

# SALMON CREEK FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT FORMATION

## PLAN OF SERVICE

### SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED

56653 (b) (1) An enumeration and description of the services to be extended to the affected territory.

56653 (b) (3) An indication of when those services can feasibly be extended to the affected territory.

**Enumeration of Services and When Such Services can be Provided.** The Salmon Creek Fire Company (VFC) has been serving the Salmon Creek area since 1978 and provides fire suppression, rescue, and basic life support emergency medical services to the proposed district boundaries. The Salmon Creek Fire Protection District (FPD) would maintain the fire protection services that are currently provided by the Salmon Creek VFC, as enumerated in Section 13862 of the Health and Safety Code, which include:

- Fire Suppression
- Rescue Services
- Basic Life Support

The community served by the Salmon Creek VFC is proposing to form the Salmon Creek FPD in order to establish long-term revenue sources to support the continued delivery of fire protection services by the Salmon Creek VFC.

The formation of the Salmon Creek FPD would not change the delivery of fire protection services. The Salmon Creek VFC would continue to provide fire protection services on behalf of the Salmon Creek Fire Protection District. Potential revenues that would be available to the new district upon approval of the proposed Salmon Creek FPD (such a new special tax, property tax or other new revenues) would be used to support the maintenance of current service levels and could allow the Salmon Creek VFC to improve the level of fire and emergency medical services in the future.

### SERVICE UNITS AND CAPACITY

56653 (b) (2) The level and range of those services.

#### **Existing Service Demand and Service Levels**

**Existing Service Demand.** Based on the 2020 Census, the Salmon Creek VFC serves approximately 316 residents and 181 total housing units.

The proposed Salmon Creek FPD boundaries include the Salmon Creek Community School, located near the intersection of Lower Thomas Road and Thomas Road. The proposed boundaries also include unimproved timber and grazing land that is interspersed within a patchwork of land developed with rural residential uses. The vacant rural residential, timber, and grazing land could be developed with rural residential uses, subject to the limitations established by the General Plan and Zoning Regulations. Such development would be expected to occur over time at current rates.

**Existing Service Levels.** The Salmon Creek VFC is a participant in the countywide fire protection mutual aid agreement and is a member of the Humboldt County dispatch cooperative. The Salmon Creek VFC provides fire suppression, emergency medical services (in general, a majority of fire department calls for service are emergency medical), auto extrication, hazardous materials, and general public assistance responses. Calls for service in the Salmon Creek area typically range from 13 to 25 per year. Typically a third of the fire department’s calls are emergency medical in nature. The Salmon Creek VFC responded to approximately 24 calls for service last year, of which almost 20 percent were fires of various types and over one third were medical related.

**CALLS FOR SERVICE**

<i>Call Type</i>	<i>2018</i>		<i>2019</i>		<i>2020</i>		<i>2021</i>	
	<i>Calls</i>	<i>Calls</i>	<i>Calls</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Calls</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Calls</i>	<i>%</i>
Structure Fire	0	0%	1	5%	1	4%	0	0%
Vegetation Fire	0	0%	1	5%	0	0%	2	8%
Other Fires	2	15%	1	5%	3	12%	3	13%
Medical	4	31%	6	32%	4	16%	8	33%
Vehicle Accident	0	0%	2	11%	1	4%	3	13%
Public Assist	6	46%	6	32%	15	60%	8	33%
Hazardous Condition	1	8%	2	11%	1	4%	0	0%
<b>Total Calls</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source:** Humboldt County Fire Services Annual Reports, CAL FIRE-Fortuna Interagency Command Center.

**Personnel.** Fire protection services for the Salmon Creek FPD are provided by the Salmon Creek VFC. The Salmon Creek VFC has sixteen active firefighters. The Salmon Creek VFC seeks to have all members qualify as Firefighter Type 1 or Type 2, based on the California Incident Command Certification System (CICCS) system. Salmon Creek VFC firefighters have training, as indicated in the following table.

