

*Samoa Peninsula*  
*Fire Protection District*  
Municipal Service Review



January 2009

Prepared by:



For Updating the Sphere of Influence Report



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## INTRODUCTION

This Municipal Service Review (MSR) was prepared as part of a mandated review of the spheres of influence (SOI) of all government entities in the County by the Humboldt Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo or the Commission). This report focuses on the Samoa Peninsula Fire Protection District (SPFPD). The purpose of this study is to examine and evaluate local governmental services in order to improve overall understanding of local service conditions and to enhance these conditions through comprehensive review and analysis. This MSR presents for the Commission's consideration a discussion, analysis, and recommendations regarding services provided by the SPFPD. The SOI for the SPFPD was adopted in 1993; this MSR serves to update the relevant data on services provided within the district's SOI. At this time, the SOI will not be amended.

### Statutory Authority

The fundamental role of the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo, or the Commission) is to implement the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Act (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 forth 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). An MSR shall be conducted prior to, as a part of, or in conjunction with, the action to adopt, amend, or revise an SOI pursuant to the Act. Together, the SOI and MSR documents analyze the District's ability to serve existing and future residents.

In accordance with §56430 of the Act, in preparation for adopting, amending, or revising an SOI, Humboldt LAFCo shall comprehensively review all services and public service providers within the designated geographic area. The Commission shall prepare a written statement of determinations on six subject areas as pursuant to state law; these determinations may be utilized in future decision-

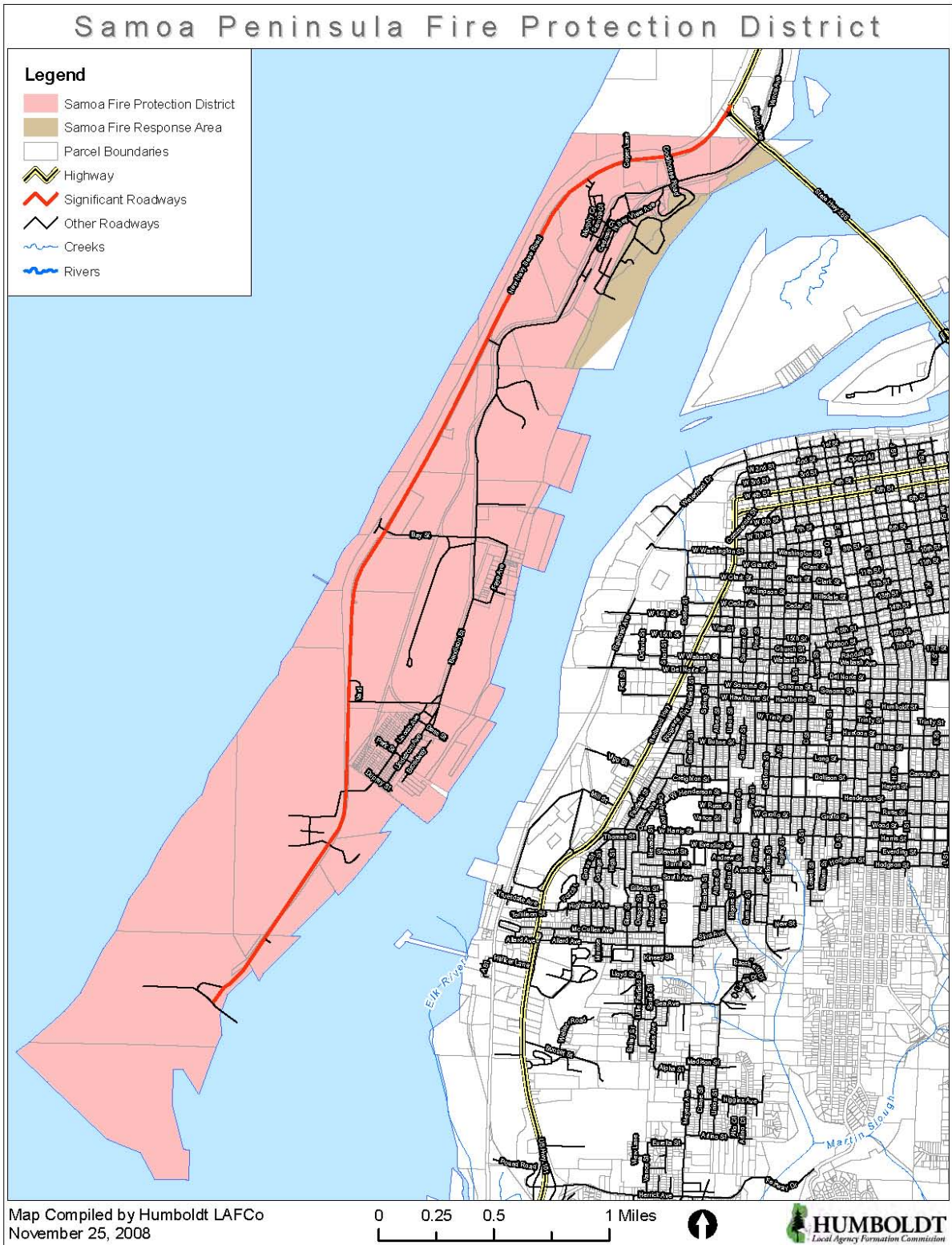
making about the provision of services, appropriate boundaries, changes of organizations, and need to revise or update SOIs. LAFCO is required to make written determinations on the following:

