

# *Garberville Fire Protection District*

## Municipal Service Review



*September 2008*



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,

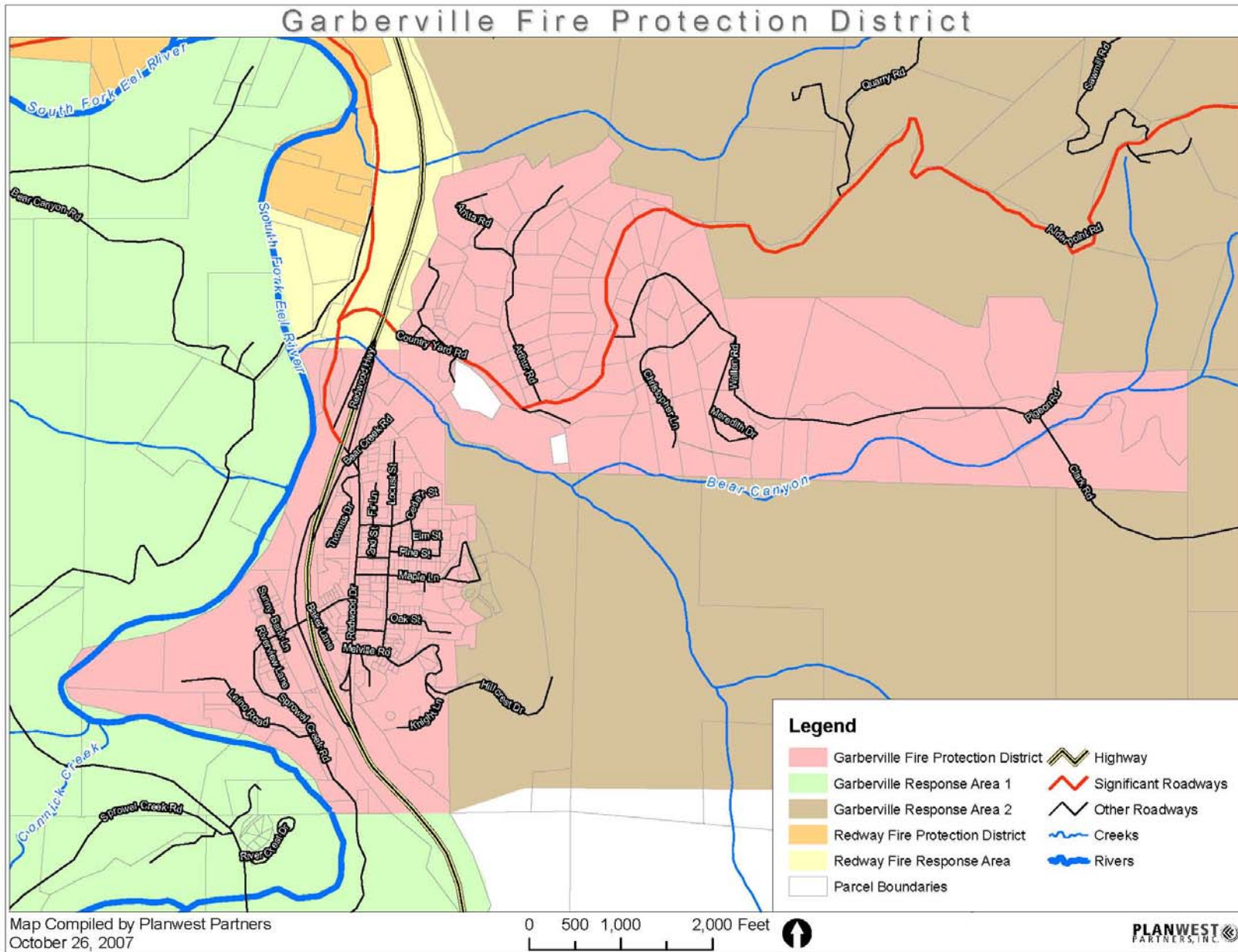
As set fourth in § 56425 (g) of The Act, on or before January 1, 2008, and every five years thereafter, Humboldt LAFCo shall review and update each Sphere of Influence (SOI).

