

**Municipal Service Review
And
Sphere of Influence Recommendation**

**Lee Vining Fire Protection District
Mono County, California**

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Prepared By:

**Mono County Local Agency Formation Commission
P.O. Box 347
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546
ph: (760) 924-1800 fax: (760) 924-1801
commdev@mono.ca.gov**

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SUMMARY

Municipal Service Review Determinations

1. Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies

- The renovation or replacement of existing facilities will be needed to maintain or increase the quality of service provided by the district.
- Additional development will place more pressure on the district to augment its service capacities.
- The replacement of aging equipment and the purchase of additional equipment will be needed to maintain or increase the quality of service provided by the district.

2. Growth and Population Projections for the Affected Area

- The Mono County General Plan Land Use Element allows for additional development in the area served by the Lee Vining Fire Protection District.
- Growth is anticipated to occur primarily in and adjacent to existing developed areas.
- Visitors to the area will continue to increase demand for services such as emergency medical response and vehicular accident response while providing no commensurate increase in revenues available to provide those services. There is a need to have these users pay for their share of the services.
- The population in Lee Vining is projected to increase to 269 by 2,020 and 290 by 2,030, creating an increased demand for fire and emergency medical services.
- The population will continue to age, creating an increased demand for emergency medical services.

3. Financing Constraints and Opportunities

- The Lee Vining Fire Protection District's future financing will continue to rely primarily on property assessments.
- The district's fire mitigation fee of \$0.50 per square foot is below the countywide average of 63 cents per square foot.
- It is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain existing service levels as costs increase over time.
- The district has applied for and received grant funding in the past.

4. Cost Avoidance Opportunities

- Mono Basin is a discrete geographic area within Mono County with distinct community areas—Lee Vining, Mono City, and Lundy Canyon.
- Lee Vining FPD and Mono City FPD are located approximately three miles apart.
- The Lee Vining Fire Protection District is a volunteer department with an elected board of commissioners—administrative costs are generally low.
- Although the district strives to keep operations and maintenance costs low by sharing services and training with other districts, small districts tend to suffer from a lack of economies of scale.
- Cooperation among fire districts is an important part of reducing costs.

- The cost of volunteer training is unavoidable and may be lost when trained volunteers leave the district. A possibility exists for the district to offer benefit contracts so that a volunteer agrees to be with the district for a specific amount of time or to reimburse the district for training costs.
- Integrated planning, especially long range planning, is an important part of cost avoidance. The district has no comprehensive long-range plan to address the demands imposed by growth within the district.
- The Lee Vining Fire Protection District and the Mono City FPD are both small districts with limited physical and financial resources. They could potentially benefit from being combined into a Mono Basin Fire Protection District, with separate facilities in various community areas
- The existing Sphere of Influence Report for the Lee Vining FPD recommends consolidation of the Lee Vining FPD and Mono City FPD in order to improve the provision of services within their service area. Such a consolidation should occur only with the concurrence of the two district boards.

5. Opportunities for Rate Restructuring

- All funding mechanisms have inherent limitations that may prevent their implementation, use or restructure.
- The Lee Vining Fire Protection District should seek additional opportunities to reduce costs through cooperation and sharing with other agencies.
- The Lee Vining Fire Protection District should apply for grant funding on an ongoing basis.

6. Opportunities for Shared Facilities and Resources

- The largest impediment to greater sharing of resources and facilities in Mono County is geographic separation between fire protection districts.
- Fire districts in Mono County can share resources through joint training sessions, shared purchasing, and the implementation of mutual aid agreements.
- The **Local Hazard Mitigation Plan for Mono County** contains a number of mitigation measures to address fire hazard planning in the county's communities. While the focus of the plan is on mitigation planning for wildland fire hazards, the mitigation measures identified in the plan apply to all fire hazards in the area. Responsibility for implementing those fire hazard planning measures rests with the County, the Regional Planning Advisory Committees, and local fire protection districts.
- Lee Vining has no paramedic service.

7. Government Structure Options

- In regions of the county with separate, distinct communities that are geographically remote from each other, public services are most logically provided by single purpose special districts rather than by a larger entity such as the county.
- In regions of the county that have several small fire districts serving separate communities within the region, such as Mono Basin, an opportunity exists to merge the districts to create a regional fire district with facilities in each community.
- Creating a regional fire district in Mono Basin could reduce administrative costs, eliminate duplication of services, and create a more financially stable district and one that

would enjoy greater economies of scale than the smaller districts. One district that was planning for future development in the Mono Basin would also create a more cohesive approach to the longterm provision of fire protection services in the region.

8. Evaluation of Management Efficiencies

- The Lee Vining Fire Protection District is managed by an elected board of commissioners and a volunteer fire chief.
- The board of directors' individual skills, knowledge, experience, qualifications, motivation and the time they have available for the district determine the effectiveness of the Lee Vining Fire Protection District and its efficiency.
- The Lee Vining Fire Protection District has no longterm planning documents that address budgeting, managing costs, and training and utilizing personnel.

9. Local Accountability and Governance

- The Lee Vining Fire Protection District complies with the minimum requirements for open meetings and public records.
- Public accessibility to district information appears to be limited and may be based on the availability of the board officers.
- Public participation in the decision-making process appears to be limited.
- The district participates in limited annual educational events.

Sphere of Influence Findings

1. Present and Planned Land Uses

Land use within Lee Vining is a mix of commercial uses and single-family residential uses. The planned land uses for the area are also commercial and single-family residential uses. Development will occur within and adjacent to existing development.

2. Present and Probable Need For Public Facilities and Services

Lee Vining has an existing and continuing need for public facilities and services to serve residents and visitors in the area.

3. Present Capacity of Public Facilities and Adequacy of Public Services

The district currently provides an adequate level of service but has identified a need to improve both its facilities and services in order to improve its provision of fire protection and emergency medical services.

4. Social or Economic Communities of Interest

The district area exhibits social and economic interdependence with residents of Mono City and Lundy Canyon. These communities of interest are relevant to the determination of an appropriate governmental structure for service provision in the Mono Basin.

Sphere of Influence Recommendation

The Sphere of Influence for the Lee Vining Fire Protection District should remain as it is, coterminous with the boundaries of the district.

Reorganization Recommendation

Section 56001 of the California Government Code states that:

The Legislature also finds that, whether governmental services are proposed to be provided by a single-purpose agency, several agencies, or a multipurpose agency, responsibility should be given to the agency or agencies that can best provide government services.

