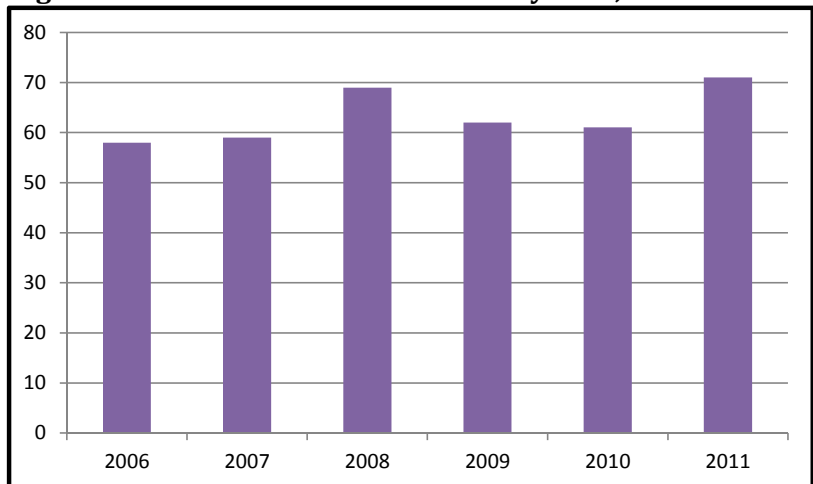
According to Census 2000, the District's population was 329.¹⁸³ Based on census designated place population in the 2010 Census, there are 270 permanent residents within the District,¹⁸⁴ indicating that the District's full-time population has declined by about 18 percent over the last ten years. There are approximately 475 housing units within the District's bounds with only 28 percent of those units occupied full-time.

Existing Demand

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

Demand for sewer services has remained constant as there have been consistently only five developed parcels being served over the last few years.

Figure 13-3: WACSD Number of Calls by Year, 2006-2011



The District reported that it had observed little change in the level of fire service demand in the last few years. As shown in Figure 13-3, there was a surge of fire service calls in 2008, after which the call volume went back down in 2009 and 2010, and again returned to a peak level in 2011. Since, PAFPD and WACSD are dispatched to all of each other's calls, annual number of calls is the same for both districts.

¹⁸³ Census designated place Lake Almanor West in Plumas County.

¹⁸⁴ Census designated place Lake Almanor West in Plumas County.

Projected Growth and Development

WACSD anticipates slight growth in population and similarly in fire service demand within the District in the next few years. Although the Lake Almanor West subdivision will not expand, there are existing empty lots throughout the community, which have the potential to be developed. Even during the recession, the community observed construction of about half a dozen homes a year. Within the last year there has been a slight surge in construction.

Demand for wastewater services has the potential to increase if the remaining four lots designed to be served by the District are developed. WACSD has the capacity to serve these additional four connections, as the system was designed to serve the nine parcels in the area.

The District does not make formal population projections, but attempts to plan for future needs by keeping an eye on new and planned construction. As part of the chief's duties he reviews new construction plans for fire safety. Observing demographics and seasonal traits also gives him tools to better project for the future.

The District reported that it had the capacity to serve anticipated future growth and possibly the territory of PAFPD, should annexation occur. WACSD did not identify any areas within its future growth area to which it would be difficult to provide an adequate level of service.

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 270 in 2010 to approximately 284 in 2020. It is anticipated that demand for service within the District will increase minimally based on the DOF population growth projections through 2020.

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 recently contracted with a fire prevention specialist; however, this position has no responsibility for code enforcement and building inspections.

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.¹⁸⁵
- 2) The County encourages development to be located adjacent to or within areas where fire services already exist or can be efficiently provided.¹⁸⁶
- 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.¹⁸⁷
- 4) Sustainable timber and biomass production and harvesting as well as intensive forest management practices are encouraged to reduce the danger of catastrophic wildfires.¹⁸⁸
- 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.¹⁸⁹
- 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.¹⁹⁰
- 7) Bridges are required to be designed for an 80,000 pound vehicle load.¹⁹¹
- 8) All access roads must be marked with an approved sign; and all lots must be identified by an address.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁵ Plumas County Code of Ordinances, Title 9 Section 9-4.604 (k).