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.

### **Review Methods**

This MSR was prepared by LAFCo staff during December 2008 / January 2009. The SPFPD completed an agency profile questionnaire, which provided LAFCo with the current status of the district's operations. The Infrastructure and Services Report that was compiled as part of the Humboldt County General Plan was also referenced for regional population and housing projections, as well as detailed descriptions of existing infrastructure. The draft report was sent to district staff for review and clarification. All information gathered for this report is stored in Humboldt LAFCo files for future reference.

Figure 1: Samoa Peninsula Fire Protection District Boundary



## AGENCY PROFILE

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The Samoa Peninsula Fire Protection District (SPFPD) is located on the southern portion of the Samoa Peninsula, which forms a land barrier between the Pacific Ocean and Humboldt Bay. The district extends north to the Samoa Bridge crossing (State Route 255) and south to the Humboldt Bay entrance's north jetty. The district is located northwest of the City of Eureka, approximately 275 miles north of San Francisco. Figure 1 (on page 3) shows the district's boundary and response area.

The SPFPD is responsible for providing fire protection services for the communities of Fairhaven, Finntown, and Samoa. The district serves 200 residential units and a population of approximately 350. Non-residential uses within the district include the Samoa Cookhouse, Samoa Pulp Mill (operated by Evergreen Pulp), the Fairhaven Biomass Power Plant, the Fairhaven Business Park, the Samoa Dragstrip, the Eureka Municipal Airport, the Redwood Dock, and County Recreation Parks. The District has a boundary of 2.8 square miles and a total response area of 3.4 square miles.

The SPFPD provides the following services to the district:

- 1) Fire Suppression
- 2) Emergency and Medical Response: Rescue Services and Basic Life Support

**Table 1: Samoa Peninsula FPD Profile**

Agency Name	Date of Formation	Enabling Legislation
Samoa Peninsula Fire Protection District	November 9, 1993	GCS 57200, HSC 14001
Contact Person	Contact Title	Email/Website
Noreen O'Brien	Secretary	samoapen@suddenlink.net
Mailing Address	Physical Address	Phone/Fax
1982 Gass Street Fairhaven, CA 95564	SPFPD Station 1982 Gass Street Fairhaven, CA 95564	Phone: (707)443-9042 Fax: (707)443-9042

### Governance Structure and Administration

The SPFPD was formed in 1993, by annexation and reorganization pursuant to Government Code Section 57200. The Samoa Fire Department was annexed into the Fairhaven FPD and the name of the expanded district was changed to Samoa Peninsula FPD. The Fairhaven FPD was formed by Resolution No. 1564 of the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors on February 15, 1961, pursuant to Health and Safety Code 14001.

The SPFPD is governed by a five member Board of Directors elected by district residents. Table 2, below, shows the current Board composition. The Board holds monthly meetings that are open to the public and are held at the Samoa Peninsula Fire Department (SPFD) at 1982 Gass Street in Fairhaven. Meetings are noticed at the SPFD, in accordance with the Brown Act.

**Table 2: Samoa Peninsula FPD Board of Directors.**

<b>Board Member</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Term Expiration</b>
Troy Nicolini	Chairman of the Board	November 2011
Richard Lindstrom	Director	November 2009
Howard Ray Craig	Director	November 2011
Hal Grotke	Director	November 2011
Richard Marks	Director	November 2009

The SPFPD has adopted a strategic plan with the following objectives:

- Recruit and maintain enough personnel to schedule a duty person at all times.
- Provide 24 hour response with staffed apparatus.
- Continually critique our training program to meet the needs of our volunteers in order to provide the best fire, property, and life protection possible.
- Improve our communication with dispatch services, communities, businesses, and other fire districts.<sup>i</sup>

The district’s mission statement is “To provide the highest quality emergency response to fires, hazardous materials incidents and medical calls that resources allow”<sup>ii</sup>.