Currently, Lee Vining and Mono City are served by separate fire protection entities, with separate facilities, equipment and administration. The Lee Vining Fire Protection District and the Mono City FPD are both small districts with limited physical and financial resources. Increased development and tourism in the Mono Basin has created a need for expanded fire protection and emergency medical services. At some point in the future, a regional Mono Basin fire protection entity with separate facilities in Lee Vining and Mono City might best provide services for the area. At that time, a reorganization study should be conducted to determine what governmental structure would best provide services for the region. Such a reorganization should occur only with the concurrence of both districts' Boards of Directors.

I. INTRODUCTION

Municipal Service Reviews

The Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000 requires Local Agency Formation Commissions (LAFCOs) to conduct comprehensive reviews of all municipal services in each county in California and to periodically update that information. The purpose of the municipal service reviews is to gather detailed information on public service capacities and issues.

Relationship Between Municipal Service Reviews and Spheres of Influence

The Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act requires LAFCOs to develop and determine the Sphere of Influence (SOI) for each applicable local governmental agency that provides services or facilities related to development. Government Code Section 56076 defines a SOI as “a plan for the probable physical boundaries and service area of a local agency.” Service reviews must be completed prior to the establishment or update of SOIs (§56430(a)). Spheres of influence must be reviewed and updated as necessary, but not less than once every five years (§56425).

The information and determinations contained in a Municipal Service Review are intended to guide and inform SOI decisions. Service reviews enable LAFCO to determine SOI boundaries and to establish the most efficient service provider for areas needing new service. They also function as the basis for other government reorganizations. Section 56430, as noted above, states that LAFCO can conduct these reviews “before, in conjunction with, but no later than the time it is considering an action to establish a SOI.”

The Lee Vining Fire Protection District Municipal Service Review is being conducted in response to, and in conjunction with, an update of the sphere of influence for the district.

II. LEE VINING FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

DISTRICT OVERVIEW

Service Area

The Lee Vining Fire Protection District was established in 1947 to provide structural fire protection to Lee Vining. The district's boundaries cover approximately 5 square miles, including the community of Lee Vining and scattered development located in the vicinity of Highway 395 north and south of the community (see Figure 1). Lee Vining is located in the Mono Basin in the center of Mono County, approximately 15 miles south of Bridgeport and 15 miles north of June Lake.

Lee Vining is located at the base of the Sierra Nevada Mountains at the junction of US Highway 395 and State Route 120. The area is bordered to the west by the mountains and to the north and south by the Mono Basin and to the east by Mono Lake. The area contains private and public lands. Private lands are concentrated primarily in the community of Lee Vining and in small pockets adjacent to Highway 395. Surrounding public lands are managed by the Inyo National Forest under the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area Management Plan or by the Bureau of Land Management.

Lee Vining is a popular recreation destination as well as a year-round residential community. The community includes commercial uses, schools, visitor centers for Mono Lake, community uses such as a fire department, community center, and ballfields, residential development, limited industrial uses, and a small airport. State Route 120 over Tioga Pass is heavily used in the summer as an entrance to Yosemite National Park. Lee Vining Creek runs past Lee Vining before entering Mono Lake. Vegetation in the area is primarily juniper-pine scrub, sagebrush-bitterbrush scrub, and lodgepole pine.

Population Characteristics

Mono County GIS estimates that there are 136 parcels in the district, including approximately 78 developed parcels (residential or commercial parcels valued at \$10,000 or more). The district estimates that it serves approximately 180 households full-time. Population data from the 2000 US Census and California Department of Finance population estimates show the population within the district boundaries to be 212 in 2000 and 218 in 2003 (Census 2000 Summary File 1, Table 3, Mono County Housing Element).

In 2000, 9.4 percent of the population in Lee Vining was under 5 years old, 15 percent was 5-17 years old, 66 percent was 18 to 64, and 9.4 percent was over 65 (Census 2000 Summary File 1).

In 2000, there were 85 households in Lee Vining (Census 2000 Summary File 1). Fifty-two percent of the households were owner-occupied and 48 percent were rented (Census 2000 Summary File 1).



Figure 1
Lee Vining Fire Protection District Boundaries

Services Provided

The district serves a full time residential population and a substantial visitor population in the community of Lee Vining. It provides fire prevention/suppression and emergency medical response services, wildland firefighting, search and rescue, permit approvals and development proposal reviews, and hydrant testing and maintenance.

ISO Rating

The Insurance Services Office (ISO) is a private organization that supplies information used by underwriters to evaluate and price particular risks, including fire protection. ISO staff gathers information on individual properties and communities and, in turn, insurers use that information in underwriting personal and commercial property insurance, commercial liability and workers compensation policies. The ratings range from a score of 10 (no fire protection at all) to 1 (best fire protection possible). The ISO rating for the Lee Vining Fire Protection District is 4-6.

Land Ownership

The district includes privately owned land surrounded by publicly owned land. Land surrounding the district is publicly owned and managed by the Inyo National Forest and the Bureau of Land Management.

Surrounding Fire Protection Facilities

The closest fire protection facilities to the Lee Vining Fire Protection District are fire protection equipment located at the Mono Basin Ranger Station in Lee Vining Canyon approximately 2 miles west of Lee Vining, the Mono City Fire Protection District, located approximately 3 miles to the north in Mono City, the Bureau of Land Management Fire Station located approximately 3 miles to the north at the entrance to Lundy Canyon, and the June Lake Fire Protection District, located approximately 15 miles to the south in June Lake.

Fire Hazard

Wildfire hazards are considered to be one of the most prevalent natural hazards in Mono County due to their repeated occurrence, the damage they have caused in the past, and the geographically widespread nature of the hazard (Mono County Multi-Jurisdictional Local Hazard Mitigation Plan). Most of the developed parcels in the Lee Vining Fire Protection District are in areas identified by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) as Wildland Fire Hazard Areas (see Figure 2).

Planned Land Uses

The Mono County Land Use Element provides for additional development in Lee Vining. The additional development allowed by the plan would be a mix of commercial and single-family residential uses. Development would occur in existing community areas along Highway 395.

Mono County Fire Safe Standards

The Mono County Fire Safe Standards (Chapter 22 of the Mono County Land Development Regulations) apply to new development in State Responsibility Areas, generally areas outside fire district boundaries. They are intended to provide the same practical effect as the State's Fire

Safe Regulations. The Fire Safe Standards establish basic wildland fire protection standards in the State Responsibility Areas of Mono County for emergency access; signing and building numbering; private water supply reserves for fire use; roof covering standards; and vegetation modification.