¹⁸⁶ Plumas County, *General Plan*, 1984, pp. 28 & 29.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*,

¹⁹¹ *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.¹⁹³
- 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.¹⁹⁴
- 11) The County encourages biomass thinning programs in high fire risk areas.¹⁹⁵

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.
- 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.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Plumas County Code of Ordinances, Title 9 Section 9-4.601.

¹⁹⁵ Plumas County Code of Ordinances, Title 4 Section 4-2.101.

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 Feasibility Study Group 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. It has been working 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. Most recently, the Committee has focused on solving an “out-of-district problem” when properties that are located outside of fire district boundaries are not properly served, and hiring a fire prevention specialist who will develop strategies and plans to help resolve the out-of-district problem by working with the public, local fire districts, Fire Safe Council, Feasibility Group and the Board of Supervisors and by updating community wildfire protection plans and Firewise Community plans.

WACSD reported that the District was willing to consider including one small pocket of about 35 to 40 lots called Big Meadows in its SOI. The District already provides services there but is not getting compensated for responses in the area. WACSD would consider eventually annexing this small subdivision; however, residents in Big Meadows have not formally requested to be annexed.

With regard to possible governance structure alternatives, the District reported that it was interested in consolidation with PAFPD. Currently the two districts have a functional consolidation contract renewable every July 1st. The districts decided not to proceed with consolidation at this time and, instead, to expand the existing agreement. Under the new agreement, which is currently being drafted, WACSD will take over administration of Prattville-Almanor FPD. The WACSD chief will also act as the PAFPD chief. The contract will be automatically renewed annually until the districts decide to proceed with consolidation, change the conditions of the agreement, or to cancel the agreement altogether.

Financing

The District reports that current financing levels are adequate to deliver services. However, it was also reported that WACSD has faced a few challenges, including increasing prices of fuel and electricity, additional funding required for state mandated training, and reduced property tax revenues as a result of economic conditions.

In order to enhance funding, WACSD applies for grants. There are currently no applications pending, but once the next FEMA grant becomes available, the District plans to

¹⁹⁶ Plumas County General Plan, Draft Goals, Policies and Implementation Measures, 2010.

apply for acquisition of a breathing air compressor. In addition, to improve its financing, WACSD asked its residents for a special assessment increase. The ballot measure was approved with an overwhelming majority on May 8, 2012. The District reported that since the assessment was recently passed, financing levels are presently sufficient.

The County keeps accounts for the District's finances and tracks revenues and expenditures. The District's total revenue for FY 10-11 was \$204,047. Revenues included property tax revenue (69 percent), special assessment (30 percent), state homeowners property tax¹⁹⁷ (0.6 percent) and interest from investments (0.2 percent).

The primary source of funding is a share of the county property taxes, which varies with the assessed valuation of Lake Almanor West parcels. Since 1988, the District has also had a voter-approved special assessment, which was a fixed annual amount per parcel. It was then updated in a 2001 election to an annual rate of \$90 per parcel, which expired in July 2012. And most recently, as it was mentioned before, voters approved an increase in the special assessment from \$90 to \$195. The new assessment will expire in seven years. The chief reported that the \$105 increase from the original assessment is to make up the difference from the loss of funding caused by decreased property values and the increase in costs to the fire department.

Each lot owner pays \$1,000 to connect into the sewer system. These fees are used to maintain the system.