## **Growth and Population**

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### **County Population and Growth**

According to the State of California Department of Finance (DOF), Humboldt County has an estimated 2008 population of 132,821. The County’s average population growth rate in 2007 was 0.6%<sup>iii</sup>. Assuming this growth continues, the population of Humboldt County will reach approximately 147,000 by the year 2025.

### **District Population and Housing Projections**

The District has an estimated 2008 population of 350<sup>iv</sup>. Applying the County’s average growth rate of 0.6%<sup>v</sup>, the district would reach a population of approximately 388 by the year 2025. The Samoa Town Master Plan (STMP) development proposal for the town of Samoa would mean more rapid population growth in the district.

The historic town of Samoa was purchased by the Samoa Pacific Group, LLC in 2001. The Samoa Pacific Group created a STMP which has been approved by the County and is now pending approval by the Coastal Commission. The plan proposes to maintain 57 of the 98 existing residential units and to construct 308 additional residential units. The total buildout for the Town of Samoa is 365 residential units.<sup>vi</sup>.

A Community Infrastructure and Services (CIS) report was prepared as part of the Humboldt County General Plan Update. The report identified Urban Study Areas (USA) and Water Study Areas (WSA) within special districts in order to develop land use planning scenarios and to focus the analysis for timing and location of new facilities.

The report identifies a Samoa USA, with a boundary that falls within the SPFPD boundary. The Fairhaven and Finntown communities were not analyzed in the CIS report. However, this is a useful reference for district housing projections because the Samoa USA boundary encompasses the proposed STMP site.

According to the County’s estimates, the Samoa USA had a total of 104 housing units in 2005. The high build out estimate for total development potential within the Samoa USA by the year 2025 is 318 additional units<sup>vii</sup>. Table 3, below, shows the District’s growth projections through the year 2025.

**Table 3: Growth and Population Summary**

Total Land Area (Acres)	1,800
Current Population	350
Annual Population Growth Rate	0.6%
Housing Projections	<b>Number of Residential Units</b>
Total Number Residential Units	200
High Build Out Estimate-Samoa USA	318
High Build Out Estimate-District Total	518

## Services

The SPFPD is an independent district that provides structural fire protection and suppression, rescue, and emergency medical services to residents and businesses within its boundary and service area.

Currently, the district has one part time paid staff and 20 volunteers and has indicated a need for additional personnel. Declining industry and population within the district boundary has resulted in a smaller base of potential volunteers. The district needs additional firefighter training resources in order to recruit new volunteers.

### Fire Protection Services

The SPFPD has an average response time from the Fairhaven and Samoa stations of two minutes in the district. The SPFD responds to approximately 100 emergency calls annually, of which 60 percent are mutual aid agreement calls to areas out of the district boundary but within their mutual aid area<sup>viii</sup>. Based on an ISO audit, the SPFPD has a PPC rating of 5 for areas in the district that are within 1,000 feet of a hydrant. The following two paragraphs describe the significance of this rating.

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 that 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 rating 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).

### **Infrastructure**

The SPFPD has two facilities, one in Fairhaven and one in Samoa. The SPFPD headquarters is located at 1982 Gass Street in Fairhaven. The Samoa facility is in a state of disrepair and is used primarily for equipment storage. The district owns two pumper engines; one of which is not completely operational due to an air leak. One pumper engine is stationed at the Fairhaven Fire Station and the other is stationed at the Samoa Fire Station.

The district also owns and operates other basic fire protection and rescue equipment including radios, Self Contained Breathing Apparatuses (SCBA), High Pressure Air Bags, protective clothing, and other tools and firefighting equipment. All riding positions on fire apparatus are equipped with radios and SCBAs and all firefighters are equipped with protective clothing.

### **Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies**

Maintaining and periodically replacing equipment is one of the greatest challenges facing small districts. The SPFPD is facing these challenges, and needs infrastructure repairs and upgrades to continue providing efficient fire protection services to its residents. The district has experienced decreasing revenues, as property tax revenue from industry within its boundary has declined over the years. The SPFPD budget is not sufficient to cover any expenses beyond the district's immediate needs.

The Humboldt Bay Municipal Water District (HBMWD) supplies the SPFPD's hydrants with water. The Samoa Peninsula is HBMWD's only retail service area; all other areas within the HBMWD's service region are supplied through a special district. The SPFPD hydrants share a distribution system with the Evergreen Pulp Mill. The Mill has an outstanding water bill that may result in termination of water services to the Mill / Samoa Peninsula connection. The termination of water services to the Mill would leave the SPFPD without the water needed to provide adequate fire suppression services. The STMP includes water system upgrades that would alleviate this concern, but are also dependent upon completion of the STMP development.

