

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

**Mono City Fire Protection District  
Mono County, California**

**February 2009**



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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.
- The district needs a longterm solution to the lack of sufficient volunteer personnel.
- Additional paved access/emergency roadways could 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 Mono City Fire Protection District.
- Growth is anticipated to occur primarily in and adjacent to existing developed areas.
- The population in Mono City is projected to increase to 159 by 2020 and 171 by 2030, 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 Mono City 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.
- There is an opportunity to apply for grant funding.

#### 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 Mono City 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 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 Mono City 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 Mono City Fire Protection District should seek additional opportunities to reduce costs through cooperation and sharing with other agencies.
- The Mono City 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.
- Mono City 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 Mono City Fire Protection District is managed by an elected board of commissioners and a volunteer fire chief.
- The Mono City Fire Protection District has no longterm planning documents that address budgeting, managing costs, and training and utilizing personnel.

**9. Local Accountability and Governance**

- The Mono City Fire Protection District board of commissioners meets annually. No minutes are posted.
- Public accessibility to district information appears to be limited.
- 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 Mono City is single-family residential development on small lots. The planned land uses for the area are the same. Development will occur within and adjacent to existing development. Additional development could occur in the vicinity within the Conway Ranch Specific Plan area.

### 2. Present and Probable Need For Public Facilities and Services

Mono City has an existing and continuing need for public facilities and services to serve the increasing residential development 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 serve additional development.

### 4. Social or Economic Communities of Interest

The district area exhibits social and economic interdependence with residents of Lee Vining. This community of interest is 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 Mono City Fire Protection District should remain as it is, coterminous with the boundaries of the district. A Conditional Sphere of Influence also exists for the nearby Conway Ranch area and a small area of development west of US 395 (see Figure 1). The conditional Sphere of Influence will only apply when and if additional development occurs at Conway Ranch and/or existing residents seek structural fire protection from a fire protection entity.

## 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 Mono City 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. MONO CITY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT**

### **DISTRICT OVERVIEW**

#### **Service Area**

The Mono City Fire Protection District was established in 1972 to provide structural fire protection to Mono City. The district's boundaries cover approximately .7 square miles, including the community of Mono City and land west of Highway 395, along Lundy Canyon Road (see Figure 1). Mono City 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.

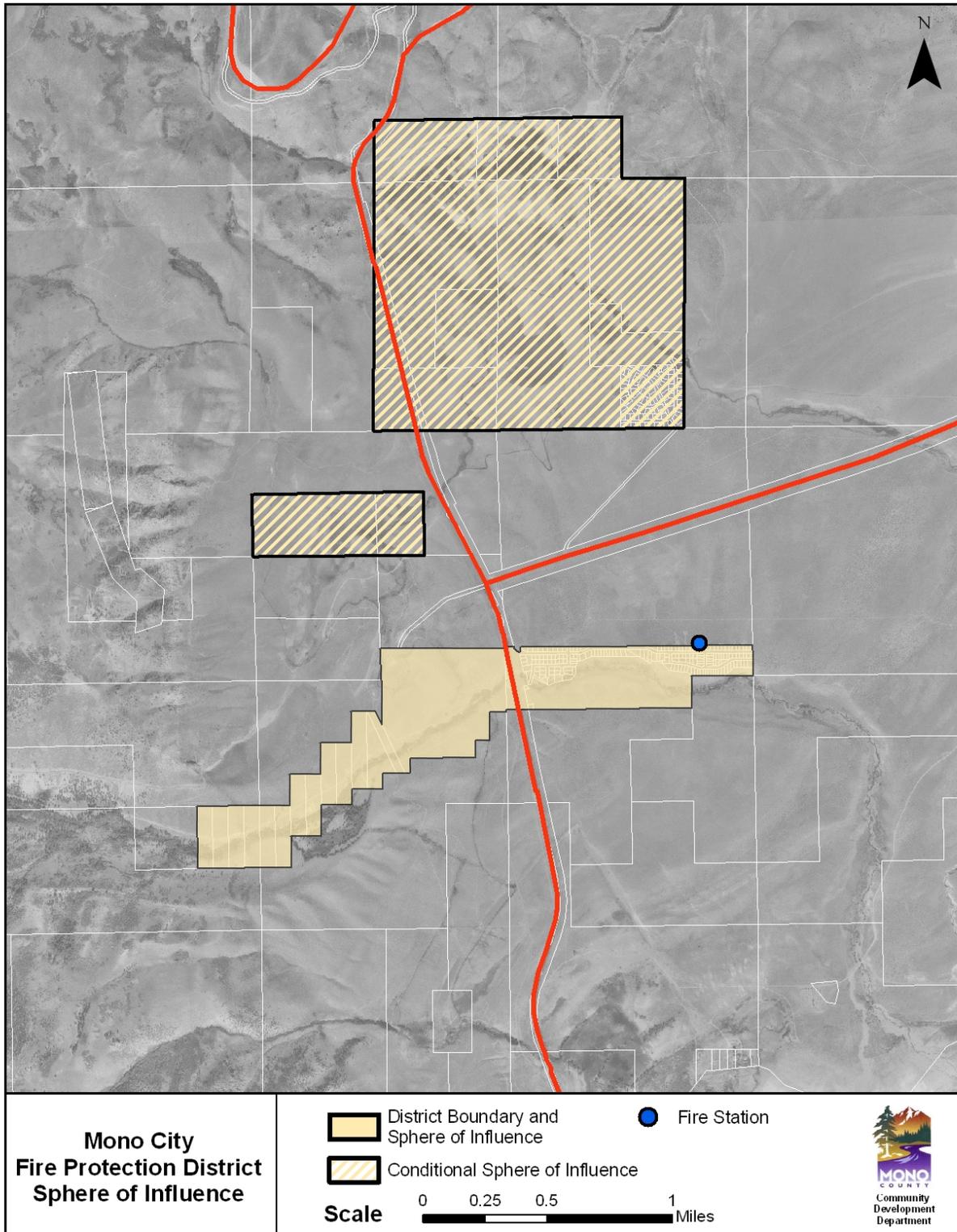
Mono City is located at the base of the Sierra Nevada mountains at the junction of US Highway 395 and State Route 167. The area is bordered to the west by the mountains and to the north and east by the Mono Basin and to the south by Mono Lake. The district area contains private lands, which are primarily single-family residential development. 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. Vegetation in the area is primarily juniper-pine scrub, sagebrush-bitterbrush scrub, and lodgepole pine.