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 Garberville 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** Garberville FPD Map-District Boundary and Sphere of Influence



## **AGENCY PROFILE**

The Garberville Fire Protection District (FPD or District) is located along the South Fork of the Eel River in the southern Humboldt County. The District is located approximately 70 miles south of Eureka and three miles south of the unincorporated community of Redway. The unincorporated town of Garberville is approximately six miles north of the Humboldt-Mendocino County line. The South Fork of the Eel River forms the District's western boundary.

The Garberville FPD is responsible for providing fire protection services, through the Garberville VFD, to the town of Garberville and the old Wallen Ranch area. Garberville is the most southerly town in Humboldt County and is located on a bluff above the South Fork of the Eel River. The largest facilities within the Garberville FPD include the downtown core, Blue Star Gas storage/distribution, and the Garberville California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) station. The Garberville FPD has a boundary of 1.1 square miles, but has a total response area of 35.9 square miles.

The Garberville FPD provides an ambulance service, emergency medical service, and water storage for fire suppression purposes. The Garberville FPD is an "Independent District" with a three member Board of Directors, which is elected at large.

### **Formation**

The petition requesting formation of the Garberville Fire Protection District was granted by the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors in September of 1940. 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 in the community of Garberville. The District currently provides structural fire protection and suppression as well as rescue services.

## **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>

### **District Population**

The population of Garberville was approximately 2,403 according to the 2000 census. The town of Garberville is expected to continue growing, at the historical growth rate of 1.6 percent. This increase would result in the demand for additional dwelling units, in addition to new commercial, industrial, and public facilities, which will require an increase in fire protection services to serve the additional growth.

## **County General Plan Growth Projections**

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. Identification of these proposed areas will allow the County to work with the affected service providers to assess infrastructure capabilities and constraints, and to develop plans for the timing and financing of services. The background report t identified Garberville as an USA. The County estimates that between 62-127 housing units will be constructed within the Garberville USA by 2025.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES**

### **Current Infrastructure and Facilities**

The Garberville Fire Protection District maintains one fire station which is located at 648 Locust Street in Garberville. District maintained equipment includes three fire engines (Engine No. 747, 705 and 783) and one utility truck. The district also owns and operates other basic fire protection and rescue equipment including radios, self contained breathing apparatuses (SCBA), and other equipment.

Most of the districts fire fighters are equipped with portable radios and personal protective clothing. Some of the fire fighters can be equipped with a self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA). The acquisition of up-to-date and adequate personal protective gear and communications equipment was highlighted as one of the district's top needs.

It is difficult to directly correlate response times with exact distances from the fire station because of the variability of road quality within the response area. District fire fighters can respond fairly quickly along the county roads with all weather surfaces. However, there are many long, winding, poorly maintained dirt roads leading to residences, which greatly slow fire fighter response. It also must be noted that response times may vary depending on the location and availability of volunteer fire fighters at the time of dispatch.

### **Fire Protection Services**

The Garberville FPD has 14 volunteers, with 4 vacant positions at this time. The District provides fire protection, suppression and emergency medical services.

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 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). Based on an ISO audit, the Garberville FPD has a PPC rating of 6 for the urbanized areas near the station and within 1,000 feet of a hydrant, and a PPC rating of 9 in all other areas of the district that are more than five miles from the fire station or more than 1,000 feet from a hydrant.

The 8B PPC rating was recently added by the ISO to recognize the efforts of fire departments to improve fire protection in areas with limited water supplies. Normally, a community whose water supply fails to meet ISO minimum standards would receive a Class 9 grading. With the new rating schedule, a community with limited water but otherwise superior fire-protection capabilities can earn Class 8B. The 8B rating acknowledges the number of firefighters responding to structure fires, training for firefighters, and water delivery capabilities.<sup>i</sup>

### **Maintenance Schedule**

All Garberville FPD vehicles including trucks, tenders and engines have a complete maintenance once per year and have routine check ups once per month. The District inspects and maintains Self Contained Breathing Apparatuses (SCBA) once per year.

