

*Arcata*  
*Fire Protection District*

Municipal Service Review



**Approved**  
*December 2008*



**HUMBOLDT**  
*Local Agency Formation Commission*

Prepared for Development of the District Sphere of Influence Report

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# **LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION AUTHORITY**

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## **Latent Powers, Enabling Legislation and Empowered Services**

The fundamental role of the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) is to implement the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Act (The Act) consistent with local conditions and circumstances. The Act guides LAFCo's decisions. The major goals of LAFCo as established by The Act are to:

- Encourage orderly growth and development;
- Promote orderly development;
- Discourage urban sprawl;
- Preserve open-space and prime agricultural lands by guiding minimizing resource loss;
- Exercise its authority to ensure that affected populations receive efficient services;
- Promote logical formation and boundary modifications that direct the burdens and benefits of additional growth to those local agencies that are best suited to provide services;
- Make studies and obtain and furnish information which will contribute to the logical and reasonable development of local agencies to provide for present and future needs;
- Establish priorities by assessing and balancing community service needs with financial resources available to secure and provide community services and to encourage government structures that reflect local circumstances, conditions and financial resources;
- Determine whether new or existing agencies can feasibly provide needed services in a more efficient or accountable manner and, where deemed necessary,

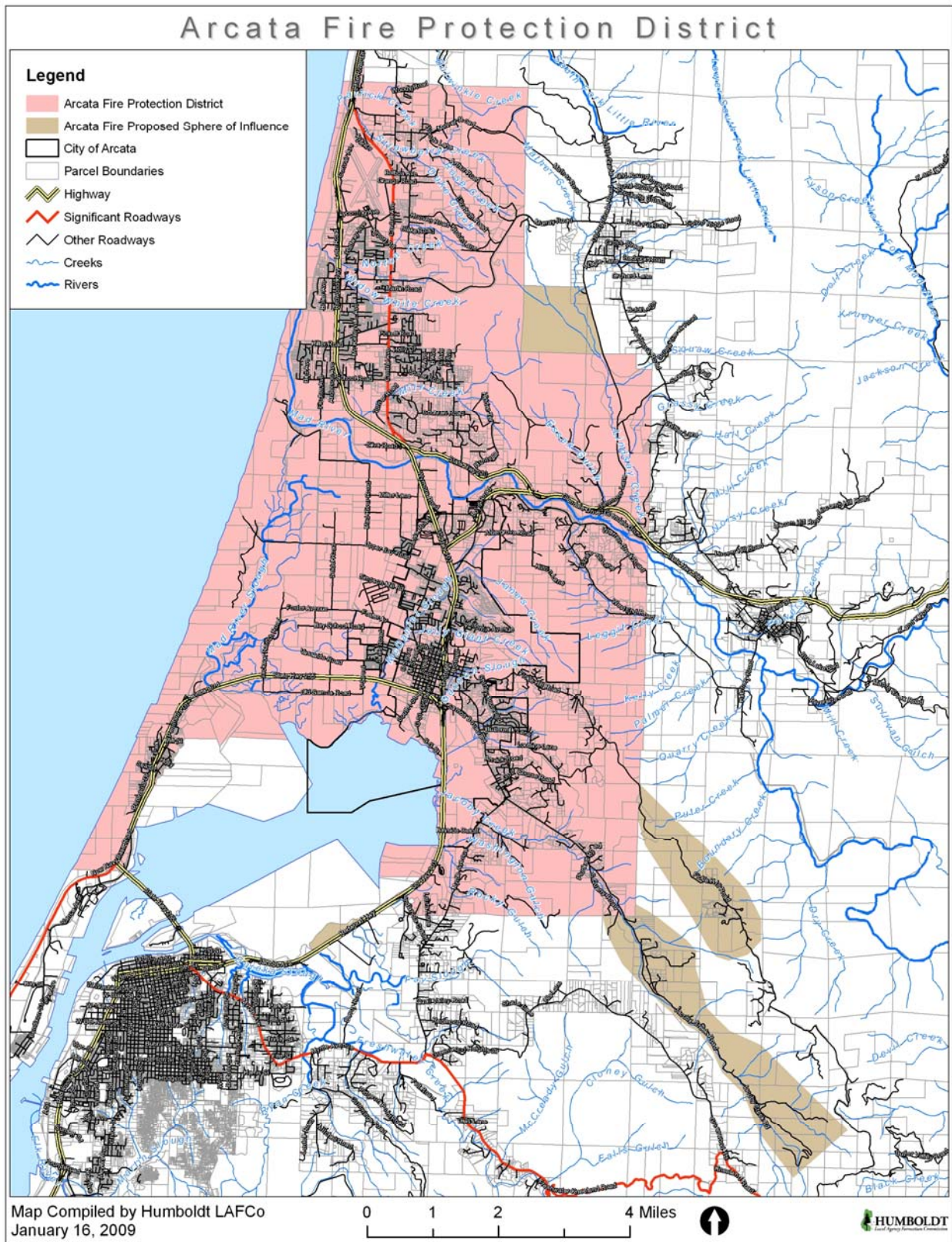
As set fourth in § 56425 (g) of The Act, on or before January 1, 2008, and every five years thereafter, Humboldt LAFCo shall review and update each Sphere of Influence (SOI).