#### **Population Characteristics**

Mono County GIS estimates that there are 191 parcels in the district, including approximately 84 developed parcels (residential or commercial parcels valued at \$10,000 or more). The district estimates that it serves approximately 150 residents and 88 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 126 in 2000 (Census 2000 Summary File 1, Table 3, Mono County Housing Element).

In 2000, 8.7 percent of the population in the district was under 5 years old, 13 percent was 5-17 years old, 68 percent was 18 to 64, and 8.7 percent was over 65 (Census 2000 Summary File 1).

In 2000, there were 61 housing units and 48 households in the district boundaries (Census 2000 Summary File 1). Seventy-nine percent of the households were owner-occupied and 21 percent were rented (Census 2000 Summary File 1).



**Figure 1**  
**Mono City Fire Protection District Boundaries**

## **Services Provided**

The district serves a full time residential population and a second home owner population in the community of Mono City. It provides fire prevention/suppression services, wildland firefighting, testing of active systems, and hydrant testing.

## **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 Mono City Fire Protection District is 9.

## **Land Ownership**

The district includes privately owned land. Land surrounding the district is publicly owned and managed by the Inyo National Forest, Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area, and the Bureau of Land Management.

## **Surrounding Fire Protection Facilities**

The closest fire protection facilities to the Mono City 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 Lee Vining Fire Protection District, located approximately 3 miles to the south in Lee Vining, the Bureau of Land Management Fire Station located at the entrance to Lundy Canyon, and the June Lake Fire Protection District, located approximately 18 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 Mono City 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 Mono City. There are currently 126 lots in the development; approximately 66 percent of the lots are developed. All of the lots are designated for single-family residential development.