Another source of the District's revenues is the service and contract charges. Prattville-Almanor FPD currently pays WACSD \$5,000 to share in the cost of operations which includes fuel, manpower, equipment maintenance, vehicle insurance, and training expenses. WACSD also has an agreement with California Emergency Management Agency for local government fire and emergency assistance to the State of California and Federal fire agencies. According to this agreement, the District's strike team gets reimbursed based on rank of responders and apparatus and equipment used.

The District receives some financial help from the community auxiliary which also gives charity donations to other entities. In 2011, the auxiliary gave WACSD \$5,000 for a thermal imaging camera; however, normally annual donations amount to about \$1,000 to \$2,000.

WACSD's expenditures were \$268,834 in FY 10-11. Of this amount, 56 percent was spent on salaries and benefits, 25 percent on services and supplies, and 19 percent on fixed assets and capital improvements. Out of \$268,834, the District spent \$7,271 on wastewater operations: \$6,577 was paid to the State Water Resource Board and \$694 was spent on laboratory testing. All remaining expenditures were for fire services.

¹⁹⁷ Every year the Auditor's office files a claim to the State which calculates the amount of tax loss resulting from Homeowners Property Tax Exemptions. The State then reimburses the County in four increments throughout the year. The Auditor's office apportions taxes 3 times a year (December, April, and June). Each time it apportions, it distributes the amount received from the State to all the districts. It distributes the amount using the current AB8 factors.

The District performs capital improvement planning as needed, usually informally during Board meetings. In the last decade, WACSD assumed ownership of the fire station and replaced an old fire engine. In 2009 and 2010, the District created a multi-purpose room and replaced the station roof. WACSD just recently obtained a tractor for snow removal. It is financed for four years from GE Financial and listed in the budget under trucks. The annual payments will be \$10,600. The District is making an annual payment of over \$26,000 to the USDA for a loan to finance a fire truck purchased in 2003. The last payment on the fire truck will be due in 2013. In addition, the District has budgeted \$8,000 for a restroom upgrade.

Some of the District's goals include keeping a full-time fire chief/general manager, increasing part-time summer staffing, maintaining facilities and equipment, replacing the oldest fire engine, replacing the tractor and command/tow vehicles, and continuing proper training.

The District does not have any financial reserves. The fire chief/general manager is trying to get a policy adopted that would allow for one or more types of reserve. Currently WACSD has a rollover fund which has been diminishing every year. The newly passed assessment is expected to help the District with establishing financial reserves.

The District does not participate in any joint ventures under joint powers agreements (JPAs); however, as mentioned previously, a small portion of WACSD's operations are funded jointly with PAFPD.

FIRE AND EMS SERVICES

Service Overview

WACSD provides fire protection and suppression, emergency medical response, fire prevention and other emergency support, such as rescue, smoke checks, standby at gas leaks, and accidents and hazmat incidents. The District is responsible for providing structure, vehicle, liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and other types of fire protection within its boundaries, and assists CalFire on all vegetation fires within the subdivision of Lake Almanor West. The subdivision is located within a State Responsibility Area (SRA) for fire protection. Fire protection is also provided outside the District under automatic aid, county, state and federal mutual aid agreements. Fire prevention is conducted within the District using adopted Uniform Fire Code (UFC), Plumas County Code, California Administrative Code Title 19, Public Resources Code (PRC), and Health and Safety Codes. The District performs inspections, advice and support on fuel reduction efforts.

The majority of WACSD emergency responses are for medical assistance. The District provides emergency medical services through the use of Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) trained and certified to the standards set by the Northern California Emergency Medical Service. All volunteers are trained in Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and in the use of universal precautions when they are involved in patient care.

WACSD contracts with Chester PUD fire department for ambulance transport service.

Collaboration

As mentioned previously, the District has a functional consolidation contract with Prattville-Almanor FPD according to which WACSD provides operations, training and automatic aid response to all emergency calls and incidents in the PAFPD boundary area. The WACSD fire chief or assigned duty officer is in charge of all operations on emergency responses. West Almanor CSD, according to the contract is responsible for training of all paid and volunteer personnel. WACSD and PAFPD are in the process of writing up a new agreement under which WACSD will also take over PAFPD's administration. The new contract will be renewable annually.

