

Telegraph Ridge Fire Protection District

Draft Sphere of Influence

District Statistics:

The Telegraph Ridge Fire Protection District (District) was formed on March 14, 1990 after a successful special election was held. Resident voters approved a benefit assessment to be imposed on property within the District boundaries. The governing board is elected and consists of a five (5) member Board of Directors who supervise the business of the District. The District was formed for the purpose of providing fire protection as specified under Health and Safety Code Sections 13801 et seq.

Although the District is responsible for structural fire protection, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) retains responsibility for grass and forest fires within the boundaries of the District. The District has a written mutual aid agreement with CDF, as well as an automatic mutual aid agreement. Informal mutual aid agreements have also been made with the Whitethorn Fire Protection District and the Beginnings and Honeydew Volunteer Fire Departments, and automatic mutual aid agreements exist with Whitethorn, Beginnings and CDF.

The Telegraph Ridge Fire Protection District provides a range of structural and wildland fire protection as well as medical response services. Presently, the District maintains and operates from one (1) fire station. The station is located in the southeast corner of the District on the Ettersberg Honeydew Road approximately thirty (30) minutes from the town of Redway.

District fire fighters respond to approximately fifteen (15) calls per year, of which twenty percent (20%) are structural/residential fire calls, twenty-five percent (25%) are vehicle accident calls, twenty-five percent (25%) are vegetation wildland fire calls, two percent (2%) are rescue calls and eight percent (8%) are false alarms, calls to investigate smoke or other miscellaneous types of calls. District fire apparatus are dispatched through the Humboldt Fire Net Dispatch Cooperative located in Fortuna. Local phones are also used to self-dispatch.

Slightly less than fifty percent (50%) of the Telegraph Ridge Fire Protection District's response area is outside of the District's boundaries. The response area is approximately forty-four (44) square miles in size and, according to District estimates, contains between 300 to 500 permanent residents. The response time within the response area varies from ten (10) minutes to over thirty (30) minutes in outlying areas.

The map on the following page (Figure 3.3.15) shows the existing District boundary and other agency boundaries, location of the fire station, primary access roads, public lands, and the adopted "expanded" sphere of influence boundary. This boundary was developed in collaboration with neighboring fire agencies based on current boundaries of first response activities by the fire organizations.

Insert Map 1

Sphere of Influence Analysis:

Section 56425 of the Government Code requires that the Commission consider and make written determinations with respect to the following factors:

1. The present and planned land uses in the area, including agricultural and open space lands.
2. The present and probable need for public facilities and services in the area.
3. The present capacity of public facilities and adequacy of public services that the agency provides or is authorized to provide.
4. The existence of social and economic communities of interest in the area if the commission determines that they are relevant to the agency.

The following written determinations were based on the Municipal Service Review that was prepared for the Telegraph Ridge Fire Protection District as part of the County Master Fire Plan.

1. The present and planned land uses in the area, including agricultural and open space lands.

The Telegraph Ridge Fire Protection District encompasses the hamlet of Ettersberg as well as scattered homesteads created through the rural subdivision of large ranches over the last twenty-five (25) years. The Ettersberg Honeydew road winds its way through the middle of the District and contains numerous spur-roads leading to private residences, many of which are unpaved and gated. The traditional post settlement land use in the Ettersberg area has included tan bark harvesting, timber harvesting, grazing, agriculture, homesteading and recreation.

The designated land uses (planned land uses) described in the 1984 Humboldt County General Plan for the territory around Ettersberg are: Agricultural Lands (AL-40), Agriculture Grazing (AG), Timber Production (T), and Public Lands (P). These designations indicate that this area is made up of predominantly resource lands supportive of timber production, agriculture, grazing, recreation, watershed and wildlife preservation and occasional rural residences. The allowable density associated with most of these land uses is one dwelling unit per 20-160 acres.

According to the Humboldt County Community Development Services, Geographic Information System (GIS), the existing land uses (present land uses) within the District and the surrounding area are: timber production, grazing/timber, rural residential and a few pockets of public land. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) King Range National Conservation Area flanks the District's West side. Recreational activities associated with these BLM lands are also notable land uses of the area.