## **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**

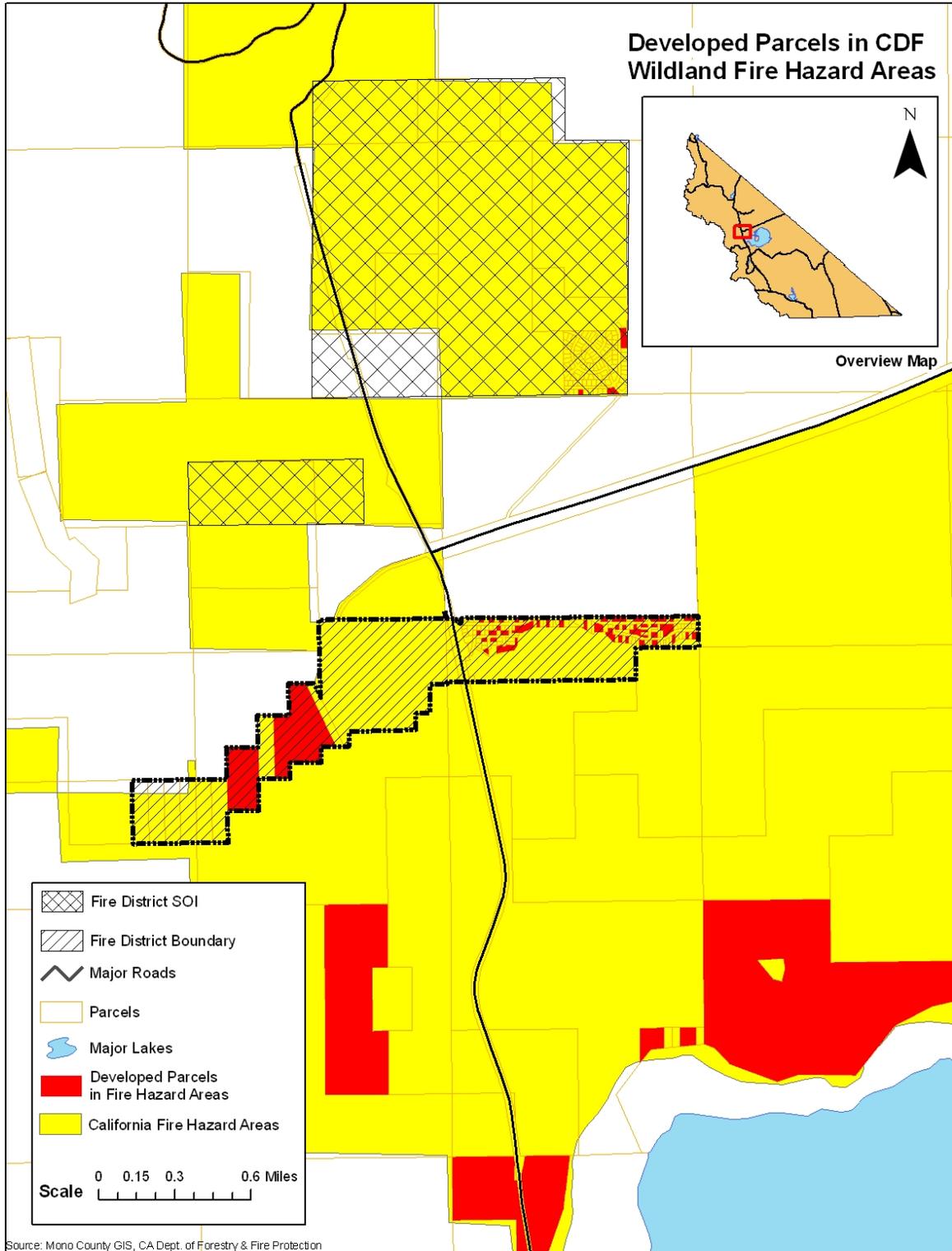
Fire safe councils are non-profit organizations created to advise citizens how best to deal with the threat of wildfires to homes, communities and natural resources in the urban/wildland interface. Fire safe councils provide information on creating defensible space around structures, creating fire safe 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 a fire safe council in Mono City that organizes an annual combustible fuel cleanup each spring.

### **District Issues of Concern**

The district needs to replace two pumpers that are over 30 years old. The district also has trouble attracting sufficient personnel with time for training and safety. In addition, the district is concerned about dead-end streets with no escape routes.

### **District Planning**

The district has no long-term planning documents.



**Figure 2**  
**Mono City 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 Mono City. The station is manned by 10 volunteer firefighters, with an average of 2 of them being able to respond midday. There are currently 9 fire hydrants within the district. The district estimates that 50 percent of the district is accessible within 10 minutes and the remaining 50 percent is accessible within 15 minutes.

The district does not provide emergency medical response; the closest Advanced Life Support ambulances are the paramedics in Bridgeport and June Lake. Six volunteers have received formal training in structural firefighting. The district also tests hydrants.

### **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 Mono City 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: Mono City Fire Protection District Services and Programs**

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

**Infrastructure and Facilities**

District facilities include the fire station in Mono City. District equipment includes the following: two pumpers and a first response/wildland fire vehicle. All of the vehicles were purchased used. The district indicates that it needs to replace the pumpers, which are both over 30 years old.

In addition, the district has 2 self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA), and 10 sets of personal protective clothing (PPE), as required by Federal, State and local laws and standards, including those established by OSHA and NFPA. The district has no personal alert safety systems (PASS).