The District maintains informal mutual aid agreements with all fire service providers in Plumas County, CalFire and USFS. WACSD is a member of Almanor Basin Fire Chiefs' Association, Plumas County Fire Chiefs' Association and Special District Association.

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 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 (including WACSD), which are served by the Susanville Interagency Fire

Center. Susanville Interagency Fire Center is an Emergency Operations Command Center composed of four cooperating agencies: U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, and California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. The Forest Service also has its own dispatch. The Susanville Interagency Fire 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.

Radio frequencies are shared with other fire agencies; and communications are interoperable. There is a possibility that WACSD will change its radio systems to the mandated narrow banding in the near future, which may cause a decrease in radio reception that could cause further communication issues.

Staffing

WACSD has 13 sworn personnel—one fire chief, one assistant chief, one captain, and ten volunteer firefighters. The chief is a full-time paid employee; the assistant chief and captain are part-time and receive per-diems. When the chief is on duty, the station is staffed 24/7. When somebody else is on duty, the station is staffed from nine to five. The median age of the firefighters is 66, with a range from 29 to 71.

The full-time fire chief's salary is \$62,244 per year. Per-diem employees are paid \$175 per shift. Volunteers do not get compensated.

The District reports that its staffing levels have not changed significantly in the last few years. WACSD tries to recruit more volunteers to help support the fire department, but due to mostly retirement-aged residents within the District, it is hard to find willing volunteers.

According to the California State Fire Marshal, all paid, 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.¹⁹⁸ WACSD has two firefighter II certified personnel, one fire officer, one paramedic, and two EMTs. Most of the District's volunteers have hazardous materials-awareness level, with three at the operations and decontamination level.

Training is conducted through in-house programs on a bi-weekly basis and through additional cross training with other agencies. WACSD conducts training for its own and

¹⁹⁸ State Fire Marshal, Course Information and Required Materials, 2007, p. 44

PAFPD sworn staff at least six times a month. The District currently trains all personnel to Firefighter I standards. WACSD is planning to start conducting medical training for all personnel to at least the Emergency Medical Responder level.

Facilities and Capacity

The District owns and maintains one fire station located at 947 Long Iron Drive in Chester, which was built in 1979. The chief's quarters were added in 1992. The station, which was reported to be in good condition, houses one 2003 Type 1 fire engine, one 1985 Type 2 engine, one 1993 quick attack/rescue unit, one 2002 SUV command/tow vehicle and one 2003 jetcraft fire and rescue boat. Departmental resources also include up-to-date firefighter gear for all responders (i.e., protective clothing, breathing apparatus, radios), necessary firefighting tools and appropriate medical response equipment and supplies found on the several vehicles.

All of the developed areas at Lake Almanor West are served by a residential fire hydrant system. The domestic water supply and hydrant supply system are gravity fed from two large storage tanks each with a 224,000-gallon capacity and located on the hilltop area of the development. Water can be replenished to the tanks at a rate of more than 1,500 gallons per minute when all three domestic well pumps are operating. The basic flow rate at the individual hydrants typically varies from 750 to over 1,000 gallons per minute depending on hydrant location; even higher flow rates are available if the water is drawn by the fire engine.

Infrastructure Needs

The District recently created a multi-purpose room and replaced the station roof. WACSD also acquired a tractor for snow removal. The District is currently in the process of upgrading its restroom to meet ADA standards.

Some of the District's goals include replacing its oldest fire engine (1985) and the command/tow vehicle.

Challenges

The lack of roads in and out of the community presents a potential problem. During an emergency, evacuating residents will have to share the same roads with fire apparatus, which could cause a life-threatening situation. WACSD collaborated with the Almanor Ranger District to restore a supplementary emergency access road into the development in early summer 2012.