Additionally, an MSR shall be conducted with, or in conjunction with the action to establish or to update a SOI pursuant to The Act. Together, the SOI and MSR documents analyze the District's ability to serve existing and future residents.

In order to prepare and to update Spheres of Influence in accordance with § 56425, Humboldt LAFCo shall conduct a service review of the municipal services provided in the Arcata Fire Protection District (FPD). The commission shall include in the designated for service review area any other geographic area as is appropriate for an analysis of the services to be reviewed, and shall prepare a written statement of determinations with respect to the following:

- (1) Growth and population projections for the affected area;
- (2) Present and planned capacity of public facilities and adequacy of public services, including infrastructure needs or deficiencies;
- (3) Financing ability of agencies to provide services;
- (4) Status of and, opportunities for, shared facilities;
- (5) Accountability for community service needs, including governmental structure and operational efficiencies;
- (6) Any other matter related to effective or efficient service delivery, as required by commission policy.

**Figure 1 Arcata Fire Protection District Boundary and Sphere of Influence**



## AGENCY PROFILE

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The Arcata Fire Protection District (FPD) is located north of the Humboldt Bay along the Pacific Coast. The District extends north throughout the unincorporated town of McKinleyville, and south to the Samoa Bridge and the Indianola Cutoff. The District extends eastward from the Pacific Ocean to include most of the Jacoby Creek County Water District, the City of Arcata, and the unincorporated town of McKinleyville. The District lies approximately seven miles north of the City of Eureka and six miles south of the City of Trinidad. Figure 1 (on previous page) shows the District's Boundary and Sphere of Influence.

The Arcata FPD is responsible for providing fire protection services for the City of Arcata and the unincorporated communities of McKinleyville, Manila, Jacoby Creek, and parts of Glendale and Fieldbrook. The District serves a large portion of the most heavily populated area of the county, the Humboldt Bay region. There are several large facilities within the District including Humboldt State University, Mad River Hospital, United Indian Health Services Potawot Health Village, and a large commercial downtown core. The District has a boundary of 63 square miles and a total response area of 68 square miles.

The Arcata FPD provides the following services to the residents of its District:

- 1) Fire Suppression
- 2) Rescue Services
- 3) Basic Life Support
- 4) Fire Prevention, Education, and Inspection Services

### Formation

The petition requesting formation of the Arcata FPD was granted by the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors on June 1, 1944. A Certificate of Existence was issued by the State of California on March 10, 1958, organizing the District pursuant to the provisions of the Local Fire District Law under Section 14107 of the Health and Safety Code. The District was subsequently reorganized under the provisions of the Health and Safety Code (Fire Protection District Act of 1961). The District was formed for the purpose of financing and providing structural fire protection for the region.

The Arcata FPD's mission statement is as follows: "We exist to protect the lives, environment, and property of the communities we serve." The District is governed by a five member Board of Directors that is elected by its residents. Table 1 shows the existing Board composition.