Fire Safe Council

Fire safe councils are non-profit organizations created to advise citizens how best to deal with the threat of wildfires to homes, communities and natural resources in the urban/wildland interface. Fire safe councils provide information on creating defensible space around structures, creating fire safe landscaping, and provide home inspections. The Eastern Sierra Regional Fire Safe Council provides fire safe information to homeowners and communities throughout Inyo and Mono Counties. Many communities in Mono County have local fire safe councils. There is currently no fire safe council in Lee Vining.

District Issues of Concern

The district needs to replace an engine and a medical response vehicle. The district's fire station is also too small for most modern fire vehicles and that district is pursuing grant funding to build a new fire station so they can replace their old trucks.

District Planning

The district has no long-term planning documents.

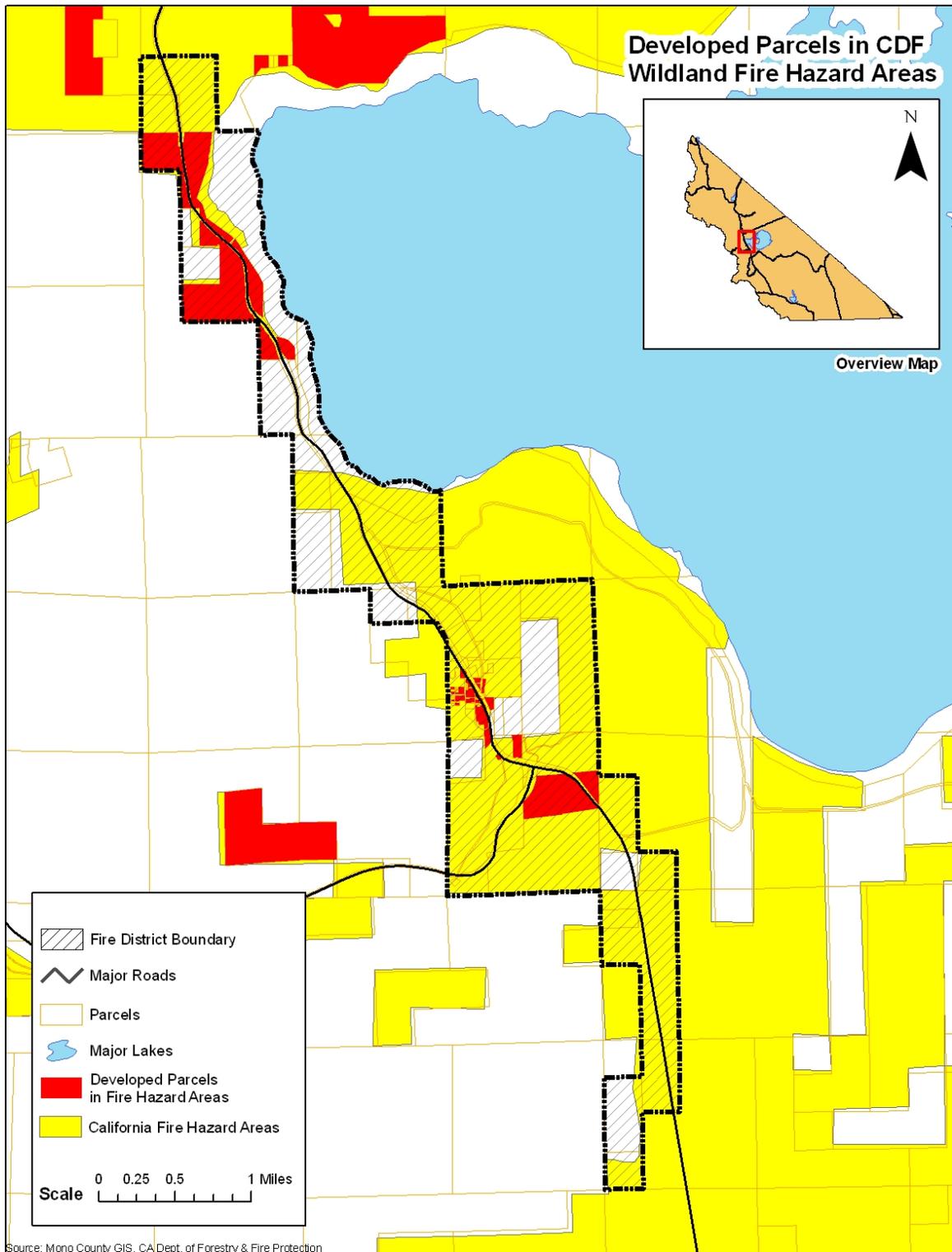


Figure 2
Lee Vining Wildland Fire Hazard Areas

DISTRICT SERVICES

Fire Suppression and Emergency Medical Response

Structural fire protection is provided to district residents from the district's station in Lee Vining. The station is manned by 20 volunteer firefighters, with an average of 10 of them being able to respond midday. There are currently 24 fire hydrants within the district. The district estimates that 80 percent of the district is accessible within 5 minutes and the remaining 20 percent is accessible within 10 minutes.

The district provides emergency medical response with 6 of the volunteer firefighters qualified as EMT1s. There is no paramedic service in Lee Vining; the closest Advanced Life Support ambulances are the paramedics in Bridgeport and June Lake.

Two volunteers have completed Firefighter I training; 2 have completed Firefighter II training. The district also reviews development proposals and building permits, tests and maintains hydrants, and provides community education.

Mutual Aid and Service Agreements

Mono County contains eleven fire protection districts, all of which belong to a county fire service association and are party to a countywide mutual aid agreement. The agreement formalizes the procedure for each district to send personnel and equipment to fires and emergencies beyond district boundaries when needed. The districts have also established informal service areas for the unserved private lands that are outside of any local fire protection district. These informal service areas reflect a recognized moral – not legal – responsibility of the districts to assist in the protection of life and property in such areas.

The district maintains mutual aid agreements with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the US Forest Service (USFS), the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF), and other fire districts in the county. Although section 13007 of the Health and Safety Code authorizes fire protection districts to collect fees from the property owners to cover the cost of responding to a fire, the Lee Vining Fire Protection District derives little, if any, revenue from serving non-district areas. The district is, however, reimbursed for the cost of responding to fires on federal lands through its memorandum of understanding with the BLM and the USFS.