2. The present and probable need for public facilities and services in the area.

At present, the District has a variety of needs related to equipment acquisition and improved training. These needs were reflected by District responses gathered in the two fire organization surveys used by the County of Humboldt in preparing the County Fire Plan. The District fire crew is responsible for structure fire protection, yet most of their gear is of the type designed for wildland fire fighting. Because of this equipment deficiency, there is a need to acquire self-contained breathing apparatus (SCUBA) to adequately outfit all crewmembers, as well as other types of structure gear including turnout gloves and structure boots.

Other priority needs expressed by the District in the context of the recent surveys include: better vehicle radios, a newer wildland fire engine, GPS (Global Positioning System) capabilities, and a meeting space in the firehouse that incorporates a seating area. In order to improve and expand its fire fighter training, the District needs a VCR and video monitor, and training opportunities that include basic wildland fire fighting, rescue, and over the bank response.

3. The present capacity of public facilities and adequacy of public services that the agency provides or is authorized to provide.

The Telegraph Ridge Fire Protection District provides a range of structural and wildland fire protection as well as medical response services. Presently, the District maintains and operates from one (1) fire station. The station is located in the southeast corner of the District on the Ettersberg Honeydew Rd. approximately thirty (30) minutes from the town of Redway. The District has an ISO rating of 10, based on information provided by District personnel.

The District provides fire protection services using one (1) wildland fire engine with a capacity of 500 gallons, one (1) quick response pickup with a 175-gallon capacity and a recently purchased fire truck with a capacity of 500 gallons. All apparatus were purchased used. The wildland fire engine is over thirty (30) years old.

The staff of the Telegraph Ridge Fire Protection District consists of volunteer fire fighters. The District has a regular volunteer force of eight (8) fire fighters. Fire fighters take part in a regular six (6) hour per month training schedule that includes hose lay drills, pumping, engineering, vehicle safety and driving, medical training, radios, and safety procedures.

District fire fighters respond to approximately fifteen (15) calls per year, of which twenty percent (20%) are structural/residential fire calls, twenty-five percent (25%) are vehicle accident calls, twenty-five percent (25%) are vegetation wildland fire calls, two percent (2%) are rescue calls and eight percent (8%) are false alarms, calls to investigate smoke or other miscellaneous types of calls. District fire apparatus are dispatched through the Humboldt Fire Net dispatch Co-op out of Fortuna. Local phones are also used to self-dispatch.

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4. The existence of social and economic communities of interest in the area if the commission determines that they are relevant to the agency.

The Telegraph Ridge Fire Protection District is located in a remote rural area and is not within the boundaries of any community planning area or incorporated city. The District is within the State Responsibility Area for fire protection service from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, as well as having its own volunteer fire department. The County of Humboldt provides general governmental services and law enforcement services throughout the territory of the District. The Ettersberg School is located within the District and is supported by the Southern Humboldt Joint Unified School District.

The Whitethorn Fire Protection District is the nearest service district (approximately five miles away). However, Whitethorn FPD is not currently in a position to expand its level of service to incorporate the residents of the Telegraph Ridge District. The District may choose to explore the possibility of consolidation or reorganization with the Whitethorn FPD at some future date.

Although the District has mutual aid agreements with CDF and neighboring volunteer fire departments, there is limited opportunity for shared facilities. There are no adjacent local agencies that could provide year-round, structural fire protection to the residents of the District within a reasonable response time.

Adopted Sphere of Influence:

Based on above analysis and the Municipal Service Review that was prepared for the Telegraph Ridge Fire Protection District as part of the County Fire Plan, the Humboldt County LAFCO has determined that an "expanded" sphere of influence is appropriate for the Telegraph Ridge Fire Protection District. An "expanded" sphere is appropriate because the majority of housing development within the District response area is located outside District boundaries, and the District is already delivering fire protection services as a "first responder" to the area identified within the "expanded" sphere of influence. Consequently, the Telegraph Ridge Fire Protection District's "expanded" sphere of influence is determined by the Humboldt County LAFCO to include the parcels to the north, west, south and east of the existing district, as illustrated on the adopted sphere of influence map included in this section.