

Loleta Fire Protection District

Municipal Service Review

January 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 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:

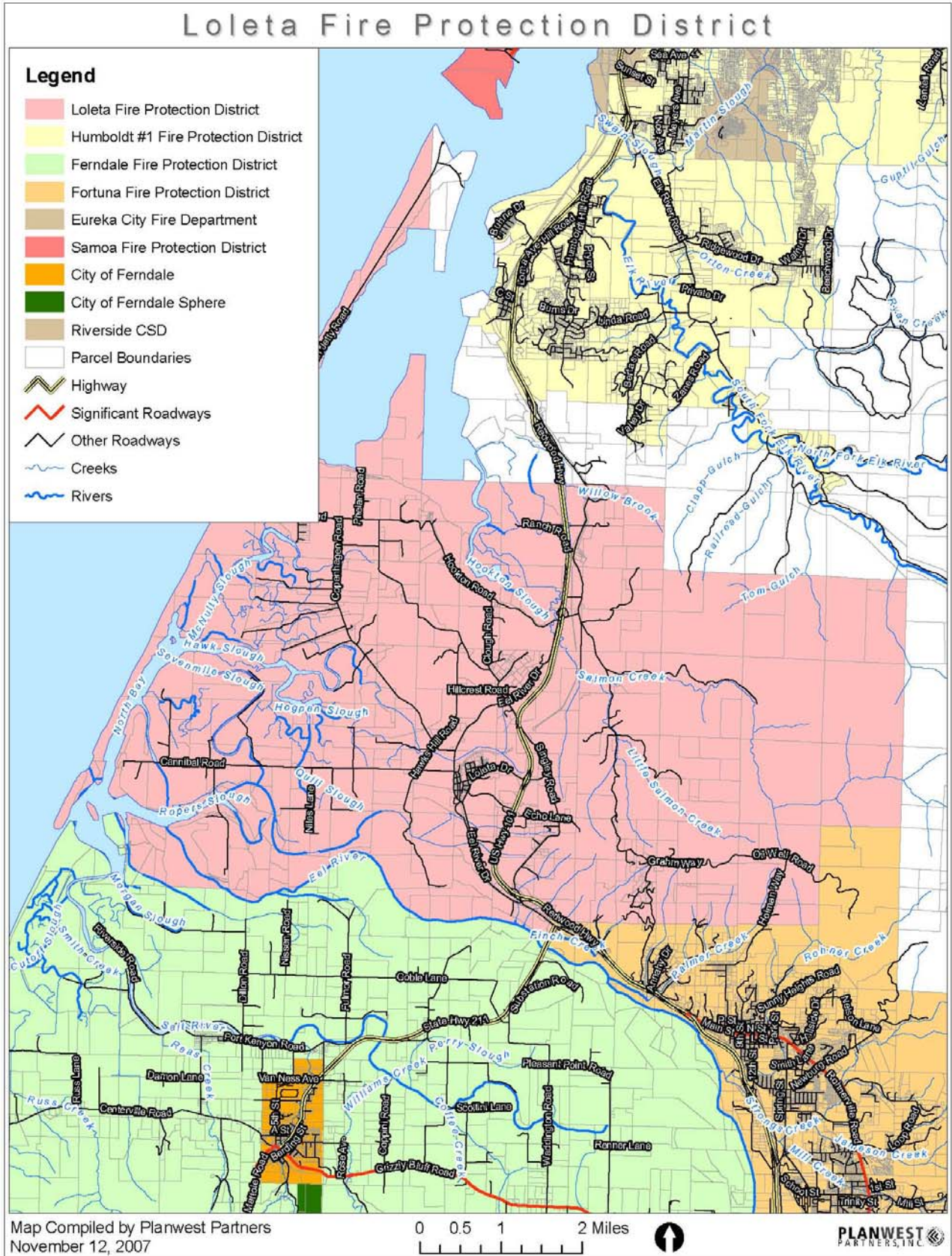
- Encourage orderly growth and development;
- Promote orderly development;
- Discourage urban sprawl;
- Preserve open-space and prime agricultural lands by guiding minimizing resource loss;
- Exercise its authority to ensure that affected populations receive efficient services;
- Promote logical formation 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 Section 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 Section 56425, Humboldt LAFCo shall conduct a service review of the municipal services provided in the Loleta Fire Protection District (FPD). The commission shall include in the area designated for service review any other geographic area as is appropriate for an analysis of the services to be reviewed, and shall prepare a written statement of its determinations with respect to each of the following:

- (1) Infrastructure needs or deficiencies;
- (2) Growth and population projections for the affected area;
- (3) Financing constraints and opportunities;
- (4) Cost avoidance opportunities;
- (5) Opportunities for rate restructuring;
- (6) Opportunities for shared facilities;
- (7) Government structure options
- (8) Evaluation of management efficiencies; and
- (9) Local accountability and governance.