Table 1: Lee Vining Fire Protection District Services and Programs

Type of Service	Provider	Service Capacity and Other Notes
<i>Fire Services</i>		
Fire Suppression	All Staff	
Residential Inspection	Staff	
Commercial Inspection	Staff	
Burn Permits		Not provided
Fire Safe Inspections		Not provided
Hydrant Inspections	Staff	
Defensible Space/Brush Reduction		Not provided
HazMat		Not provided
<i>Rescue Services</i>		
Swift Water Rescue		Not provided
Rope Rescue		Not provided
Extrication/Vehicle Rescue	Staff	
<i>Medical Services</i>		
Basic Life Support	6 EMTs	
First Responder	6 EMTs	
<i>Other Safety Services and Programs</i>		
Public Education Program	Staff	
School Programs	Staff	
Community Activities	Staff	
<i>Development</i>		
Plans Review	Chief	
Permit Approval	Chief	
Will-Serve Letters	Chief	

Infrastructure and Facilities

District facilities include the fire station in Lee Vining. District equipment includes the following: five engines, one water tender, two rescue vehicles, a wildland vehicles, and the chief’s car. Two of the vehicles were purchased new, one was converted and four were purchased used. The district indicates that it has a need to replace an engine and a medical response vehicle and to build a new fire station

In addition, the district has 6 personal alert safety systems (PASS), 6 self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA), and 20 sets of personal protective clothing (PPE), as required by Federal, State and local laws and standards, including those established by OSHA and NFPA.

Table 2: Lee Vining Fire Protection District Facilities

Existing Facility: Type/Size	Year Built or Remodeled	Facilities	Characteristics
Lee Vining Station	1946	4 bays that hold six small trucks, bathrooms, office, laundry, meeting room, kitchen, bar/pool room	Too small for modern vehicles

Table 3: Lee Vining Fire Protection District Equipment and Vehicles

Vehicle/Year/Model	Capacity & GPM ¹	Location and Other Notes
Engine #1—1946 Chevy	400 gallons, 500 gpm	Parade vehicle, still functional
Engine #2—1966 Mack	500 gallons, 1200 gpm	
Engine #3—1966 Mack	500 gallons, 1200 gpm	In need of replacement
Water truck—1979 Ford	2000 gallons, 150 gpm	
Fire and Rescue—2003 Ford F550	200 gallons, 450 gpm	Rapid response vehicle
Medical Response—1986 Chevy Suburban		In need of replacement
Ford Excursion		Chief's vehicle

Communications

Fires and medical emergencies are dispatched to the district from the Mono County Sheriff's Office in Bridgeport via the county's 911 emergency system. The district currently has 10 portable radios. The district has complete internet access.

Administration and Staffing

The district is managed by an elected board of commissioners. Meetings are held monthly at the Fire hall. Twenty volunteer firefighters actively staff the district's facilities. The volunteers receive training on a regular basis (approximately 20 hours a month) covering all aspects of fire suppression and use of the equipment. Training is provided in-house by the training officer. The district participates in joint training activities with other fire districts. District personnel also attend specialized training sessions out of the county.

¹ GPM = gallons per minute

Service Activity

The Lee Vining Fire Protection District responded to 97 calls in 2005. The district's service calls are predominantly emergency medical calls, vehicle accidents, and rescues.

Table 4: Lee Vining Fire Protection District Call Log--2005

<i>Incident Type Summary</i>	Number of Responses	Percentage (%)
Structural	5	5%
Vehicle Accident	30	31%
Emergency Medical	40	41%
HazMat	0	0%
Rescue	15	15%
Wildland Fire	2	2%
False Alarm	5	5%
TOTAL	97	100%

Funding and Budget

The Lee Vining Fire Protection District relies heavily on property tax revenue for its funding. Liability insurance is the greatest expense of the LVFPD, at approximately 80 percent of the total budget. The district has no outstanding debt.

Table 5: Lee Vining Fire Protection District Funding, FY 2007-2008

Revenues	
Tax Allocation	\$ 30,628
Home Owners Exemption	77
Interest	1,416
Fire Mitigation Fees	2,378
Miscellaneous Income	<u>.....683</u>
Total Revenues	35,182
Expenditures	
Services and Supplies	12,645
Insurance	11,408
Prior Period Adjustment	<u>2</u>
Total Expenditures	24,055
Net Revenue Over Expenditures	11,127

III. SERVICE REVIEW ANALYSIS AND DETERMINATIONS

Government Code §56430 requires the analysis of nine factors when assessing the capabilities of public service agencies. Each of the required factors is discussed below as it pertains to fire protection districts in general and the Lee Vining Fire Protection District, Community Service District specifically.

1. Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies

Overview

Purpose: To evaluate the infrastructure needs and deficiencies of a district in terms of capacity, condition of facilities, service quality, and levels of service and its relationship to existing and planned service users

The infrastructure elements of fire protection and emergency services include facilities (stations), rolling stock (engines and ambulances), dispatch systems, water supplies and roadways. Service also depends on trained personnel.

In the context of fire and emergency services, infrastructure needs and deficiencies are indicated by facilities that do not provide adequate capacity to accommodate current or projected demand for service in the affected area. Adequacy of service can be measured by reviewing response times, coverage, mutual aid, staffing and the underlying water and roadway systems.

Lee Vining Fire Protection District--Facilities

The district currently has one fire station in Lee Vining. The district estimates that 80 percent of its service area is accessible within 5 minutes; the remaining 20 percent is accessible within 10 minutes. The average response time to an emergency is approximately 5 minutes. The district has indicated that the station is not big enough for modern equipment and is pursuing grant funding to build a new station.

Lee Vining Fire Protection District--Apparatus and Other Equipment

The district has indicated that it needs to replace an engine and a medical response vehicle.

Lee Vining Fire Protection District--Personnel

The district has a current volunteer staff of 20. Currently, 10 of the volunteers are available to respond during the middle of the day. Volunteer staff is a problem for most fire districts in the county. Volunteers who live in Lee Vining may work outside of the community and may therefore be available only for very limited time periods or may not have the time or energy to provide community service at the level of intensity required for volunteer firefighters

Lee Vining Fire Protection District--Dispatch System

The emergency services dispatch system in Mono County is operated by the Mono County Sheriff's office from facilities in Bridgeport. The district has no communications problems.

Mono County, along with the Town of Mammoth Lakes and emergency service providers throughout the county, is in the process of a 911 Addressing Project for the entire county. Addresses are being input into the county's GIS system and being field checked for accuracy. Once the project is complete, 911 dispatchers in Bridgeport will see the location of a call displayed on an interactive map on their computer and will be able to describe the location more accurately and quickly to emergency services personnel.

Lee Vining Fire Protection District--Roadways

The main access routes through the district are Highway 395 and State Route 120, both paved two-lane roadways. Other paved roads serve the community. Snow storage may create access problems in winter.