**PERSONNEL & TRAINING**

<i>Personnel</i>	<i>Number</i>
Reserve	0
Volunteer	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>
<i>Training Qualification</i>	<i>Number*</i>
Fire Fighter I or above	1
Wildland (CICCS)	7

Public Safety First Aid	2
First Responder (Medical)	2
EMT	0
Paramedic	0
HazMat First Responder Ops.	0
Rope Rescue	2
Swift Water Rescue	2
Fire Investigation & Prevention	0

\*Members trained to level

**Emergency Medical Services.** The North Coast Emergency Medical Services Agency (North Coast EMS) establishes certifications, scopes of practice, and procedures for departments responding to medical emergencies. North Coast EMS maintains Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with First Responder Basic Life Support (BLS) and First Responder Advanced Life Support (ALS) departments. The Salmon Creek VFC is a BLS service provider.

The proposed Salmon Creek FPD boundaries are served by City Ambulance of Garberville (20 miles away from the western edge of the proposed district boundary) and it is the same distance to the nearest hospital (Jerold Phelps Community Hospital in Garberville) and approximately 35 miles to the closest comprehensive Emergency Department (Redwood Memorial Hospital in Garberville). As a result, it is very important to the greater Salmon Creek area that the Salmon Creek VFC has the equipment and resources necessary to provide a rapid response, carry out BLS medical interventions, and have patients ready for transport when ambulance personnel arrive.

**Current Infrastructure and Facilities.** The Salmon Creek VFC operates from one fire station located 3588 Thomas Rd. The fire engine houses several fire engines, a quick attack, and water tender.

**FACILITIES AND APPARATUS**

Station	Address	Apparatus (seats)	Year	Type	Pump (GPM)	Tank (Gal)
1	3588 Thomas Rd	E-6111 (5)	1989	I		500
		E-6137 (5)	2005	III		600
		E-6130 (3)	1980	III		500
		A-6148 (3)	2006	VI		200
		T-6162 (3)	1990	VI		2,000

**Future Service Demand**

According to the Census of 2020, Humboldt County has seen little growth in the past ten years and the Salmon Creek area has also seen little growth. Based on the 2020 Census, the Salmon Creek VFD serves approximately 316 residents and 181 total housing units.

New development within the proposed district boundaries is expected to occur into the future at existing county-wide rates, which would likely range from 0.25 to 1.0 percent per year. Significant growth during the next ten years is not likely to occur. All properties within the proposed district boundaries utilize on-site water and wastewater

systems, which limits the maximum density of development. In addition, the Humboldt County General Plan and Zoning Maps identify most land within the proposed district boundaries for rural residential, timber production and grazing activities. Therefore, the demand for fire protection service within the proposed district boundaries is not expected to change significantly over the next 20 years.

## **PROPOSED SERVICE INFRASTRUCTURE**

56653 (b) (4) An indication of any improvement or upgrading of structures, roads, sewer or water facilities, or other conditions the local agency would impose or require within the affected territory if the change of organization or reorganization is completed.

The Salmon Creek VFC does not propose to make specific or immediate improvements to fire protection service infrastructure as part of the proposed district formation. As described above, the Salmon Creek VFC currently provides fire protection services throughout the proposed fire protection district boundaries.

Although the proposed Salmon Creek FPD would not be required to make improvements to maintain the current level of service, upgrades to apparatus and equipment and training needs would be required to ensure the level of service does not decline. The Salmon Creek FPD would hope to use the special tax and other new revenue to adequately cover ongoing costs of providing service, such as those associated with insurance, utilities, fuel, and disposable equipment. In addition, the Salmon Creek FPD would hope to establish funds to improve training on-site in Salmon Creek (rather than require that firefighters travel to the Humboldt Bay Area for training), regularly replace personal protective equipment, and to replace equipment and apparatus.

## **FINANCING OF SERVICES**

56653 (b) (5) Information with respect to how those services will be financed.

The Salmon Creek VFC has provided fire suppression, rescue services, and basic life support to the proposed district boundaries since 1978. The Salmon Creek VFC currently supports its fire protection operations through fundraising and donations. The Salmon Creek VFC, Inc. reports annual average income from donations of approximately \$60,000 and expenses of approximately \$52,000.