Figure 1 Loleta FPD Map-District Boundary and Sphere of Influence



AGENCY PROFILE

The Loleta Fire Protection District is located in the central part of Humboldt County on a small ridge sloping to the west overlooking the Eel River. Situated on the north side of the Eel River, the District is approximately eight miles southwest of the City of Eureka. The District boundary includes approximately 31,284 acres or 48.9 square miles. Figure 1 illustrates the District's boundaries.

Most of the Loleta FPD is agricultural grass lands with some limited forested areas. The district also includes the Table Bluff area, the Eel River bottoms north of the River, Hookton Slough, the South Spit, and a portion of Fernbridge. The Loleta FPD operates one fire station, located on Park Street, which is centrally located in downtown Loleta.

Loleta FPD is responsible for providing structural fire protection services, through the Loleta VFD, to the town of Loleta and surrounding lands. 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 does have a mutual aid agreement with CDF as well as other adjacent fire protection agencies.

The staff of the District consists of an all volunteer force of approximately 24 firefighters. Over the last decade, the level of personnel has decreased by almost half from 40 firefighters in 1996 to 24 firefighters in 2007. Loleta Fire Protection District has primary responsibility to protect all structures within the District's boundaries.

The District has mutual aid agreements with similar nearby districts. These mutual aid agreements allow the districts to enter into agreements for services, including emergencies which have the potential to overwhelm the resource capabilities within a single district. This enables the district to maintain preparedness for a disaster beyond their capacity, without the need to expand and create an additional facility.

The Loleta Fire Protection District also has a mutual aid agreement with the California Department of Forestry (CDF). Under the terms of this agreement, the District will respond to fires beyond its boundaries pending the arrival of CDF crews and equipment.

Formation

The Loleta Fire Protection District was first organized in March of 1936 under Statute 1923, Chapter 191, and was reorganized in 1966 by resolution 85-40. The District Board now functions as an independent entity, no longer directly responsible to the County Board of Supervisors.

Current Facilities and Equipment

The Loleta Fire Protection District maintains four engines, 1 tender and two rescue/other vehicles and one fire station, which is located at 567 Park Street in the Community of Loleta. The station was constructed in the mid-1980s and operates adequately to meet existing needs.

Maintenance Schedule & Conditions

The Loleta Fire Protection District provides and maintains fire hydrants in all areas where fire protection service is available within its boundaries. Loleta's water system is in poor to fair condition. The present water storage capacity and some water mains are inadequate for combined emergency and fire storage suggested requirements and with respect to ability to provide adequate fire flows. Major deficiencies include undersized distribution mains, inadequate storage capacity, and the low well volume. With approximately 476,000 gallons per day and maximum day demand of approximately 210,000, the system is operating at a current peak water use of approximately 76% of available production capacity.

Planned Improvements

The Loleta Fire Protection District plans to purchase a new engine in 2008. Present water storage is inadequate for combined emergency and fire storage. Therefore, the Loleta CSD has planned to build additional storage tank. Construction of a second 155,000 gallon storage tank is planned for 2010 and repair of the existing 225,000 gallon tank is anticipated. Additional water mains are being considered to provide fire flows in all sections of town and additional mains may be extended on South Main Street or Montgomery to service new construction to that area.

GROWTH AND POPULATION

Demographics

According to the 2000 Census, the total population in Humboldt County was 126,518. The Building Communities Report for the Humboldt County General Plan Update includes a complete discussion of County Population Trends. According to that report: "Between 1985 and 1990, the County grew by about 8,000 people (7.3 percent), with an average annual increase of 1.4 percent." The US Census projects population growth in Humboldt County to increase to 135,600 by 2010 and 143,100 by 2025.