Lee Vining Fire Protection District--Water Supply

The district currently has 24 fire hydrants, installed and maintained by the Lee Vining FPD. Water is provided by the Lee Vining Public Utility District, from streams in the area.

Determinations

- The renovation or replacement of existing facilities will be needed to maintain or increase the quality of service provided by the district.
- Additional development will place more pressure on the district to augment its service capacities.
- The replacement of aging equipment and the purchase of additional equipment will be needed to maintain or increase the quality of service provided by the district.

2. Growth and Population Projections for the Affected Area

Overview

Purpose: To evaluate service needs based on existing and anticipated growth patterns and population projections.

Existing and Anticipated Growth Patterns in Lee Vining

Lee Vining is a popular recreation destination as well as a year-round residential community. The community includes commercial uses, schools, visitor centers for Mono Lake, community uses such as a fire department, community center, and ballfields, residential development, limited industrial uses, and a small airport.

The Mono County General Plan Land Use Element provides for the following buildout in Lee Vining:

Table 6: Buildout Figures for Lee Vining

Land Use Designation	Density	Acres	Maximum Potential Dwelling Units
SFR Single-Family Residential	5.8 du/acre	4	23
C Commercial	15 du/acre	28	420
I Industrial	---	18	---
PF Public/Quasi-Public Facilities	---	37	---
SP Specific Plan	---	74	10 ^a
Total Private Lands		161	453 ^b
RM Resource Management – Federal/State	---	4,062	---
OS Open Space – LADWP	1 du/80 acres	2,607	32
OS Open Space – SCE	1 du/80 acres	435	5
Other PF – USFS Mono Lake Visitor Center	---	72	---
Total		7,337	490

Notes: du = dwelling unit

- a. 74 acres = the Tioga Inn Specific Plan which permits 10 residential dwelling units. The remaining areas designated on the land use maps as SP are future potential expansion areas for Lee Vining that are now owned by LADWP.
- b. Also includes land leased from LADWP.

Seasonal Population

In addition to the projected residential growth, Lee Vining’s population experiences significant seasonal increases due to tourism. Lee Vining is a vacation destination for Mono Lake, Bodie State Historic Park, and Yosemite National Park. While these visitors cause an increased demand for services such as emergency medical response, vehicular accident response, and search and rescue, there is no commensurate increase in revenues available to provide those services.

Population Projections

Population data from the 2000 US Census and California Department of Finance population estimates show the population in Lee Vining to be 212 in 2000 and 218 in 2003. In 2000, there were 85 households in Lee Vining. The population in Lee Vining is projected to increase to 269 by 2020 and 290 by 2030 (State Department of Finance Report P-3, Population Projections²). Overall, the population in Mono County is aging. The median age in the unincorporated area increased from 33 in 1990 to 40.1 in 2000 (Mono County Housing Element). The number of seniors 65 years and older increased from 10 percent of the unincorporated population in 1990 to 12 percent in 2000. Lee Vining, however, has one of the smallest percentages of older residents. In 2000, 9.4 percent of the total population in Lee Vining was 65 or older (20 people).

² This assumes that the population in the unincorporated area remains at approximately 45 percent of the total county population and that the population in Lee Vining remains at approximately 3.4 percent of the total unincorporated population, as they were in 2000.

Determinations

- The Mono County General Plan Land Use Element allows for additional development in the area served by the Lee Vining Fire Protection District.
- Growth is anticipated to occur primarily in and adjacent to existing developed areas.
- Visitors to the area will continue to increase demand for services such as emergency medical response and vehicular accident response while providing no commensurate increase in revenues available to provide those services. There is a need to have these users pay for their share of the services.
- The population in Lee Vining is projected to increase to 269 by 2,020 and 290 by 2,030, creating an increased demand for fire and emergency medical services.
- The population will continue to age, creating an increased demand for emergency medical services.

3. Financing Constraints and Opportunities

Overview

Purpose: To evaluate factors that affect the financing of needed improvements.

Expenses for special districts generally fall into one of three categories: (1) acquisition of facilities and major capital equipment, (2) employee expenses, and (3) ongoing operations and maintenance costs. The primary criteria that should be considered when evaluating adequacy of potential funding sources is availability, adequacy to meet the need, equity between existing and future residents, stability, and ability to cover on-going operating and maintenance costs.

Lee Vining Fire Protection District

The Lee Vining Fire Protection District is dependent on property assessments as its single most important source of revenue, followed by fire mitigation fees. The district charges \$0.50 per square foot for fire mitigation fees for all new development. In Lee Vining, there are not many undeveloped parcels so fire mitigation fees are not a consistent source of revenue for the district. The district also receives funding from the County's Special District Augmentation Fund. This is a discretionary program intended to assist fire districts achieve longterm financial stability. Augmentation funds can only be used to provide equipment for enhanced fire protection and emergency medical services within the fire districts.

In FY 2007-2008, the district received \$30,628 in property assessments, \$77 in Home Owners Exemption, \$1,416 in interest, \$2,378 in fire mitigation fees and \$683 in miscellaneous income.

With the increase in growth, previously adequate funding arrangements may no longer be adequate. To fund the infrastructure needed to support new residents, the district may need to rely more heavily on mechanisms such as impact fees, grants, and partnerships. Absent such changes, the Lee Vining Fire Protection District may be hard pressed to maintain service levels in the long run.

The district regularly applies for and receives grant funding. In recent years, the district has received matching grants from the Bureau of Land Management.

Determinations

- The Lee Vining Fire Protection District's future financing will continue to rely primarily on property assessments.
- The district's fire mitigation fee of \$0.50 per square foot is below the countywide average of 63 cents per square foot.
- It is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain existing service levels as costs increase over time.
- The district has applied for and received grant funding in the past.

4. Cost Avoidance Opportunities

Overview

Purpose: To identify practices or opportunities that may aid in eliminating unnecessary costs.

Cost avoidance opportunities are defined as actions to eliminate unnecessary costs derived from, but not limited to, duplication of service efforts, higher than necessary administration/operation cost ratios, use of outdated or deteriorating infrastructure and equipment, underutilized equipment or buildings or facilities, overlapping/inefficient service boundaries, inefficient purchasing or budgeting practices, and lack of economies of scale.

Lee Vining Fire Protection District

Generally, in Mono County each community area is a discrete geographic area and, as a result, there is no duplication of service efforts or overlapping or inefficient service boundaries. The Mono Basin is its own discrete geographic area with distinct community areas in Mono City, Lundy Canyon, and Lee Vining. Currently, Lee Vining and Mono City are served by separate fire protection entities, with separate facilities, equipment and administration—the districts are located approximately three miles apart.