### **Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies**

Currently, the water system is maintained by the Garberville Sanitary District, and pump testing station needs to be upgraded to provide additional capacity for fire protection. The District has also indicated that they need an additional water tender.

### **Other Service Providers**

The District has a County-wide mutual aid agreement. In addition to having its own fire department, the District is within the State Responsibility area for fire protection service from CAL FIRE. Humboldt County provides general governmental services and law enforcement functions throughout the territory of the District.

The Garberville Water Company, a PUC regulated private utility provides potable water within a portion of the Garberville FPD's jurisdiction. The water company has installed and maintains 27 fire hydrants where water lines are available. The Garberville Sanitary District provides sanitary sewer service within the more densely developed portion of the fire district.

## **BUDGET**

The Garberville FPD has an annual income of approximately \$54,700 with property taxes, interest and grants being the primary sources of income. Expenses amount to a total of \$45,970, with leased equipment, insurance and equipment maintenance contributing to over half of the district's expenditures. The District has a balance of \$8,730 recorded for the 2008-2009 fiscal year.

## LOCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

### Contact Information

Garberville Fire Protection District	
<b>Contact:</b>	Kent Scown
<b>Mailing Address:</b>	P.O. Box 288, Garberville, CA 95542
<b>Site Address:</b>	680 Locust Street, Garberville, CA
<b>Phone Number:</b>	707-392-1237 or Cell: 707-223-1959
<b>Email/ Website:</b>	kscown@asis.com
<b>Types of Services:</b>	Fire Protection and medical
<b>Population Served:</b>	~2,500
<b>Size of Service Area (Acres):</b>	Approximately 702 acres
<b>Date of Formation:</b>	September 1940
<b>Number of Staff</b>	14 - all volunteer

### Board Meetings

The District board meets on an as needed basis; all meetings are held at the 680 Locus Street fire house and are noticed in advance.

## 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.**

Garberville is designated in the Humboldt County General Plan Update as an USA. This means the County is considering increased densities and development potential. The growth projections for the Garberville USA indicate that the Garberville area is expected to accommodate between 62 and 127 additional residential units. Some non residential commercial and industrial growth is projected as well. The FPD should review these projections to determine if additional fire services are needed for future population growth.

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

As noted above, future growth is projected as part of the Humboldt County General Plan Update should be reviewed to determine what new facilities will be needed (i.e. new or expanded stations and apparatus). The District has noted that they would like to expand their district boundary, construct one to two new fire stations, and obtain an additional engine to provide services to a greater area.

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

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

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

While the response area for Garberville is directly adjacent to the response area of Redway, the response times of these providers could be long due, due to the rural geography of the region. County staff has facilitated a series of meetings to explore opportunities for shared facilities, staff and administrative resources to assist the Garberville FPD and other more remote fire departments with obtaining funding sources and fulfilling other district needs that would help increase the region's capacity to provide fire protection services.

The Garberville Fire Protection District could still maintain its independent identity as the services provider for the area, but may benefit from an arrangement of shared resources with other southern Humboldt service providers. For greater effectiveness and efficient service delivery the District should consider the consolidation of administrative functions and collectively pursuing assessments and other revenue sources with nearby service providers.

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

The District board should hold regularly scheduled board meetings, rather than on an as needed basis.

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

The District should continue coordination for fire protection, emergency response and training with CALFIRE from their station on Alderpoint Road, especially for training and shared facilities.

## **REFERENCES**

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i Department of Finance, 2008. Population Estimates for Cities, Counties and the State, May 2008.

ii Ibid

iii Humboldt County, 2003. Humboldt County General Plan Housing Element. Approved December 16, 2003. Amended November 30, 2004.

iiii Effective Fire Protection, a National Concern, ISO, 2004