Winter storms can isolate firefighters located at the station. Heavy snow loads can close highways and high winds can topple hundreds of trees in a single storm.

WACSD also faces the challenges of increasing emergency call volume, additional training and certification mandates, and public demand for higher levels of service.

Not having enough volunteer personnel available to respond and provide service in a safe and efficient manner also presents a challenge. For this reason, mutual aid agreements are in place to help alleviate potential staffing issues on the fire scene.

Other challenges identified include:

- ❖ Minimal staffing,
- ❖ Declining volunteer membership and participation,
- ❖ Difficulty in compliance with Cal-OSHA and federal mandates,
- ❖ Increasing demand for services and call volumes,
- ❖ Difficulty planning for apparatus replacement,
- ❖ Decreasing tax revenues, and
- ❖ A need to upgrade emergency equipment and improve capabilities with the jaws of life.

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. WACSD enjoys an ISO rating of three, which is the best in Plumas County. The District was last evaluated in 1999.

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.¹⁹⁹

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

¹⁹⁹ Commission on Fire Accreditation International, 2000.

rural areas, and as quickly as possible in wildland areas. The District's response zones includes the rural and wilderness classifications. CalFire tracks response times for each incident WACSD is dispatched to within its boundaries. It was reported that the District's average response time in 2011 was two minutes inside its bounds. The percentage of response times under five minutes was 100. An area that WACSD could improve upon is tracking and logging its response times for each incident and collaborating with CalFire on data exchange, which would allow for more structured response and enhanced efficiency and consistency.

The service area size²⁰⁰ for each fire station varies between fire districts. The median fire station in Lake Almanor Area serves approximately 37 square miles. Densely populated areas tend to have smaller service areas. For example, the average service area for Peninsula FD is five square miles. WACSD and PAFPD serve the most expansive area, with 99 square miles served per station on average. Although the PAFPD's service area is 198 square miles, because WACSD and PAFPD cover the same service area and each of them has one station, the 198-square mile territory is served by two stations, each of which is serving 99 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 Lake Almanor area vary from 31 call firefighters per 1,000 residents in PFD service area to 59 in WACSD and PAFPD.²⁰¹

²⁰⁰ Service area refers to the area that the agency will respond to, based on a first responder map used by the Sherriff's office.

²⁰¹ PAFPD and WACSD have the same service area, share resources and get dispatched to each other's calls. Many of their service adequacy indicators are the same, including firefighters per 1,000 residents, since resourced are pooled to serve both districts.

Figure 13-4: West Almanor CSD Fire Service Profile

Fire Service					
Facilities					
Firestation	Location	Condition	Staff per Shift	Vehicles	
WACSD Station	947 Long Iron Drive Chester, CA	Good	Staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by the full time fire chief and per-diem employees.	1 2003 type 1 fire engine, 1 1985 type 2 fire engine, 1 1993 quick attack/rescue unit, 1 2002 SUV command/tow vehicle and 1 2003 23' Jentcraft Fire and Rescue boat.	
Facility Sharing					
Current Practices: The District has an automatic aid agreement with PAFPD. The two agencies share resources and conduct joint trainings.					
Future opportunities: The District does not see any opportunities to share facilities with other agencies.					
Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies					
The District is currently in the process of upgrading its restroom. Other goals include replacing oldest engine and command vehicle.					
District Resource Statistics		Service Configuration		Service Demand	
Staffing Base Year	2011	Configuration Base Year	2011	Statistical Base Year	2011
Fire Stations in District	1	Fire Suppression	Direct	Total Service Calls ⁵	71*
Stations Serving District	2*	EMS	Direct	% EMS	52%
Sq. Miles Served per Station ¹	99*	Ambulance Transport	CPUD	% Fire/Hazardous Materials	4%
Total Staff ²	14	Hazardous Materials	Direct	% False	8%
Total Full-time Firefighters	1	Air Rescue/Ambulance Helicopter	Enloe, PHI	% Misc. emergency	13%
Total Call Firefighters	10	Fire Suppression Helicopter	USFS, CalFire	% Non-emergency	23%
Total Sworn Staff per Station ³	13	Public Safety Answering Point	Sheriff	% Mutual Aid Calls	10%
Total Sworn Staff per 1,000	59*	Fire/EMS Dispatch	SIFC	Calls per 1,000 people	234*
Service Adequacy			Service Challenges		
Response Time Base Year	2011	Lack of reliable roads and winter storms present challenges to WACDS.			
Average Response Time (min) ⁴	2	Training			
Percentage of response times under 5 min	100%	Volunteers train at least six times per month. All personnel trained to			
ISO Rating	3 (1999)	Firefighter I standards.			
Mutual & Automatic Aid Agreements					
The District has automatic aid agreement with PAFPD and mutual aid agreements with all fire providers in the County, CalFire and USFS.					
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.					
4) Response time are provided for incidents responded to by the District within its boundaries.					
5) WACSD had 71 calls, as reported by the District. According to CalFire, WACSD responded to 76 service calls.					
* Based on pooled resources, response to same service calls and identical service area of WACSD and PAFPD these service indicators are the same for two districts.					