Due to the small size of each of these districts, their resources, both physical and financial, are extremely limited. The Lee Vining Fire Protection District is managed and administered by volunteer fire fighters and an elected board of commissioners. The department conducts joint training with other fire departments, including the Mono City FPD.

As they level of cooperation among fire districts in the county has increased in recent years, the districts routinely share information and best practices in order to reduce or avoid unnecessary costs. One cost that is difficult to avoid is volunteer training. Small districts may spend limited resources to train volunteer personnel only to have those qualified volunteers leave the district.

The existing Sphere of Influence report for the Lee Vining FPD recommends that the Lee Vining and Mono City Fire Protection Districts form a consolidated fire protection district for the Mono Basin, including the Lundy Canyon area. The report goes on to say that such a consolidation should occur only with the concurrence of the two district boards.

Determinations

- Mono Basin is a discrete geographic area within Mono County with distinct community areas—Lee Vining, Mono City, and Lundy Canyon.
- Lee Vining FPD and Mono City FPD are located approximately three miles apart.
- The Lee Vining Fire Protection District is a volunteer department with an elected board of commissioners—administrative costs are generally low.
- Although the district strives to keep operations and maintenance costs low by sharing services and training with other districts, small districts tend to suffer from a lack of economies of scale.
- Cooperation among fire districts is an important part of reducing costs.
- The cost of volunteer training is unavoidable and may be lost when trained volunteers leave the district. A possibility exists for the district to offer benefit contracts so that a volunteer agrees to be with the district for a specific amount of time or to reimburse the district for training costs.
- Integrated planning, especially long range planning, is an important part of cost avoidance. The district has no comprehensive long-range plan to address the demands imposed by growth within the district.
- The Lee Vining Fire Protection District and the Mono City FPD are both small districts with limited physical and financial resources. They could potentially benefit from being combined into a Mono Basin Fire Protection District, with separate facilities in various community areas
- The existing Sphere of Influence Report for the Lee Vining FPD recommends consolidation of the Lee Vining FPD and Mono City FPD in order to improve the provision of services within their service area. Such a consolidation should occur only with the concurrence of the two district boards.

5. Opportunities for Rate Restructuring

Overview

Purpose: To identify opportunities to positively impact rates without decreasing service levels.

As noted in the Financing Constraints and Opportunities Section, funding for fire protection districts in Mono County relies heavily on property tax revenues combined with mitigation fees, augmentation funds, and other smaller revenue sources (grants, fundraisers, etc.). Each of these categories has inherent constraints that prevent an agency from restructuring them.

Lee Vining Fire Protection District

Property taxes – In California, the maximum property tax assessed on any land is generally 1% of the property's value.

Fire Mitigation Fees – The district has a resolution adopted by the County Board of Supervisors on the agency's behalf that sets the fire fees for all new construction. The district's fee of \$0.50 per square foot is below the countywide average of \$.63 per square foot for a 2,000 square foot house. In addition, Lee Vining has a limited private land base and limited new construction. Fire mitigation fees are not a consistent source of revenue for the district.

Grants – Grant money is a one-time source that is useful in funding certain special projects but may be too unreliable or variable for ongoing expenses or recurring needs. Grants have helped get funding for items that would have to be purchased out of budget. As noted in Section 3, Financing Constraints and Opportunities, the Lee Vining FPD has applied for and received grant funding in the past.

Determinations

- All funding mechanisms have inherent limitations that may prevent their implementation, use or restructure.
- The Lee Vining Fire Protection District should seek additional opportunities to reduce costs through cooperation and sharing with other agencies.
- The Lee Vining Fire Protection District should apply for grant funding on an ongoing basis.

6. Opportunities for Shared Facilities and Resources

Overview

Purpose: To evaluate the opportunities for a jurisdiction to share facilities and resources to develop more efficient service delivery systems.

Sharing facilities and resources can result in a more efficient and cost-effective delivery of resources.

Lee Vining Fire Protection District

Due to the geographic distance between most communities in the county, sharing facilities is not possible. Fire districts do share resources through mutual aid agreements. The most beneficial sharing of resources to residents in the County is the practice of deploying the nearest resource to an emergency. While there are costs associated with mutual aid and/or automatic aid, there is a direct benefit when an agency can rely on its neighbors for support. This ensures that residents of the County can be assured that there will be someone who will respond to an emergency without regard to jurisdictional issues. The fire districts in Mono County tend to do this very well.

The Lee Vining Fire Protection District shares resources in several other ways:

- They attend shared training sessions with the Mammoth Lakes FPD.
- They maintain mutual aid agreements with BLM, CDF, USFS (for wildland fires), and other FPDs in the county.
- They attend monthly county fire chiefs meetings.

The **Multi-Jurisdictional Local Hazard Mitigation Plan** prepared for Mono County and the Town of Mammoth Lakes identified a number of mitigation measures to address fire hazard planning in the county's communities. While the focus of the **Local Hazard Mitigation Plan** is on mitigation planning for wildland fire hazards, the mitigation measures identified in the plan apply to all fire hazards in the area, i.e.:

Mitigation W-3: Review and, if necessary update, the County's General Plan land use policies and regulations and building regulations to ensure that they address fire hazard planning as a component of the development process.

Mitigation W-5: Develop community-level fire plans for communities throughout the county, utilizing resources and assistance from the California Fire Alliance. These fire plans should address the following:

- Developing an informed, educated public that takes responsibility for its own decisions relating to wildfire protection.
- Developing an effective wildfire suppression program for local communities.
- Developing an aggressive hazardous fuel management program.
- Revising land use policies and standards to ensure that they protect life, property and local resource values.
- Implementing construction and property standards that provide defensible space.

Mitigation W-6: Develop and implement an ongoing countywide program to increase public awareness of wildland fire hazards.

Mitigation W-7: All communities and fire protection districts should participate in the Eastern Sierra Regional Firesafe Council.

Mitigation W-8: The county and the town should appoint a fire hazard coordinator with the responsibility for developing fire plans for the county, participating in the Eastern Sierra Regional Firesafe Council and the California Fire Alliance, coordinating with local, state, and federal fire protection and suppression entities, developing and implementing public education and awareness programs concerning fire safety including safe building materials and landscaping, and applying for funding for fire hazard mitigation such as fuel reduction programs.