**Table 2: Mono City Fire Protection District Facilities**

<b>Existing Facility: Type/Size</b>	<b>Year Built or Remodeled</b>	<b>Facilities</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
Mono City Station	1978	Kitchen, bathroom, room for three fire trucks	

**Table 3: Mono City Fire Protection District Equipment and Vehicles**

<b>Vehicle/Year/Model</b>	<b>Capacity &amp; GPM<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Location and Other Notes</b>
First Response/Wildland Fire—1998 GMC	120 gallons, 300 gpm	
Pumper—1962 Crown	350 gallons, 1250 gpm	
Pumper—1963 Ford	250 gallons, 500 gpm	In need of replacement

### 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 6 portable radios. The district has complete internet access but not at the fire house.

### Administration and Staffing

The district is managed by an elected board of commissioners. Meetings are held monthly at the Fire hall. Ten volunteer firefighters actively staff the district's facilities. The volunteers train 1-2 hours per month covering basic aspects of fire suppression and use of the equipment. Training is provided in-house by the training officer. The district does not participate in joint training activities with other fire districts.

### Service Activity

The Mono City Fire Protection District responded to 5 calls in the last 12 months.

**Table 4: Mono City Fire Protection District Call Log**

<b><i>Incident Type Summary</i></b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Structural	0	0%
Vehicle Accident	0	0%
Emergency Medical	2	40%
HazMat	0	0%
Rescue	0	0%
Wildland Fire (lightning strikes)	3	60%
False Alarm	0	0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100%</b>

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<sup>1</sup> GPM = gallons per minute

**Funding and Budget**

The Mono City Fire Protection District relies heavily on property tax revenue for its funding. Liability insurance and services are the greatest expenses of the Mono City FPD, each at approximately 40 percent of the total budget. The district has no outstanding debt.

**Table 5: Mono City Fire Protection District Funding, FY 2006-2007**

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<b>Revenues</b>		
<i>Taxes and Assessments</i>		
Current Secured and Unsecured (1%)	\$ 17,926	(61 % of total revenue)
Licenses, Permits, Franchises	2,359	(8 % of total revenue)
 <i>Revenue from Use of Money and Property</i>		
Interest Income	1,880	(6 % of total revenue)
 <i>Intergovernmental</i>		
State	44	(<1 % of total revenue)
Other governmental	<u>7,286</u>	25 % of total revenue)
<b>Total Revenues</b>	29,495	
 <b>Expenditures</b>		
Services and Supplies	2,517	(23 % of total expenditures)
Other Expenditures	<u>8,638</u>	(77 % of total expenditures)
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	11,155	
 <b>Revenues Over Expenditures</b>	 \$ 18,340	

### 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 Mono City 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.

##### ***Mono City Fire Protection District--Facilities***

The district currently has one fire station in Mono City. The district estimates that 50 percent of its service area is accessible within 10 minutes; the remaining 50 percent is accessible within 15 minutes. The average response time to an emergency is approximately 10 minutes.

##### ***Mono City Fire Protection District--Apparatus and Other Equipment***

The district has indicated that it needs to replace two pumpers.

##### ***Mono City Fire Protection District--Personnel***

The district has a current volunteer staff of 10. Currently, 2 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 Mono City 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

##### ***Mono City 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.

***Mono City Fire Protection District--Roadways***

The main access routes to the district are Highway 395 and State Route 167, both paved roadways. County-maintained paved roadways provide access throughout the community. Some of those roads are dead-ends with no emergency access. The district has been informed that other fire protection districts will not respond to fires on the dead-end roads. The Mono County Road Department has been working with the USFS to get approval to use a small portion of the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area to connect one of the dead-end roads to an escape route.

***Mono City Fire Protection District--Water Supply***

The district currently has 9 fire hydrants, installed and maintained by the district. Water is provided by individual wells and a mutual water company.

**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.
- The district needs a longterm solution to the lack of sufficient volunteer personnel.
- Additional paved access/emergency roadways could 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 Mono City***

Mono City is a small, contained area of residential development. There are currently 126 lots in the development; approximately 66 percent of the lots are developed. All of the lots are small lots designated for single-family residential development.

***Population Projections***

Population data from the 2000 US Census and California Department of Finance population estimates show the population in Mono City to be 126 in 2000. In 2000, there were 48 households in Mono City. The population in Mono City is projected to increase to 159 by 2020

and 171 by 2030 (State Department of Finance Report P-3, Population Projections<sup>2</sup>). 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. Mono City, however, has one of the smallest percentages of older residents. In 2000, 8.7 percent of the total population in Mono City was 65 or older (11 people).