WASTEWATER SERVICES

Service Overview

During the development of Lake Almanor West it was determined that eight lots in Unit 4 of the subdivision would not be able to accommodate both a septic tank and a leach field. When created, CSA #2 started providing sewer effluent collection and disposal. In 1982, the CSA assumed responsibility for repair and maintenance of a sewer system to serve lots 67-71 on Osprey Loop and lots 79-81 on Raccoon Trail, for a total of eight lots in unit 4 of the Lake Almanor West subdivision. In 2002 a ninth lot was added to the common septic system when the layout of the residence on lot 87, unit 4 on Raccoon Trail was found to preclude the placement of a leach field there.

Construction, by the developer, of a leach field system was completed in 1991. The system allows each of the nine lots access to a common collection, which transfers effluent from their individual septic tanks to a distribution box and leach field located in lot 197 of Unit 4. Ownership of the common line, distribution box and leach field was passed on to CSA #2.

The effluent flows from each residence to septic tanks on their properties first and after that to the common leach field.

The District performs ground water monitoring. WACSD responsibilities include maintaining in good repair a series of test wells, and ensuring that sampling of water from each active well occurs twice yearly (in April and in October). Sampling analyzing and reporting is performed by the Fruit Growers Laboratories of Chico.

WACSD has a septic system maintenance plan:

- ❖ Conduct an ongoing public education program on the importance of proper septic system usage and maintenance by including articles in newsletter mailings and presentations at property owners' association meetings.
- ❖ Contact all property owners in the subdivision to determine the maintenance history of each septic system.
- ❖ Maintain records of all septic system maintenance activity within the subdivision.
- ❖ Submit an annual report of all septic system maintenance activity to the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Central Valley Region.

Staffing

Wastewater operations are managed by the WACSD general manager/fire chief with the support of the district secretary.

Facilities and Capacity

WACSD has the capacity to serve nine connections. Currently only five properties are built out and receive service. The remaining four are still vacant.

The District owns and operates a leach field and five test wells, two of which are non-operational. The system was reported to be in good condition.

Infrastructure Needs

In a meeting held in 1996, it was agreed that Well 1 was severely damaged but did not need to be repaired since the remaining test wells provide adequate sample gathering locations. It was also agreed the Fruit Growers Laboratories of Chico would furnish written results of each testing to the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, as well as WACSD.

The District reports that there are no current infrastructure needs. As part of regular maintenance, the settling tank is pumped out every five to six years.

Challenges

The District did not identify any challenges to operating and maintaining the system.

Service Adequacy

This section reviews indicators of service adequacy, including regulatory compliance, treatment effectiveness, sewer overflows and collection system integrity.

