

# *Humboldt No. 1 Fire Protection District*

Municipal Service Review



*September 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

## 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,

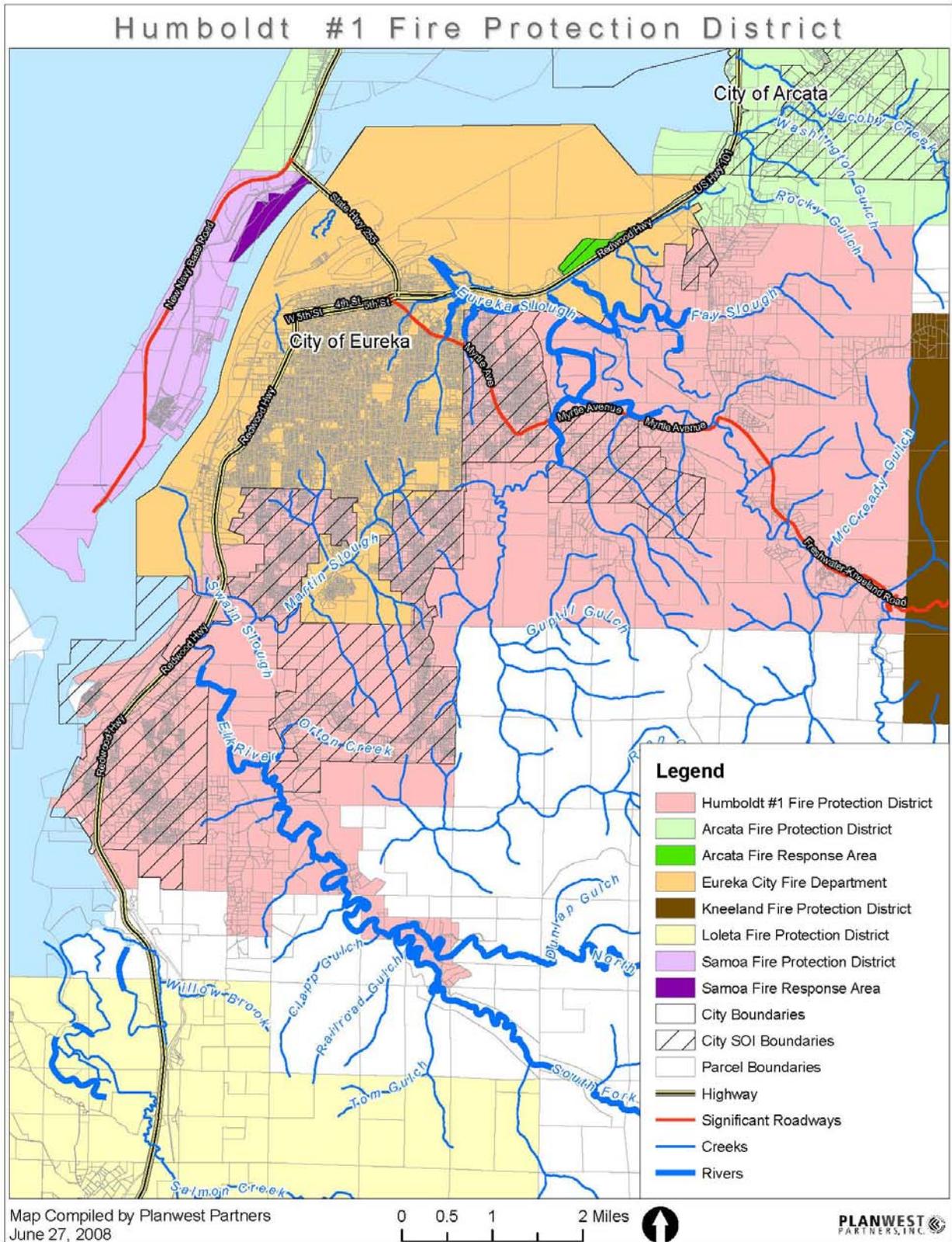
As set fourth in § 56425 (g) of The Act, on or before January 1, 2008, and every five years thereafter, Humboldt LAFCo shall review and update each Sphere of Influence (SOI).