**Table 1:** Arcata FPD Board of Directors.

<b>Board Member</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Term Expiration</b>
John Davis	Chairman of the Board	November 2009
Larry Mendez	Secretary	November 2009
Elena Davids	Director	November 2009
Steve Tyler	Director	November 2011
Tom Ayotte	Director	November 2011

## **GROWTH AND POPULATION**

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### **County Population and Growth**

According to the State of California Department of Finance, Humboldt County has an estimated population of 132,821. The County grew at an overall rate of 0.6% during 2007<sup>[1]</sup>. Assuming this growth continues, the population of Humboldt County will reach approximately 147,000 by the year 2025.

### **District Population and Housing Projections**

The population served by the Arcata FPD is approximately 36,000. According to the State of California Department of Finance, the population growth rate for both the City of Arcata and the unincorporated areas of the County is 0.8% <sup>[1]</sup>. At this rate, the District's population will reach approximately 41,000 by the year 2025.

The areas in the District that are expected to receive the greatest population growth are the City of Arcata and the unincorporated town of McKinleyville. The City of Arcata has an estimated population of 17,558 and the town of McKinleyville has an estimated population of 14,000. These growing populations will demand additional dwelling units and more commercial, industrial, and public facilities; which will, in turn, require an increase in services provided by the Arcata FPD.

As part of the Humboldt County General Plan Update, the County has defined Urban Study Areas (USA) within special districts in order to develop land use planning scenarios and to focus the analysis for timing and location of new facilities. The background report identified a McKinleyville USA and an Arcata USA. McKinleyville has been identified as one of three major development areas within the County. The Report estimates that 2,347 to 4,249 housing units will be constructed within the McKinleyville USA by 2025. The Arcata USA is expected to receive 205 additional housing units during the same time period.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES**

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The Arcata FPD provides the following services to the residents of its District:

- 1) Fire Suppression
- 2) Rescue Services
- 3) Basic Life Support
- 4) Fire Prevention, Education, and Inspection Services

In addition, the Arcata FPD provides service support to the following entities: Arcata Mad River Ambulance, City Ambulance, Arcata Police, Humboldt State University and Police, Humboldt County Sheriff, California Highway Patrol, Cal Trans, City of Arcata, PG&E, McKinleyville Community Services District (CSD), Manila (CSD), Humboldt Bay Municipal Water District (HBMWD), Bureau of Land Management, US Forest Service, US Fish and Wildlife, US Coast Guard Air Station, Humboldt County Fire/Arson Investigation Unit, Humboldt County Coroner, Humboldt County Parks and Recreation, Humboldt County District Attorney's Office, and Arcata/Eureka Airport.

The District has private fire protection contracts with California Redwood's Brainerd Mill site and Blue Lake Fire Protection District for the community of Korbel. The District also has pending private fire protection contracts with the community of Crannell and the Blue Lake Rancheria Complex.

### **Fire Protection Services**

The Arcata FPD's staff consists of, eighteen full time suppression employees, one full-time administrative assistant, one part time employee, and thirty-one volunteers. The District plans (within the next year) to hire one additional firefighter who will be a full-time employee. The District has an average call response time of five minutes, thirteen seconds.

ISO Rating. The Insurance Services Office (ISO) establishes fire insurance ratings for communities throughout the United States. One of ISO's more well known services is to evaluate the fire suppression delivery systems of fire departments and districts. The result of those reviews is an individual Public Protection Classification (PPC) rating number assigned to the community that the respective fire department protects. The ratings are presented in a rating class structure that ranges from 1 to 10. Class 1 is the highest rating, representing excellent fire protection and Class 10 is the lowest, meaning the community's fire department did not meet the minimum requirements of the Fire Suppression Rating Schedule and is not recognized by ISO. The PPC is commonly used by insurance providers to establish home and business fire insurance rates.

The Fire Suppression Rating Schedule is used by ISO to rate the response capabilities within a community. Fifty percent of the grade is based on the fire department (equipment, staffing, training, and geographic distribution of fire companies), 40 percent is based on the water supply (condition and maintenance of hydrants, and a careful evaluation of the amount of available water compared with the amount needed to suppress fires), and ten percent is based on fire alarm and communications systems (telephone systems, telephone lines, staffing, and dispatching system). Based on an ISO audit, the Arcata FPD has a PPC rating of 4 for areas in the district that are within 1,000 feet of a hydrant, and a PPC rating of 8 in areas in the district that are more than 1,000 feet from a hydrant.