### **Determinations**

- The Mono County General Plan Land Use Element allows for additional development in the area served by the Mono City Fire Protection District.
- Growth is anticipated to occur primarily in and adjacent to existing developed areas.
- The population in Mono City is projected to increase to 159 by 2020 and 171 by 2030, 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.

### ***Mono City Fire Protection District***

The Mono City 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. 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 2006-2007, the district received \$17,926 in property assessments, \$2,359 in permit fees, \$1,880 in interest income, \$445 from the state, and \$7,286 in other governmental transfers.

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

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<sup>2</sup> This assumes that the population in the unincorporated area remains at approximately 45 percent of the total county population and that the population in Mono City remains at approximately 2.18 percent of the total unincorporated population, as they were in 2000.

changes, the Mono City Fire Protection District may be hard pressed to maintain service levels in the long run.

The district does not apply for grant funding.

### **Determinations**

- The Mono City 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.
- There is an opportunity to apply for grant funding.

## **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.

### ***Mono City 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 Mono City Fire Protection District is managed and administered by volunteer fire fighters and an elected board of commissioners.

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 Mono City 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 Mono City 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 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 Mono City 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.

### ***Mono City 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, Mono City has a limited private land base and limited new construction. Fire mitigation fees will not continue to be 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 may help get funding for items that would have to be purchased out of budget.

### **Determinations**

- All funding mechanisms have inherent limitations that may prevent their implementation, use or restructure.
- The Mono City Fire Protection District should seek additional opportunities to reduce costs through cooperation and sharing with other agencies.
- The Mono City 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.

### ***Mono City 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 Mono City Fire Protection District shares resources in several other ways:

- 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". Mono City 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.
- Mono City 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.

### ***Mono City 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.

### ***Mono City Fire Protection District***

The Mono City 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 Mono City 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 on an "as need" basis. The district's current ISO rating is 9.

### **Determinations**

- The Mono City Fire Protection District is managed by an elected board of commissioners and a volunteer fire chief.
- The Mono City 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.

### ***Mono City Fire Protection District***

The board of commissioners for the Mono City Fire Protection District meets once a year at the Fire Hall. The volunteer firefighters meet monthly at the Fire Hall. No minutes are posted. There is no newsletter nor public education events other than the annual fuel reduction event run by the local fire safe council.

**Determinations**

- The Mono City Fire Protection District board of commissioners meets annually. No minutes are posted.
- Public accessibility to district information appears to be limited.
- 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 Mono City Fire Protection District.

### **1. Present and Planned Land Uses**

***Discussion:***

Mono City is a small, contained area of single-family residential development. There are currently 126 lots in the development; approximately 66 percent of the lots are developed. All of the lots are small lots designated for single-family residential development. Population data from the 2000 US Census and California Department of Finance population estimates show the population of Mono City to be 126 in 2000. In 2000, there were 48 households in Mono City.

There is the potential for substantial additional development at Conway Ranch, which is located to the north of Mono City in the Mono Basin. Currently, there are a few houses at Conway Ranch that lack structural fire protection.

***Finding:***

Land use within Mono City is single-family residential development on small lots. The planned land uses for the area are the same. Development will occur within and adjacent to existing development. Additional development could occur in the vicinity within the Conway Ranch Specific Plan area.

### **2. Present and Probable Need For Public Facilities and Services**

***Discussion:***

Increased development throughout the district's service area has created an increased need for fire protection services now. The buildout allowed by the General Plan will create a greater demand for those services in the future.

***Finding:***

Mono City has an existing and continuing need for public facilities and services to serve the increasing residential development in the area.

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

***Discussion:***

The district has no latent powers; fire protection is the only service it is authorized to provide. The district provides adequate services with its existing facilities, infrastructure, and personnel; its ISO rating is 9.

***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 serve additional development.

#### **4. Social or Economic Communities of Interest**

***Discussion:***

Residents of Lee Vining, Mono City, Conway Ranch, 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, Conway Ranch, 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 Lee Vining 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 Mono City Fire Protection District should remain as it is, coterminous with the boundaries of the district. A Conditional Sphere of Influence also exists for the nearby Conway Ranch area and a small area of development west of US 395 (see Figure 1). The conditional Sphere of Influence will only apply when and if additional development occurs at Conway Ranch and/or existing residents seek structural fire protection from a fire protection entity.

#### **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.

## V. REFERENCES

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### Persons Consulted

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Mono City Fire Protection District

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