The SPFPD's Fire Stations are both in need of upgrades. A new emergency vehicle storage building in Samoa is proposed as part of the STMP. This building would be an improvement to the district's facilities, but is dependent on the STMP development being completed.

### **Planned Improvements**

The district currently has no planned improvements due to budget constraints.

## Maintenance

The district's regular maintenance and repair schedule is not currently being executed due to budget limitations.

## Other Service Providers

The SPFPD is involved in a county-wide mutual aid agreement for fire protection. Some areas within the district are State Responsibility Areas covered by the California Department of Forest and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE). The Arcata Police Department provides dispatch services for the SPFPD.

The district has an automatic aid agreement to have the Arcata FPD respond to calls in the SPFPD's boundary and the SPFPD to respond to calls in Manila, which lies within the Arcata FPD's boundary. The Eureka FPD boundary meets the SPFPD's boundary and the two districts participate in a mutual aid agreement<sup>ix</sup>.

The Evergreen Pulp Mill had limited fire suppression and emergency response capabilities when they were in operation. The mill had trained personnel on staff and fire suppression equipment, including a truck equipped with a water tank, to aid the SPFPD in the event of a fire at the mill site.

The HBMWD provides water to all areas within the District. The County has installed and maintains fire hydrants where water lines are available. The County provides general governmental services, road maintenance, and law enforcement throughout the district boundary.

Federal Agencies with facilities on the Samoa Peninsula, including US Coast Guard and Bureau of Land Management have limited fire suppression and emergency response capabilities.

## Budget

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The SPFPD's total projected revenue for the fiscal year 2008-2009 is \$68,000. The district's primary sources of revenue are special taxes (87%), rent (12%), and property taxes (1%). The district's projected expenditures for the fiscal year 2008-2009 total \$180,600. Primary expenditures are pension obligations (50%), structure maintenance (14%), and equipment purchases (12%).

The district has a total outstanding debt of \$150,000 that will be retired by 2011 with the current repayment schedule. The debt is to CalPERS for retiree pension obligations and the payments continue to increase annually. Due to declining revenue, the district is not able to pay CalPERS debt obligations.

Table 4: Budget Summary Table

Service	Revenues	Expenditures	Net Deficit
Fire	\$68,000	\$180,600	\$112,600

## MSR DETERMINATIONS

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### **Growth and population projections for the affected area**

The SPFPD currently serves residents, businesses, and industry with a residential population of 350. The high build out estimate for the Samoa USA by the year 2025 is 365 additional units. The STMP, if approved, will add 293 residential units within the district and will significantly increase the district's population. There are several development projects pending within the SPFPD boundary that would induce growth.

The Humboldt Bay Harbor Recreation and Conservation District proposes to develop a Redwood Marine Terminal in Samoa. This project includes a single multi-purpose berth suitable for cargo ships, cruise ships, and barges that may be integrated into a larger development in the future, in conjunction with rail development<sup>x</sup>.

The Timber Heritage Association (THA) has proposed a Humboldt Bay Scenic Railroad and Timber Heritage Museum development. The project would include a steam-powered tourist railroad operating from South Fork to Samoa, where there would be a history museum of timber and logging<sup>xi</sup>

Fairhaven Cottages, LLC has proposed a residential development in Fairhaven that is currently pending approval from the County.

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

Currently, the SPFPD needs additional personnel and infrastructure / facility repairs to continue to provide fire protection services to the communities it serves. The Fairhaven Fire Station and the Samoa Fire Station need upgrades. One of the district's pumper engines needs repair. Fire flows are a concern due to the status of the Evergreen Pulp Mill.

The Samoa Town Master Plan includes a new Emergency Services Vehicle Structure that would be available to the SPFPD.

### **Financing ability of agencies to provide services**

The district has experienced a decline in revenue due to a loss of property tax revenue from industry within its boundary. The property tax revenue for the fiscal year 2008-2009 budget is \$500. SPFPD staff has indicated concern regarding the district's ability to provide services in the future without an increase in revenue.

If the Samoa Town Master Plan (STMP) development project is approved and carried out, it is expected to substantially affect the district's financial condition by increasing tax revenue for the district. The project includes the following elements:

- development of 387 residential units—293 new units and 96 existing units (56.8 acres),
- business park (19.2 acres),
- coastal dependent industry (33.5 acres),
- general commercial use (4.6 acres),
- commercial recreation area with an indoor soccer arena, RV park, hotel / motel, and 22 vacation rental units (9.7 acres),
- natural resources designated area with parking and coastal access (34.9 acres),

- public recreation facility with a park and visitor serving area (4.4 acres)
- three public facilities areas (10.1 acres), and
- a network of roads and trails.