The Salmon Creek VFC is governed by the Board of Directors of the Salmon Creek Volunteer Fire Company, Inc. The Salmon Creek VFC supports its fire protection operations exclusively through fundraising and donations and periodic grant related revenue. The purpose of forming the Salmon Creek FPD is to facilitate the establishment of a dependable long term source of revenue for community fire protection services.

The Salmon Creek FPD is being formed as a means to establish dependable long term sources of revenue to maintain community fire protection services that the community and the fire department can rely upon into the future. The formation of the Salmon Creek Fire Protection District would not change the delivery of fire protection services to the

response area. The Salmon Creek VFC would continue to provide fire protection services on behalf of the Salmon Creek Fire Protection District.

The Salmon Creek FPD would seek approval of a special tax from the registered voters within the proposed district boundaries. The continued operation of the proposed Salmon Creek Fire Protection District is to be funded through a voter-approved special tax that would generate approximately \$20,000 to \$25,000 per year and would be apportioned to property in the following manner: a maximum rate of \$75 per parcel for fiscal year 2023-24. The tax revenue amount could vary due to the inclusion of an exemption that would allow landowners with multiple contiguous Assessors Parcels which are undeveloped, held under identical ownership, and used solely for timber production or agricultural grazing, to “lump” their parcels together so they are taxed as one parcel. An ordinance establishing the application process will be approved by the local elected governing board. The amount of revenue that could be generated through the special tax is partially dependent upon the number of property owners who seek the contiguous parcel exemption.

Beginning on January 1<sup>st</sup> of the year after the approval of the special, the District Board may increase the maximum tax rate by applying the increase, if any, in the Consumer Price Index of the San Francisco-Oakland-San Jose area that has occurred since January of the prior year, up to a maximum of five percent.

The Salmon Creek VFC has evaluated current service costs and needs and deferred or forgone expenses and determined that a budget of approximately \$24,000 per year is necessary to support adequate fire protection services for the community. The following is a proposed budget for the Salmon Creek FPD

<i>Item</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Worker's Comp	\$3,400
Insurance	\$4,300
Communications	\$1,000
Equipment (repair, maintenance, replace)	\$1,600
Supplies and materials	\$750
Fuel and vehicle maintenance	\$10,000
Utilities and facilities costs	\$200
Education/Training	\$1,700
Memberships and Dues	\$1,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$23,950</b>

**CONDITIONS OF SERVICE**

The proposed action(s) will be subject to the following terms and conditions:

The approval of the formation of the district would be subject to a two-thirds majority vote by the registered voters within the proposed district boundaries in favor of a special tax and the approval by the Board of Supervisors of an agreement for Humboldt County to transfer to the new district a portion of Humboldt County's share of the growth in property tax within the proposed district equal to three percent of the one percent property tax.

**ORGANIZATION ALTERNATIVES TO BE CONSIDERED:**

1. Fire Protection District Formation (proposed action)
2. County Service Area Formation
3. Fire Protection District Annexation
4. Fire Protection District Annexation/Consolidation

Considerations in the evaluation of Alternatives:

§ 56301 "When the formation of a new government entity is proposed, a commission shall make a determination as to whether existing agencies can feasibly provide the needed service or services in a more efficient and accountable manner. If a new single-purpose agency is deemed necessary, the commission shall consider reorganization with other single-purpose agencies that provide related services."

Alternative actions considered could include:

- Alternative 1 - The formation of a County Service Area, where the County would be responsible for fire protection services and could hire staff or contract with the Salmon Creek VFC, CAL FIRE, or an adjacent fire department to provide the service.

Humboldt County utilizes a CSA and an Amador Agreement with CAL FIRE to provide fire protection services to the Trinidad Area. In the 1990's Humboldt County utilized Caltrans grant funds to support an Amador Agreement with CAL FIRE to maintain staffing at the Weott Fire Station during non-fire season. The Weott CAL FIRE station is located approximately 9 miles to the northwest edge of the proposed district. Grant funds ran out and no other sources of funds for the Amador Agreement were identified.