Mitigation W-10: Help local landowners participate in the state's Vegetation Management Program (VMP), when applicable. The Vegetation Management Program (VMP) is a cost-sharing program that focuses on the use of prescribed fire and mechanical means to address wildland fire fuel hazards and other resource management issues on State Responsibility Area (SRA) lands.

Mitigation W-11: Help local landowners participate in CDF's hazardous fuel reduction program.

Mitigation W-12: Help local landowners participate in the BLM's Wildland Urban Interface Grant Awards program for hazardous fuel reduction.

Responsibility for implementation of these mitigation measures lies with the County, the Regional Planning Advisory Committees, local fire protection districts, and the County Office of Emergency Services.

Emergency Medical Services

In areas of the county with paramedic services (generally along the Highway 395 corridor from the Nevada state line south to the Inyo County line), local fire protection district personnel play a crucial role in supporting the County paramedics with manpower, extrication services, and as "first responders". Lee Vining has no paramedic service since it has in the past been an area of low population density; the nearest paramedics are at Bridgeport and June Lake.

The County charges for its paramedic services and has traditionally used areas of high volume and high revenues to help offset the cost of operations in areas of lower call volume and lower

revenues. The County paramedic program is in the process of updating its system along the Highway 395 corridor to address identified needs.

Determinations

- The largest impediment to greater sharing of resources and facilities in Mono County is geographic separation between fire protection districts.
- Fire districts in Mono County can share resources through joint training sessions, shared purchasing, and the implementation of mutual aid agreements.
- The **Local Hazard Mitigation Plan for Mono County** contains a number of mitigation measures to address fire hazard planning in the county's communities. While the focus of the plan is on mitigation planning for wildland fire hazards, the mitigation measures identified in the plan apply to all fire hazards in the area. Responsibility for implementing those fire hazard planning measures rests with the County, the Regional Planning Advisory Committees, and local fire protection districts.
- Lee Vining has no paramedic service.

7. Government Structure Options

Overview

Purpose: To consider the advantages and disadvantages of various government structures to provide service.

Government Code §56001 declares that it is the policy of the State to encourage orderly growth and development essential to the social, fiscal, and economic well being of the State. The Code further states that "this policy should be effected by the logical formation and modification of the boundaries of local agencies, with a preference granted to accommodating additional growth within, or through the expansion of, the boundaries of those local agencies which can best accommodate and provide necessary governmental services."

For local agency consolidations to occur there has to be significant (and popularly desired) cost savings or an increase in service. For fire protection districts, consolidations might be recommended if any of the following would occur as a result of consolidation:

1. A reduction in the number of stations where service coverage might create unnecessary overlap.
2. An increase in the staffing of stations where currently staffing is limited.
3. An increase in staffing that reduces response times can be achieved.
4. A reduction in the number of senior administrative staff can be achieved.
5. Economies of scale for costly services can be attained.

Lee Vining Fire Protection District

Generally, in Mono County each community is a discrete geographic area and, as a result, there is no duplication of service efforts or overlapping or inefficient service boundaries. Mono Basin is its own discrete geographic area with distinct community areas in Lee Vining, Mono City, and Lundy Canyon. Currently, Lee Vining and Mono City are served by separate fire protection entities, with separate facilities, equipment and administration, located approximately three miles apart. Due to the small size of each of these districts, their resources, both physical and financial, are extremely limited.

Communities in Mono County are unincorporated, except for the Town of Mammoth Lakes. Government for a variety of services is provided for those areas by Mono County. The county has several distinct regions, i.e. Antelope Valley, Bridgeport Valley, Mono Basin, June Lake, Long Valley, Wheeler Crest/Paradise, and the Tri-Valley. Due to the geographical distance between these regions, and between some of the communities within certain regions, there needs to be separate fire services in each community area. Local governance of those services is generally desired by residents in each region and is generally the most sensible approach since funding generated within a region is then spent in that region. However, some regions of the county, such as Mono Basin, have several small fire districts serving separate communities within the region. It would be possible to merge those districts into a regional fire district with facilities in each community. Creating a regional fire district in Mono Basin could reduce administrative costs, eliminate duplication of services, and create a more financially stable district and one that would enjoy greater economies of scale than the smaller districts. One district that was planning for future development in Mono Basin would also create a more cohesive approach to the longterm provision of fire protection services in the region.

Determinations

- In regions of the county with separate, distinct communities that are geographically remote from each other, public services are most logically provided by single purpose special districts rather than by a larger entity such as the county.
- In regions of the county that have several small fire districts serving separate communities within the region, such as Mono Basin, an opportunity exists to merge the districts to create a regional fire district with facilities in each community.
- Creating a regional fire district in Mono Basin could reduce administrative costs, eliminate duplication of services, and create a more financially stable district and one that would enjoy greater economies of scale than the smaller districts. One district that was planning for future development in the Mono Basin would also create a more cohesive approach to the longterm provision of fire protection services in the region.

8. Evaluation of Management Efficiencies

Overview

Purpose: To evaluate the quality of public services in comparison to cost.

As defined by OPR, the term “management efficiency,” refers to the organized provision of the highest quality public services with the lowest necessary expenditure of public funds. An efficiently managed entity (1) promotes and demonstrates implementation of continuous improvement plans and strategies for budgeting, managing costs, training and utilizing personnel and customer service and involvement, (2) has the ability to provide service over the short and long term, (3) has the resources (fiscal, manpower, equipment, adopted service or work plans) to provide adequate service, (4) meets or exceeds environmental and industry service standards, as feasible considering local conditions or circumstances, (5) and maintains adequate contingency reserves. “Management Efficiency” is generally seen as organizational efficiency including the potential for consolidation.

The purpose of management is to effectively carry out the principal function and purpose of an agency. Good management will ensure that the agency's mission is accomplished and that the agency's efforts are sustainable into the future. Unfortunately, "good management" is a relatively subjective issue, and one that is hard to quantify.

Lee Vining Fire Protection District

The Lee Vining Fire Protection District is managed by an elected board of commissioners and a volunteer fire chief. Management input is also provided during monthly Mono County fire chief meetings. As a small district, the Lee Vining Fire Protection District has limited physical and financial resources. The district is able to provide adequate service in the short-term to the existing residents of the area but may not have the resources to provide longterm services to the planned development in the area.

The district currently has no longterm planning documents. The district currently sets long-range goals and objectives at monthly board meetings and on an "as need" basis. The district's current ISO rating is 4-6.