Between the time period January 1, 2007 and June 1, 2012, WACSD has had no recorded violations and has not been issued any enforcement orders, which equates to no violations per 1,000 population served.

Wastewater treatment providers are required to comply with effluent quality standards under the waste discharge requirements determined by RWQCB. WACSD is not responsible for treatment of effluent and therefore has not been out of compliance with effluent quality requirements.

Wastewater agencies are required to report sewer system overflows (SSOs) to SWRCB. Overflows reflect the capacity and condition of collection system piping and the effectiveness of routine maintenance. The sewer overflow rate is calculated as the number of overflows per 100 miles of collection piping. WACSD reported no overflows during the period from January 1, 2008 thru June 1, 2012, and consequently the overflow rate is zero.

There are several measures of integrity of the wastewater collection system, including peaking factors, efforts to address infiltration and inflow (I/I), and inspection practices. In the case of WACSD, the amount of I/I is unknown, as the system is self-contained and flow

into the leach field is not tracked during dry and wet periods. Due to the relatively young age of the system, it is assumed that there is relatively low I/I.

WEST ALMANOR CSD DETERMINATIONS

Growth and Population Projections

- ❖ Present full-time population of West Almanor Community Services District (WACSD) is 270.
- ❖ Based on DOF projections, the District's population would increase to approximately 284 in 2020; however, the DOF's projections may be low given the development potential in the area.
- ❖ Although the development cannot grow outwards, there are multiple scattered undeveloped lots throughout the community.
- ❖ A majority of the District's population is seasonal.

The Location and Characteristics of Disadvantaged Unincorporated Communities Within or Contiguous to the Agency's SOI

- ❖ The population threshold by which Plumas LAFCo will define a community is yet to be determined. Specific disadvantaged unincorporated communities and characteristics of the communities will be identified when appropriate as other areas are to be annexed to the District.

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 restroom upgrades and replacement of the oldest engine and command vehicle. The station was reported to be in good condition.
- ❖ 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.
- ❖ Currently, capital improvement projects are planned on an as-needed basis during Board meetings. The District should consider adopting a capital improvement plan to identify financing needs and sources for these needs.
- ❖ An area that WACSD could improve upon is tracking response times for each incident and collaborating with CalFire on information exchange.

- ❖ The District operates one leach field and five testing wells, two of which are non-operational. The District has capacity to serve the nine connections for which the system was designed.

Financial Ability of Agencies to Provide Services

- ❖ The District reports that current financing levels are adequate to deliver services and accommodate anticipated growth. The situation further improved with the approval of an assessment increase.
- ❖ The District gets reimbursed for assisting federal and state fire providers.
- ❖ The current economic conditions and rising prices of services and supplies were identified as a challenge to financing. However, the new assessment passed this year helped eliminate financial constraints that the District previously faced.
- ❖ WACSD hopes to increase its funding through potential grants.
- ❖ The District does not have reserve funds, but is in the process of setting up a policy to create one or more.

Status of, and Opportunities for, Shared Facilities

- ❖ WACSD collaborates with other fire providers in Plumas County through informal mutual aid agreements and common trainings, and with Prattville-Almanor FPD through an automatic aid agreement and functional consolidation contract. WACSD and PAFPD share resources and conduct joint trainings. Under the new agreement, WACSD will take over PAFPD administration.
- ❖ WACSD is a member of the Almanor Basin Fire Chiefs' Association, Plumas County Fire Chiefs' Association and Special District Association.
- ❖ The District did not identify any additional opportunities to share its facilities with other agencies in the future.

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

- ❖ WACSD demonstrated accountability and transparency by disclosing financial and service related information in response to LAFCo requests.
- ❖ Governmental structure options are annexation of Big Meadows and consolidation with PAFPD. Consolidation with other fire districts offers opportunities for shared resources and finances.