### **Current Infrastructure and Facilities**

The Arcata FPD has three fire stations:

- District Headquarters (631 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Arcata),
- Mad River Fire Station (3295 Janes Road, Arcata), and
- McKinleyville Fire Station (2149 Central Avenue, McKinleyville).

The District owns two vacant parcels; one is adjacent to the McKinleyville Fire Station and the other is on the corner of Old Arcata Road and Anderson Road in Arcata. The District maintains and operates six fire engines, one ladder truck, one rescue truck, one water tender, and five command vehicles.

The District also owns and operates other basic fire protection and rescue equipment including radios, Self Contained Breathing Apparatuses (SCBA), Jaws of Life, High Pressure Air Bags, protective clothing, and numerous other tools and firefighting equipment. All riding positions on Fire Apparatus are equipped with radios and SBCAs and all firefighters are equipped with protective clothing.

## **Maintenance Schedule**

All Arcata FPD vehicles including trucks, tenders and engines receive a safety inspection and are serviced by Certified Mechanics once every six months. The vehicles have routine inspections (fluids, tires, equipment, lights, brakes, etc.) once every week performed by the District staff. The vehicles that are driven daily receive a daily inspection (as stated above). All inspections are documented and on file.

All SCBAs receive a factory inspection once every two years. They also have routine inspections once per week, or daily on fire apparatus that are driven daily.

## **Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies**

The Arcata FPD has three vehicles that will need to be replaced in the near future: the Rescue Truck (15 years old) and two Fire Engines (20 and 22 years old). The District's Jaws of Life and High Pressure Air Bags are each 15 years old. This equipment continues to function properly, but will need to be replaced soon. The Arcata Fire Station's first-out fire engine is not equipped with Thermal Imaging Camera capabilities.

The McKinleyville Fire Station will be 50 years old in 2010 and is not seismically retrofitted. There is no room for expansion in the current station or space for an aerial ladder truck if needed for the community. The Mad River Fire Station is 33 years old and is not seismically retrofitted. The station lacks adequate auxiliary power to function independently after a major disaster. There are no emergency supplies at either station.

The Arcata FPD currently responds to the Jacoby Creek and Fickle Hill areas outside of their District's sphere of influence. These areas are not officially within the jurisdiction of any FPD. These portions of Jacoby Creek and Fickle Hill receive services for which the District receives no revenue and commits resources further away from the District.

The Arcata FPD maintains an Automatic Aid agreement with the Samoa Peninsula FPD that has been nonreciprocal for several years. The Arcata FPD has indicated that the Samoa FPD is severely underfunded to the point that they are unable to provide the necessary services to their district. This situation also results in commitment of resources away from the District. The Arcata FPD cannot continue this nonreciprocal expense indefinitely.

## **Personnel Deficiencies**

The Arcata FPD operates with a minimum of two on-duty firefighters per fire engine at the McKinleyville and Mad River fire stations and there are no on duty firefighters at the Arcata (Headquarters) station. The National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA 1710) recommends that all career fire engines have a minimum of four firefighters per fire engine to effectively place an initial attack line (two firefighters) into service and meet the OSHA regulation of two firefighters available for immediate rescue of the attack team. Arcata FPD has to merge personnel from two responding fire engines before initial fire attack can be conducted. This delays the efficiency and effectiveness of operations resulting in greater property loss. Additionally, the specialized apparatus (Water Tender, Ladder Truck and Rescue Truck) remain unstaffed and depend on volunteer or off-duty staff to respond and operate the equipment.

## **Planned Improvements**



The Arcata Volunteer Firefighters Association is purchasing two vacant parcels off Sunset Avenue in Arcata just west of Highway 101. They plan to build a new facility on the easternmost parcel to become the new District headquarters. The facility will be constructed and owned by the Volunteer Firefighter's Association, and the plans and intentions are expected to be finalized in approximately one month. This site is expected to improve response times due to its central location within the City of Arcata and its proximity to the Highway 101 access point on Sunset Avenue.