Humboldt County has not indicated its desire to establish additional CSA's for fire protection. If Humboldt County were to pursue a CSA, establishing a contract with the Salmon Creek VFC rather than CAL FIRE would provide the highest level of service to the Salmon Creek area given proximity of the fire station and response times. However, the establishment of a CSA would not result in any government efficiencies and administration and governance would be significantly separated from the community to be served.

- Alternative 2 - The annexation of the proposed boundaries by an adjacent fire protection district and the merger of the Salmon Creek VFC with the existing fire district or the dissolution of the Salmon Creek VFC. Salmon Creek is not within the response area of an existing fire protection district; therefore there are no adjacent fire protection

districts that could provide adequate fire protection services to the Salmon Creek area.

The Myers Flat FPD and the Miranda CSD are the closest fire related districts (the proposed Salmon Creek FPD boundaries adjoin the Briceland and Telegraph Ridge FPDs, but there are very few passable roads between these areas) and they are located one and two miles from the proposed boundaries, respectively. The Myers Flat FPD and Miranda CSD are the nearest special districts that provide fire protection services, in terms of the county roadway network. Myers Flat FPD is focused on improving its level of service within its district boundaries and has not indicated an interest in annexing the Salmon Creek area. Typically, the boundaries of CSDs are limited to the developed areas of communities because most CSD's provide utilities services and these services are intended to be limited to urban or suburban type areas. Therefore, it may not be appropriate for multipurpose-type districts like the Miranda CSD to annex the Salmon Creek VFD service area.

- Alternative 3 - Larger reorganization involving surrounding fire protection districts and areas outside district boundaries protected by volunteer fire departments not affiliated with special districts.

The fire departments within the Avenue of the Giants area, including the Fruitland Ridge FPD, Miranda CSD, Myers Flat FPD, Phillippsville VFC, Redcrest VFC, Weott CSD, and the Salmon Creek VFC, met for several years between 2016 and 2018 to consider a broader fire reorganization to support service sustainability and redundancy. This working group considered numerous options for new revenue sources; improvements to training, recruitment, and operations; and options for successor agencies. Although the discussions regarding funding alternatives, operational consolidation, and merger options were very productive, there was no consensus to initiate a reorganization. As a result, the efforts were abandoned.

The Salmon Creek VFC made several attempts in the last two years re-initiated discussion with the Avenue of the Giants group, but there was no interest in a broader reorganization

The effects of alternates 2 and 3 could be similar to the proposed district formation in terms of cost and service level, so long as the change in organization resulted in funding to sustain the operation of the Salmon Creek VFC. To the extent that alternative 1 resulted in another fire department (such as CAL FIRE) providing service to the proposed district formation area, then the alternative action would likely be significantly more costly and result in a lower level of service.

The establishment of a governing board other than one in the Salmon Creek area would reduce the control that the community currently has to establish priorities, control costs, and to ensure that the level of service continues to match the needs of the local community. In addition, the establishment of a board other than one in the Salmon Creek area may also result in governance by board members that does not share the mutual and economic interests of the Salmon Creek area.

The establishment of the Salmon Creek FPD would not preclude future reorganizations that may include consolidation. However, an attempt to consolidate fire protection services in the Salmon Creek area, if not supported by the Salmon Creek VFD or other neighboring fire departments, would likely be unsuccessful and could prejudice future organization proposals.

The proposed action would maintain and enhance fire protection to the Salmon Creek area provided by the Salmon Creek VFC by establishing ongoing funding support through tax revenue from the local community and by establishing a Board of Directors that is elected by the community. The proposed action would support the mutual social and economic interests of the Salmon Creek community by sustaining community-based fire protection services and establishing local governance for such services. In addition, the Salmon Creek FPD would be the first local agency within the Salmon Creek community and could provide a forum for broader community organization and discourse.

The proposed action would have little or no effect on adjacent areas, most of which have their own local fire department. The proposed action would not affect Humboldt County tax revenue or government structure because Humboldt County only provides fire protection services in County Service Area 4 in the Trinidad area and does not budget funds for fire protection services in the Salmon Creek area.