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 Humboldt No. 1 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 Humboldt No. 1 FPD Map-District Boundary and Sphere of Influence**



## **AGENCY PROFILE**

Humboldt Number 1 Fire Protection District (Humboldt 1FPD) provides fire protection services to a 40 square mile area including the unincorporated areas of Fields Landing, Humboldt Hill, King Salmon, Freshwater and Indianola, and serves an area east of Eureka to Elk River and south to Ridgewood Heights. Additionally, the District participates in an Automatic Aid Agreement with the City of Eureka Fire Department. Figure 1 (above) shows the Humboldt 1FPD boundaries as well as other fire protection service providers that are near the District.

Humboldt 1FPD has both paid staff and volunteer firefighters. Currently the District staffs 21 full-time employees including 18 professional firefighters and three administrative personnel and has 13 volunteers. Two stations are located within the District; the headquarters is located at 3455 Harris Street, and another station is located at 755 Herrick Avenue in Bayview. Humboldt 1FPD has an active fire prevention program and all firefighters are trained to at least the level of Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) I. The District received 1452 calls in 2006, and almost 60 percent of the calls were for medical service.

Humboldt 1FPD has an automatic mutual aid agreement with the Eureka Fire Department. This means that for specified areas within each fire department's territory, their automatic mutual aid partner will be automatically dispatched to an emergency and a special request for help will not be necessary. The "auto aid" responses provide an improved level of service to areas that are often adjacent to the boundaries of the other agency. Having neighboring agencies assisting on these calls allows the District to keep some resources in the central areas of the District in the event of additional calls.

Major facilities within Humboldt 1FPD include Redwood Acres Fairgrounds, the PG&E Humboldt Bay Power Plant, and numerous schools and churches. Humboldt 1FPD and the City of Eureka also provide emergency medical service and fire protection services to College of the Redwoods via a contract arrangement. Humboldt 1FPD traditionally operates a fire protection/safety education program for schools within the District, and also participates in countywide fire education activities as a member of the Humboldt County Fire Prevention Officer's Association.

Although the Humboldt 1FPD is responsible for structural fire protection and primary initial wild land response, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) retains primary financial responsibility for grass and forest fires in areas within the boundaries of the District that are classified as State Responsibility Area (SRA). The District has a mutual aid agreement with CAL FIRE as well as other adjacent fire protection agencies.

### **Formation**

Humboldt 1FPD was originally formed on August 5, 1929 after a successful special election of registered voters living in the affected area. The District was formed under the authority of State of California Ordinance No. 165, Chapter 191. The District has had a long history of cooperation and partnership with the City of Eureka. For the first twenty years of its life the District housed its fire engine in Eureka and had a contractual agreement of support with the City. Over the years the District went through many jurisdictional and organizational changes. In February of 1965 the

District was reorganized under the authority of Health and Safety Code Section 13812 of Part 2.7, Division 12 (the “Fire Protection District Law of 1961”). On this date the State of California recognized the District as a legal Fire Protection District under the 1961 law. Humboldt 1FPD also reorganized and currently operates under the fire districts reorganization act of 1987. There is now an elected, five (5) member Board of Directors supervising the business of the District. The term of office of Fire Directors is four (4) years.

## **GROWTH AND POPULATION**

### **Demographics**

The Humboldt County population is estimated to be 132,821 with 61,281 (46%) in the incorporated cities and 71,540 (54%) in the unincorporated areas.<sup>1</sup> Based on a Department of Finance (DOF) estimated annual population growth rate of 0.60% (607 persons per year), DOF projects that the County’s population will reach 145,858 by 2025.