Arcata FPD continues to recruit volunteers to join the department and become firefighters. Today's volunteers face the many challenges of completing their weekly training, answering emergency calls, participating in fundraisers, working and/or going to school and possibly raising a family. Due to these constraints and time commitments, the Arcata FPD continues to face a constant turnover of Volunteer Firefighters.

The Arcata FPD has a goal to hire one additional fulltime firefighter within one year as budget allows.

### **Other Service Providers**

The Arcata FPD is involved in a county-wide mutual aid agreement for fire protection. The Arcata FPD has automatic-aid agreements with Eureka Fire, Humboldt Fire, Samoa Fire, Fieldbrook Fire and Blue Lake Fire to jointly cover areas that border the respective boundary lines. Some areas within the District are State Responsibility Areas covered by CAL FIRE. Humboldt County and the City of Arcata provide general governmental services and law enforcement throughout the territory of the District.

The Humboldt Bay Municipal Water District (HBMWD) provides water to all areas within the District. The City of Arcata, McKinleyville Community Service District (CSD), Manila CSD, the Fieldbrook-Glendale CSD, and Jacoby Creek County Water District (CWD) have installed and maintain fire hydrants where water lines are available.

### **Sphere Expansion**

The Arcata FPD provides services for the Jacoby Creek and Fickle Hill areas that are not within the District's existing sphere of influence. According to Section 56076 of the Cortese-Knox-Herzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000, a District's sphere of influence is a plan for the probable physical boundaries and service area of a local agency. The Jacoby Creek and Fickle Hill areas are not merely probable areas of service but are in fact actual areas of service for the District, and therefore, should be encompassed by the District's sphere of influence. LAFCo staff recommends an expansion of the District's sphere of influence to reflect the true service area of the District.

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## BUDGET

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The Arcata FPD's projected revenues for the fiscal year 2008-2009 are \$3,409,343. The District's primary sources of revenue are benefit assessment/special taxes (48%) and property taxes (42%); other sources include interest payments and grant funding. The District's projected expenditures for the fiscal year 2008-2009 are \$3,394,509. Employee salaries/benefits are the primary expenditure (67%); other costs include supplies, maintenance, and debt payments. Table 2 shows a comparison between the District's budget and actual spending.

**Table 2.** Arcata FPD Budget.

	<b>2007-2008 Actual</b>	<b>2008-2009 Budget</b>
<b>Total Revenues</b>	\$3,076,253	\$3,409,393
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	2,962,594	3,394,509
<b>Net Income</b>	113,658	14,883
<b>General Reserve Balance</b>	2,724,824	2,739,707

The total outstanding debt for the District is \$1,106,260 which will be expired on January 1, 2014 with the current repayment schedule.

## LOCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

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### Contact Information

<b>Arcata Fire Protection District</b>	
<b>Contact:</b>	John McFarland, Fire Chief
<b>Mailing Address:</b>	631 9 <sup>th</sup> Street, Arcata, CA 95521
<b>Site Address:</b>	631 9 <sup>th</sup> Street, Arcata, CA 95521
<b>Phone Number:</b>	707-825-2000
<b>Email/ Website:</b>	jmcfarland@arcatafire.org
<b>Types of Services:</b>	Fire Suppression; Rescue; Basic Life Support; Fire Prevention, Education, and Inspection
<b>Population Served:</b>	~36,000
<b>Size of Service Area (Acres):</b>	68 square miles
<b>Date of Formation:</b>	June 1, 1944
<b>Number of Staff</b>	19 full-time, 1 part-time, and 33 volunteer

### Board Meetings

The District Board holds public meetings on the third Tuesday of every month. A meeting Notice and Agenda is posted 72 hours prior to the meeting on the window of the District office at 631 9<sup>th</sup> Street in Arcata.

## **MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW DETERMINATIONS**

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### **Growth and population projections for the affected area**

The District's estimated population is 36,000. The population growth rate for both the City of Arcata and the unincorporated areas of the County is 0.8% <sup>[1]</sup>. According to these estimates, the District's population will reach approximately 41,000 by the year 2025.