Because birthrates continue to fall, Humboldt County's median age is projected to rise from 36 to 41 over the next 25 years, while the median age in California is expected to remain stable at 33-34. Humboldt County's population is largely white, though one with a notable Native American population on three reservations, four Rancherias (including one in the Trinidad area), and other scattered lands. However, minority racial and ethnic groups have been growing in population share.

A total of 55,912 housing units existed in Humboldt County in 2000, with an average of 2.39 persons per household. The number of households in the county has grown 10.4 percent since 1990, compared to the population increase of 6.2 percent. Consequently, the average number of persons per household has declined 6.3 percent from 2.55 in 1980. Based on population projections, the Building Communities report projects the demand for housing units over the next 25 years to be 5,961 units in all of Humboldt County, with 3,220 units to be located in the unincorporated areas.

District Population

The County estimates there were 278 housing units within Loleta, and high build-out estimates for total development potential of 394 housing units by 2025, based on the County's housing growth

projections of between 0.5% and 2.5%. The populated areas within the Loleta FPD include the town of Loleta and the Table Bluff Rancheria. Larger facilities within Loleta FPD include Loleta Elementary School, the Table Bluff Rancheria, and a large food warehouse. About 750 people reside within the town of Loleta, and approximately 350 people live at the Table Bluff Rancheria. These are the main areas within the District, and the outskirts of these areas are primarily made up of agricultural and tide lands. As of 2007, Loleta (zip 95551)'s population is 1,374 people. Since 2000, it has had a population growth of 6.37 percent.

FIRE SERVICES

The active powers of the District currently include fire protection, and suppression services, auto extrication, light rescue with search lights and basic and advanced life support services for all medical emergencies. The District maintains the fire station on Park Street in Loleta and is responsible for training all volunteers.

All of the District's personnel must undergo continual training in all phases of fire protection, rescue techniques, and first aid. The fire fighters take part in a regular nine (9) hour per month training schedule that includes training for any emergencies that may arise within the District such as medical, fire, hazmat, tech-rescue, etc. The Loleta FPD has an ISO rating of 6 within the area of the district that contains fire hydrants, and an ISO rating of 7 outside of the hydrant area.

According to the County GIS database, there is a gap in fire protection district boundaries in and around the Humboldt CSD Urban Study Area, which includes College of the Redwoods. This area is located just south of the Humboldt # 1 Fire Protection District and north of the Loleta FPD boundary. To provide service to this area it is suggested that the Loleta FPD boundary is extended north or the Humboldt # 1 FPD boundary is extended south.

OTHER SERVICE PROVIDERS

Additional services provided within the Loleta Fire Protection District include:

- The Loleta Sanitary District provides sewage disposal services within a portion of the service area of the Loleta FPD;
- The Loleta Water System, a privately owned public utility company that provides potable water throughout the community of Loleta. Adequate water is supplied for domestic purposes, but pipe sizes should be enlarged to increase available fire flow;
- The Loleta Street Lighting District, which provides street lighting throughout Loleta; and
- Humboldt County provides general governmental services and law enforcement services throughout the district's territory.

FINANCING CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Budget

According to the Loleta FPD budget for fiscal year 2005 -06, the District had a total district budget of 143,860.

Table 1 2004/2005 Rio Dell Fire Protection District Budget

Reserves	Revenues	Expenditures	Total District Budget
\$69,160.00	\$76,860.00	\$74,700	\$143,860.00

Revenues. Major revenue sources include property taxes, interest income, charges for services, and grants. Property tax revenues account for the majority of the district's total revenues.

Expenditures. Major expenditure sources include repairs and maintenance (\$9,500), insurance (\$9,000), and employee benefits (\$6,000). Insurance accounts for about 11 percent of the District's expenditures.

Reserves: The district's total reserves are approximately \$67,000. However, the district also has a long term debt loan of approximately 32,000, for a water tender which the district is in the process of paying off.

Operations

The Loleta FPD conducts all of its business, meetings and training from a single facility. The District's largest expenditures are on workers compensation, insurance, and equipment. These costs are essential to the district, and are not items that can be considered for elimination. Mutual aid agreements with CDF and other nearby service providers are mutually beneficial to Loleta FPD and the other nearby fire districts.

Funding Sources for Improvements

The Loleta CSD does not have replacement or depreciation water reserve funds accumulated, and the water fund is in debt to the wastewater fund for approximately \$140,000. Although it is not the responsibility of the Fire Protection District to fund or upgrade the facility, the district could be affected by inadequate water capacity for emergency and fire storage needs.