As of January of 2008, there were approximately 59,370 housing units in Humboldt County with an average of 2.36 persons per household.<sup>2</sup> A total of 3,975 new housing units were required to support growth in Humboldt County between 2001 and 2008.<sup>3</sup> The County’s 2003 Housing Element does not project housing demand past 2008. However, if the 2001-2008 housing demand were to continue at the same rate in the future (e.g., 568 units per year), the demand for new housing units between 2008 and 2025 would be 9,656 within the County as a whole, 5,214 within the unincorporated areas of the County, and 663 within the Eureka Community Plan (ECP) Planning Area (approximately 39 units per year).

### **District Population**

Humboldt 1FPD serves both homes and businesses in a primarily suburban service area and has an estimated service population of 24,600. Because of the District’s close proximity to the City of Eureka and the scarcity of land within the City suitable for new residential development, the District is likely to see much of the projected growth for the area.

## **SERVICES**

### **Current Facilities and Equipment**

Presently, the District maintains and operates from two fire stations, the headquarters (Station 11) is located at 3455 Harris Street, and another station (Station 12) is located at 755 Herrick Avenue in Bayview. The locations of these stations provide adequate coverage and response time to most areas of the District. The District operates three fire engines (two lead, one reserve), and a 2,000 gallon water tender. Humboldt 1 FPD also maintains various special equipment including fire hoses, Personal Protective Equipment, a generator, and thermal imaging cameras.

Station 11 serves as the headquarters station for the District, and covers the northern end of the District. The administrative staff works out of the front office of this station. Headquarters is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week with a crew of three on Engine 11 (Captain, Engineer, and Firefighter). Station 11 also houses other emergency response related vehicles including utility, control, and command vehicles. In the event of a fire out of the hydrant area, or a wildland fire, the

on duty crew will respond both Engine 11 and Water Tender 11. Station 11 is first in to both Hospitals in the City of Eureka and covers the largest area of any of the five area fire stations (including Eureka Fire Department stations).<sup>4</sup>

Station 12, Bayview, covers the southern end of the District. Bayview is normally staffed by three personnel. Station 12 covers mainly residential areas, but is first in to four different elementary schools. It is also first due at the local PG&E power-plant. Also housed at Station 12 is one of the department's reserve engines, Engine 14. In the event of a large fire, firefighters called back to duty will staff this engine and will be prepared to respond to any other emergency that arises.<sup>5</sup>

Fire hydrants are installed and maintained by the Humboldt Community Services District within the urbanized portions of the Humboldt 1FPD. Currently there are approximately 385 fire hydrants within the Humboldt 1FPD.

### **Fire Protection Services**

The Humboldt 1 FPD provides structural and wildland fire protection, aircraft rescue and firefighting, over-the-edge and confined space rescue, auto extrication, hazardous materials, and medical aid responses, as well as prevention, inspection, investigation, and public education services. The fire fighters of the District take part in a regular twenty (20) hour per month training schedule that includes structure fire, wildland fire, EMS, confined space, Hazardous Materials, and extrication. A joint Fire Department Training Committee conducts this training.

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 which 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).<sup>6</sup> The Humboldt 1FPD currently holds an ISO rating of 4 in the water supplied areas, and 9 in the balance of the District, with the exception of two small areas that are more than 5 miles from a station which become automatic 10's per ISO policy.

### **Infrastructure Deficiencies**

The District identified a need for increased water supplies in the Freshwater, Elk River, and Indianola areas and the need for a new station in the Ridgewood area, south of Cutten.

**Planned Improvements**

Planned facilities needed to serve new development in the District include a new station, new apparatus, and new equipment; a third station in the Ridgewood Heights neighborhood is currently under consideration by the District.

**Funding Sources for Improvements**

Humboldt 1FPD recently had a Fire Facilities Impact Fee Study completed in July 2008. The focus of the study was funding sources for new fire stations, vehicles and equipment that are required as a direct result of new fire service demands brought on by new development. The District does not currently have a fire facility impact fee in place. The District is considering charging an impact fee on new development in order to prepare for expected growth and the facilities needed to serve that growth.<sup>7</sup> The revenue generated by impact fees would be used for a new station, new apparatus, and new equipment as shown in Table 6 of the Impact Fee Study.