The McKinleyville Community Services District serves approximately 14,000 people and has been identified as one of three major development areas within the County <sup>[2]</sup>. The growth projections for McKinleyville alone indicate that the area will gain between 2,347 and 4,249 residential units by 2025. Some non-residential commercial and industrial growth is projected, as well. The City of Arcata is expected to gain 205 housing units by 2025.

### **Present and planned capacity of public facilities and adequacy of public services, including infrastructure needs or deficiencies**

As noted above, future growth within the District is projected as part of the Humboldt County General Plan Update. This information should be reviewed to determine the type and extent of additional facilities, equipment, and personnel that will be necessary to accommodate the District's growth.

The District plans to replace the following equipment in the near future: Rescue Truck, two Fire Engines, Jaws of Life, High Pressure Air Bags, and Thermal Imaging Camera Capability for one of their engines.

### **Financing ability of agencies to provide services**

The majority of the District's income comes from property taxes and assessments, but funding also comes from grants and interest revenue. The Arcata FPD should periodically review assessments and other required services and adjust as necessary.

The Arcata FPD is currently providing fire protection services for certain areas that lie outside any FPD's jurisdiction, including the distant regions of Jacoby Creek and Fickle Hill. The residents of these areas are receiving services for which the District receives no revenue. LAFCo staff recommends that the District expand its sphere of influence to reflect the actual service area. Once these areas are included in the District's sphere of influence, the District can begin the proceedings for a boundary expansion to include these areas. This would result in additional tax revenue for the District and would enable them to continue providing their services to these areas.

The District provides the community with fire prevention, education, and inspection services in an effort to reduce the occurrence of fires. The District also participates in a countywide mutual aid agreement and an auto-aid agreement with their neighboring fire departments to share resources.

### **Status of and, opportunities for, shared facilities**

The District maintains an Automatic Aid agreement with the Samoa Peninsula FPD. However, this arrangement is nonreciprocal due to a lack of funding and consistent response on the part of the Samoa Peninsula FPD.

## **Accountability for community service needs, including governmental structure and operational efficiencies**

The five-member Board of Directors is elected by District residents. The Board holds regular meetings that are open to the public with notice and agenda posted 72 hours in advance. The District staff can also be reached by phone or email.

The Arcata FPD is currently providing fire protection services for certain areas that lie outside any FPD's jurisdiction, including the distant regions of Fickle Hill and Jacoby Creek. The residents of these areas are receiving services for which the District receives no revenue. The District should expand its sphere of influence to reflect the actual service area. After the sphere of influence has been updated, LAFCo staff recommends that the District take the necessary steps to incorporate these areas into its service boundary. This would result in additional tax revenue for the District and would enable them to continue providing service to these areas.

The District's service, infrastructure, and budget decisions are made by the Administration Staff and overseen by the Board of Directors. The tiered management structure is as follows: Fire Chief, Administrative Assistant, Assistant Fire Chief, Battalion Chief (Operations), Battalion Chief (Training), Fire Captain, Fire Apparatus Engineer, Firefighter, and Support Firefighter.

The District doubled their full-time staff in fiscal year 2006-2007 and has a strong volunteer force. Each volunteer serves a minimum of three years.

## **Any other matter related to effective or efficient service delivery, as required by commission policy**

There are no further matters regarding the Arcata FPD that have not been discussed in this Municipal Service Review.

## **REFERENCES**

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1. State of California; Department of Finance. 2008. *Population Estimates with Annual Percentage Change*. [www.dof.ca.gov/research/demographic/reports/estimates/e-1\\_2006-07/documents/E-1table.xls](http://www.dof.ca.gov/research/demographic/reports/estimates/e-1_2006-07/documents/E-1table.xls).
2. Humboldt County General Plan Update: Community Infrastructure and Services Technical Report. July 2008. [http://co.humboldt.ca.us/planning/gp/PrelimHearingDraft/Group7c/Technical%20Report/Comm\\_Inf\\_Serv\\_Tech\\_Report.pdf](http://co.humboldt.ca.us/planning/gp/PrelimHearingDraft/Group7c/Technical%20Report/Comm_Inf_Serv_Tech_Report.pdf).