Properties in the district need to be assessed to ensure that the existing valuations are correct. The district needs to assess rates and increase rates as appropriate.

### **Status of and, opportunities for, shared facilities**

The SPFPD has an automatic aid agreement with the Arcata FPD. The Arcata FPD responds to calls in the SPFPD's boundary and the SPFPD responds to calls in Manila, which lies within the Arcata FPD's boundary. The District is also involved in a county-wide mutual aid agreement.

Being a single purpose district limits the SPFPD's ability to generate sufficient revenue to continue its operations. The fire protection services that the district provides are, nonetheless, critical to the communities it serves. The SPFPD has indicated an interest in the formation of a Community Services District (CSD) to handle services in addition to fire protection, such as water, wastewater, and recreation.

The Fairhaven and Finntown communities currently have no municipal wastewater treatment system. Residents and businesses have individual septic systems. Water distribution within the district boundary is provided by the HBMWD. As mentioned previously, the Evergreen Pulp Mill closure may result in termination of water services to the district's fire hydrants. The formation of a CSD to provide these services would address these issues and may help to relieve the financial burden the district is facing.

The town of Samoa is also considering annexation to the Manila CSD for water, wastewater, and recreation services. The Manila CSD provides water, wastewater, stormwater drainage, and recreation services to its residents.

The district should consider the benefits of expanding to a CSD to include water, wastewater, and recreation services. This option could potentially broaden the district's assessment base and allow the district to benefit from efficiencies associated with providing more services.

### **Accountability for community service needs, including governmental structure and operational efficiencies**

The SPFPD is governed by a five member Board of Directors that is elected by its residents. The Board holds monthly meetings that are open to the public and are noticed in accordance with the Brown Act. The district has a part-time secretary that manages the district's business and reports to the Board of Directors. The District secretary can be reached at the Fairhaven Fire Station.

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

## **SOI STATUS**

It is concluded that the SPFPD's current SOI is sufficient for future growth, according to projections used for this report, which are anticipated for the next 5 years. Based on the results of this MSR, no amendments to the district's SOI are necessary at this time.

## REFERENCES

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<sup>i</sup> SPFPD.Municipal Service Review Questionnaire. December 2008

<sup>ii</sup> *ibid*

<sup>iii</sup> State of California; Department of Finance. 2008. *Population Estimates with Annual Percentage Change*. [www.dof.ca.gov/research/demographic/reports/estimates/e-1\\_2006-07/documents/E-1table.xls](http://www.dof.ca.gov/research/demographic/reports/estimates/e-1_2006-07/documents/E-1table.xls).

<sup>iv</sup> SPFPD Municipal Service Review Questionnaire. December 2008.

<sup>v</sup> State of California; Department of Finance. 2008. *Population Estimates with Annual Percentage Change*. [www.dof.ca.gov/research/demographic/reports/estimates/e-1\\_2006-07/documents/E-1table.xls](http://www.dof.ca.gov/research/demographic/reports/estimates/e-1_2006-07/documents/E-1table.xls).

<sup>vi</sup> Samoa Town Master Plan. July 2002. Prepared for the Samoa Pacific Group LLC.

[http://co.humboldt.ca.us/planning/planning\\_library/samoa\\_plan.pdf](http://co.humboldt.ca.us/planning/planning_library/samoa_plan.pdf)

<sup>vii</sup> Humboldt County General Plan Update: Community Infrastructure and Services Technical Report. July 2008.

[http://co.humboldt.ca.us/planning/gp/PrelimHearingDraft/Group7c/Technical%20Report/Comm\\_Inf\\_Serv\\_Tech\\_Report.pdf](http://co.humboldt.ca.us/planning/gp/PrelimHearingDraft/Group7c/Technical%20Report/Comm_Inf_Serv_Tech_Report.pdf).

<sup>viii</sup> County of Humboldt. 2005. *Samoa Town Master Plan Draft Environmental Impact Review*.

<sup>ix</sup> *ibid*

<sup>x</sup> Redwood Marine Terminal Business Plan, Final Draft. October 30, 2008. Humboldt Bay Harbor and Recreation District. <http://www.humboltdbay.org/harbordistrict/documents/terminalfeasibility>.

<sup>xi</sup> Humboldt Bay Scenic Railroad and Timber Heritage Museum Proposal. Accessed on January 12, 2009. <http://www.timberheritage.org/proposal.htm>.