**Other Service Providers within District**

Humboldt County provides general governmental services and law enforcement functions throughout the territory of the District. Humboldt Community Services District provides fire hydrants in all areas where water service is available within its boundaries and also provides water and wastewater services to a majority of their District.

**FINANCING**

Humboldt 1 FPD receives a majority of its funding from property taxes and benefit assessments. According to the District’s adopted budget for FY 08-09, total expenses are \$2,936,596 and total revenues are \$2,968,031, for a difference of \$31,435. The table below summarizes revenues and expenses of the District.

**FY 2008-09 Budget Summary**

| <b>Revenues</b>                           | <b>Budget</b>      |
|---|--------------------|
| Property Taxes                            | \$1,979,958        |
| Fire Assessments & Other Government Funds | \$815,875          |
| Other Revenue                             | \$108,500          |
| Taxes                                     | \$63,698           |
| <b>Total</b>                              | <b>\$2,968,031</b> |
| <b>Expenses</b>                           |                    |
| Capital Costs                             | \$90,796           |
| Operational Services                      | \$214,061          |
| Operational Supplies                      | \$92,528           |
| Personnel                                 | \$2,413,923        |
| Professional Services                     | \$59,888           |
| Special Projects                          | \$65,400           |
| <b>Total</b>                              | <b>\$2,936,596</b> |
| <b>Revenue over Expenses</b>              | <b>\$31,435</b>    |

## LOCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

### Contact Information

| <b>Humboldt No. 1 Fire Protection District</b> |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Contact:</b>                                | Glenn Ziemer, Fire Chief (starting 11/1/08 Chief Ken Woods)   |
| <b>Mailing Address:</b>                        | 3455 Harris Street, Eureka, CA 95503  |
| <b>Site Address:</b>                           | (same as above)   |
| <b>Phone Number:</b>                           | (707) 445-4900  |
| <b>Email/ Website:</b>                         | <a href="mailto:gziemer@hfd1.org">gziemer@hfd1.org</a> , <a href="http://kwoods@hfd1.org">kwoods@hfd1.org</a> |
| <b>Types of Services:</b>                      | Fire prevention / Suppression, EMS, Rescue  |
| <b>Population Served:</b>                      | 24,600  |
| <b>Size of Service Area (Acres):</b>           | 40 square miles   |
| <b>Date of Formation:</b>                      | August 5, 1929  |
| <b>Number of Staff:</b>                        | 21 full time, 13 volunteer  |

### Board Meetings

Board meeting are held on the third Tuesday of the month, at 6 p.m. at 5055 Walnut Drive, Eureka.

## MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW DETERMINATIONS

### Written Determinations

56430. (a) In order to prepare and to update SOI in accordance with Section 56425, the commission shall conduct a service review of the municipal services provided in the county or other appropriate area designated by the commission. The commission shall include in the area designated for service review the county, the region, the subregion, or any other geographic area as is appropriate for an analysis of the service or services to be reviewed, and shall prepare a written statement of its determinations with respect to each of the following:

#### **(1) Growth and population projections for the affected area.**

The population within the District is expected to increase due to proposed subdivision and new development of land within its boundaries. Because of the District's close proximity to the City of Eureka and the scarcity of land within the City suitable for new residential development, the District is likely to see much of the projected growth for the area. Humboldt 1 FPD service area includes portions of Cutten and Humboldt Hill which could experience substantial growth in the future. The District is currently assessing potential impacts from large-scale mixed-use projects currently on file with the County; specifically the Ridgewood Village Development Project and the McKay Tract which combined could result in approximately 1,800 dwelling units and new commercial development.