Determinations

- The Lee Vining Fire Protection District is managed by an elected board of commissioners and a volunteer fire chief.
- The board of directors' individual skills, knowledge, experience, qualifications, motivation and the time they have available for the district determine the effectiveness of the Lee Vining Fire Protection District and its efficiency.
- The Lee Vining Fire Protection District has no longterm planning documents that address budgeting, managing costs, and training and utilizing personnel.

9. Local Accountability and Governance

Overview

Purpose: To evaluate the accessibility and levels of public participation associated with an agency's decision-making and management processes.

Special districts such as fire protection districts are required to adopt budgets at open public meetings and to file their budgets with the county auditor. They are required to have annual or biennial independent audits. Districts are subject to the Ralph M. Brown Act for meetings, agendas and minutes. They are also subject to the Public Records Act.

Complying with the minimum open meeting and information requirements is not sufficient to allow an adequate amount of visibility and accountability. Outreach efforts, including convenient meeting times, additional notice of meetings and dissemination of district information, are desirable.

Lee Vining Fire Protection District

The Lee Vining Fire Protection District complies with the minimum open meetings and public information requirements. The board meets monthly; meeting notices and agendas are posted on a bulletin board at the fire station.

The district participates in school-oriented educational events annually.

Determinations

- The Lee Vining Fire Protection District complies with the minimum requirements for open meetings and public records.
- Public accessibility to district information appears to be limited and may be based on the availability of the board officers.
- Public participation in the decision-making process appears to be limited.
- The district participates in limited annual educational events.

IV. SPHERE OF INFLUENCE RECOMMENDATION

In determining the sphere of influence for each local agency, Government Code §56425 requires the Local Agency Formation Commission to consider and prepare a written statement of its determination with respect to four required findings. Each of the required findings is discussed below as it pertains to the Lee Vining Fire Protection District.

1. Present and Planned Land Uses

Discussion:

Lee Vining is a popular recreation destination as well as a year-round residential community. The community includes commercial uses, schools, visitor centers for Mono Lake, community uses such as a fire department, community center, and ballfields, residential development, limited industrial uses, and a small airport. State Route 120 over Tioga Pass is heavily used in the summer as an entrance to Yosemite National Park. Lee Vining Creek runs past Lee Vining before entering Mono Lake. Vegetation in the area is primarily juniper-pine scrub, sagebrush-bitterbrush scrub, and lodgepole pine.

Mono County GIS estimates that there are 136 parcels in the district, including approximately 78 developed parcels (residential or commercial parcels valued at \$10,000 or more). Population data from the 2000 US Census and California Department of Finance population estimates show the population within the district boundaries to be 212 in 2000 and 218 in 2003 (Census 2000 Summary File 1, Table 3, Mono County Housing Element). In 2000, there were 85 households in Lee Vining (Census 2000 Summary File 1). The Mono County General Plan Land Use Element provides for the following buildout in Lee Vining:

Table 6: Buildout Figures for Lee Vining

Land Use Designation	Density	Acres	Maximum Potential Dwelling Units
SFR Single-Family Residential	5.8 du/acre	4	23
C Commercial	15 du/acre	28	420
I Industrial	---	18	---
PF Public/Quasi-Public Facilities	---	37	---
SP Specific Plan	---	74	10 ^a
Total Private Lands		161	453 ^b
RM Resource Management – Federal/State	---	4,062	---
OS Open Space – LADWP	1 du/80 acres	2,607	32
OS Open Space – SCE	1 du/80 acres	435	5
Other PF – USFS Mono Lake Visitor Center	---	72	---
Total		7,337	490

Notes: du = dwelling unit

- a. 74 acres = the Tioga Inn Specific Plan which permits 10 residential dwelling units. The remaining areas designated on the land use maps as SP are future potential expansion areas for Lee Vining that are now owned by LADWP.
- b. Also includes land leased from LADWP.

Finding:

Land use within Lee Vining is a mix of commercial uses and single-family residential uses. The planned land uses for the area are also commercial and single-family residential uses. Development will occur within and adjacent to existing development.

2. Present and Probable Need For Public Facilities and Services

Discussion:

Development in Lee Vining is limited by the amount of undeveloped private land in the area. However, as tourism has increased at Mono Lake and en route to Yosemite, visitor demand for emergency medical services has increased. Resident and visitor demand will continue to create a need for fire protection and emergency medical services. The buildout allowed by the General Plan will create a greater demand for those services in the future.

Finding:

Lee Vining has an existing and continuing need for public facilities and services to serve residents and visitors in the area.

3. Present Capacity of Public Facilities and Adequacy of Public Services

Discussion:

The district has no latent powers; fire protection and emergency medical services are the only service it is authorized to provide. The district provides adequate services with its existing facilities, infrastructure, and personnel; its ISO rating is 4-6.

Finding:

The district currently provides an adequate level of service but has identified a need to improve both its facilities and services in order to improve its provision of fire protection and emergency medical services.

4. Social or Economic Communities of Interest

Discussion:

Residents of Lee Vining, Mono City, and Lundy Canyon share social and economic communities of interest. Communities in the Mono Basin are isolated from other communities in the county; interaction with other communities in the county is limited due to the geographic distance between communities. Residents of Lee Vining, Mono City, and Lundy Canyon share school facilities, shopping, and public facilities located in the Mono Basin.

Finding:

The district area exhibits social and economic interdependence with residents of Mono City and Lundy Canyon. These communities of interest are relevant to the determination of an appropriate governmental structure for service provision in the Mono Basin.

Sphere of Influence Recommendation

The Sphere of Influence for the Lee Vining Fire Protection District should remain as it is, coterminous with the boundaries of the district³.

Reorganization Recommendation

Section 56001 of the California Government Code states that:

The Legislature also finds that, whether governmental services are proposed to be provided by a single-purpose agency, several agencies, or a multipurpose agency, responsibility should be given to the agency or agencies that can best provide government services.

Currently, Lee Vining and Mono City are served by separate fire protection entities, with separate facilities, equipment and administration. The Lee Vining Fire Protection District and the Mono City FPD are both small districts with limited physical and financial resources. Increased development and tourism in the Mono Basin has created a need for expanded fire protection and emergency medical services. At some point in the future, a regional Mono Basin fire protection entity with separate facilities in Lee Vining and Mono City might best provide services for the area. At that time, a reorganization study should be conducted to determine what governmental structure would best provide services for the region. Such a reorganization should occur only with the concurrence of both districts' Boards of Directors.

³ The Sphere of Influence includes the Hansen Official Map parcels which were excluded inadvertently from the prior sphere of influence.

V. REFERENCES

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Population and housing estimates and projections

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Persons Consulted

Lee Vining Fire Protection District

Shelley Channel