SERVICE RATES

Service Rates

All services and operations are performed at the fire station, including training, storage of equipment fees are gathered at the same facility.

LOCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Contact Information

Rio Dell Fire Protection District	
Contact:	Ken Nielsen, Fire Chief
Mailing Address:	PO Box 57 Loleta, CA 95551
Site Address:	567 Park Street
Phone Number:	733-5407 Ken cell: 845-3090
Email/ Website:	kennielsen@chevron.com
Types of Services:	Fire Protection and suppression services
Population Served	~1,374
Size of Service Area (Acres):	31,284
Date of Formation:	March 1936
Staff and Facilities	
Number of Paid Staff	1- secretary: \$15 per month
Number of Volunteer Staff	24

Board Meeting Times Locations & Notification Process The Loleta FPD board meets the second Tuesday of each month at 7:30 at the fire station located at 567 Park Street. Meeting notifications are posted at the fire station.

MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW DETERMINATIONS

Infrastructure

The district's fire station, engines, and other utility vehicles are all in operable condition. The district has plans to acquire a new engine in 2008 to meet the needs of the district.

The water infrastructure capacity has been identified as inadequate for emergency and fire storage suggested requirements with respect to the ability to provide adequate fire flows. The Loleta CSD has planned to build additional storage tank in 2010 and additional water mains are being considered to provide fire flows in all sections of town.

Growth and Population

The County estimates there were 278 housing units within Loleta, and high build-out estimates for total development potential of 394 housing units by 2025, based on the County's housing growth projections of between 0.5% and 2.5%. This growth is expected to create the need for an expanded service area and extended fire services to those areas.

Financing Constraints and Opportunities

The Loleta VFPD has been successful at acquiring funding to provide infrastructure and equipment, which has supplemented the property tax apportionment that is allocated to the district annually. The District does have an outstanding debt of approximately \$32,000. Increased Insurance, equipment and training costs represent financial constraints to the District. There are opportunities for sharing training costs, group insurance policies, and bulk equipment purchases with other fire service organizations, that should be explored.

Rate Restructuring

The current budget and funding mechanisms reflect a balanced fiscal condition. Since funding constraints have not been identified, there is no need to apply a rate restructure at this time, but the district may need to review and assess service area rates if/when proposed development would require increases in fire protection and suppression services.

Cost Avoidance Opportunities

The Loleta FPD conducts all of its business, meetings and training from a single facility. The District's largest expenditures are on workers compensation, insurance, and equipment. These costs are essential to the district, and are not items that can be considered for elimination.

Opportunities for Shared Facilities

With only one fire station the existing facility serves its purpose and is not duplicative. The district is located away from other similar districts, and is not in a position where they could share administrative facilities with a neighboring district or service provider.

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Mutual aid agreements and agreements with CalFire enable the district to operate efficiently with minimal expenses, and without having to compensate nearby agencies for their assistance in emergencies that require additional capacity for fire protection services. There are minimal management costs and low operating expenses in the District's adopted budget. Management of infrastructure is shared between the City and the district.

Government Structure Options

The district is run by a total of 24 volunteer staff members. There are no developed areas within the district that do not receive services; however, the District may extend services outside of the service area boundary to honor a mutual aid agreement with neighboring districts. Mutual Aid agreements with nearby districts allow the Loleta FPD to draw on nearby facilities for assistance when an emergency is beyond the capacity of the district.

The District is within the State Responsibility area for Fire Protection service from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire), as well as having its own volunteer fire department.

Evaluation of Management Efficiencies

Residents within the Loleta FPD currently have adequate fire protection services provided to them. Based on present and projected demand for fire protection services, the district has the ability to meet the level of demand of projected growth within its boundaries. Overall services are distributed efficiently, and there are no underserved areas that have been identified within the District boundary. However, a service gap has been identified just north of the district, which includes College of the Redwoods and the surrounding area. It is suggested that either Loleta FPD or Humboldt #1 FPD extend boundaries to include this area within a fire protection district. Expanded mutual aid agreements should be considered to increase efficiency.

Local Accountability

The Loleta FPD meets regularly, and has meeting times posted at the fire station. All District board meetings comply with the provisions of the Brown Act.