**(2) Present and planned capacity of public facilities and adequacy of public services, including infrastructure needs or deficiencies.**

The District’s goal is to reduce response times and achieve a service standard of four minutes response time to 95 percent of its emergency calls for service. Building a new strategically located station with new apparatus and new equipment will be needed to serve new development in the District and will improve the District’s response time and level of service it provides. A new station in the Ridgewood Heights neighborhood is currently under consideration and would include new apparatus and equipment such as a new engine, self-contained breathing apparatus, thermal imaging cameras, and personal protective equipment. The District also identified a need for increased water supplies in the Freshwater, Elk River, and Indianola areas.

**(3) Financial ability of agencies to provide services.**

The majority of the District’s income comes from property taxes, but funding also comes from special assessments, interest revenue, and other smaller sources. The District does not currently have a fire facility impact fee in place. Based on the recent Fire Facilities Impact Fee Study prepared for the District, they are considering charging an impact fee on new development in order to prepare for expected growth and the facilities needed to serve that growth.

The Impact Fee Study allocated the costs of planned facilities to new development. The costs are allocated on a per capita basis and then converted to development impact fees per housing unit for residential development and per thousand building square feet for nonresidential development. See the Impact Fee Study for impact fees and projected impact fee revenue. The Study also presented Program Implementation information including the impact fee program adoption process, special case land uses, inflation adjustment, reporting requirements, and programming revenues.

The District also identified the following issues that affect their ability to efficiently provide services: loss of \$400,000 annually due to the State Education Revenue Augmentation Fund (ERAF) which shifted property taxes away from the District; low revenues have lead to no capital replacement funding; and a wage structure that results in high personnel turnover.

**(4) Status of, and opportunities for, shared facilities.**

Humboldt 1FPD currently has two fire stations and space for a third is possible at a public safety building/fire station parcel included in the Ridgewood Village Development Project. This third location would allow shorter response times in the Elk River Area and Ridgewood Heights neighborhood. The District has an automatic aid agreement with the City of Eureka Fire Department. The “auto aid” responses provide improved levels of service to areas that to adjacent areas of other agencies. Having neighboring agencies assisting on these calls allows the District to keep some resources in the central areas of the District in the event of additional calls.

Although the District is responsible for structural fire protection, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) retains responsibility for grass and forest fires in areas within the boundaries of the District that are classified as State Responsibility Area (SRA). The District has a mutual aid agreement with CAL FIRE as well as other adjacent fire protection agencies. These agreements should be periodically reviewed and updated as needed.

**(5) Accountability for community service needs, including governmental structure and operational efficiencies.**

The Humboldt 1FPD has a board that oversees accountability and services needs. They constitute the governmental structure for the District. The District is governed by five elected officials that make up HFD's Board of Directors. The HFD Board of Directors oversees the fire department's budget under advisement from the Fire Chief and his staff. The Directors make the political decisions for HFD. Operations of HFD are handled by the Fire Chief and the Assistant Fire Chief.

Humboldt 1FPD participates in a variety of community outreach activities which focus on prevention including regular fire prevention inspections, public fire safety education, and public CPR and First Aid training.

**(6) Any other matter related to effective or efficient service delivery, as required by commission policy.**

In conducting a service review, the commission shall comprehensively review all of the agencies that provide the identified service or services within the designated geographic area. Humboldt 1 FPD shares a large boundary with the City of Eureka to the north and west of the District. As noted previously, the District currently has an automatic aid agreement with the City of Eureka Fire Department. There is potential for further consolidation with the City of Eureka for improved efficiency.

The commission has conducted a service review in conjunction with the action to establish a sphere of influence in accordance with Section 56425 or Section 56426.5 or to update a sphere of influence pursuant to Section 56425.

## REFERENCES

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Finance, 2008. Population Estimates for Cities, Counties and the State, May 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Humboldt County, 2003. Humboldt County General Plan Housing Element. Approved December 16, 2003. Amended November 30, 2004.

<sup>4</sup> Humboldt No. 1 Fire Protection District. <http://www.hfd1.org/index.html>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Effective Fire Protection, a National Concern, ISO, 2004

<sup>7</sup> Fire Facilities Impact Fee Study, July 8, 2008. Prepared by Muni Financial for Humboldt No. 1 Fire Protection District.