

**MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW AND
SPHERE OF INFLUENCE UPDATE**

CUYAMA VALLEY

Report to the
**Santa Barbara Local Agency
Formation Commission**

April 2006

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- A. Introduction and Overview Section A
 - 1. Before LAFCOs were created
 - 2. LAFCO regulation of boundary changes
 - 3. Santa Barbara LAFCO
 - 4. Legislative History
 - 5. Requirement to Prepare Municipal Service Reviews
 - 6. Requirement to Update Sphere of Influence

- B. Cuyama Community Services District Section B
 - 1. Introduction
 - 2. Municipal Service Review
 - 3. MSR Determinations
 - 4. Sphere of Influence Review
 - 5. Acknowledgements and References
 - 6. Recommendations

- C. Cuyama Recreation & Park District Section C
 - 1. Introduction
 - 2. Municipal Service Review
 - 3. MSR Determinations
 - 4. Sphere of Influence Review
 - 5. Acknowledgements and References
 - 6. Recommendations

- D. Santa Barbara County Fire Protection District Section D
 - 1. Introduction
 - 2. Municipal Service Review
 - 3. MSR Determinations
 - 4. Sphere of Influence Review
 - 5. Acknowledgements and References
 - 6. Recommendations

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Local Agency Formation Commissions (or LAFCOs) are a method unique to California in dealing with population growth and public service conditions that became evident in a significant way following World War II.

During and after World War II California experienced a dramatic increase in population and economic development. These changes, together with increased personal mobility related to common automobile ownership, created growing demands for housing, public services and public infrastructure, often in suburban areas.

1. Before LAFCOs were created

Prior to 1964 decisions to expand city and special district boundaries were left to the annexing agency and the affected landowners. There was no external or third party oversight.

As a result, and due to the desires of some communities to capture their perceived share of new growth, annexation “wars” evolved between some agencies, with some expanding their area to be in a better a position to annex additional territory. The creation of new cities or special districts also occurred without any third party review.

A general lack of coordination led to a multitude of overlapping, inefficient jurisdictional and service boundaries and premature conversion of much of the State’s productive agricultural and open-space lands. The result was “urban sprawl.”

Recognizing these problems, in 1959 newly elected Governor Edmund G. Brown, Sr. appointed the Commission on Metropolitan Area Problems. It’s task was to study and make recommendations on the "misuse of land resources" and the growing complexity of local governmental jurisdictions.

The Commission's revelations about local governmental reorganization were converted into legislation enacted in 1963 that created a Local Agency Formation Commission in each county (except the City and County of San Francisco).

2. LAFCO regulation of boundary changes

Beginning in 1964, local boundary changes required approval of this new Commission with county-wide regulatory authority. Its broad goals and objectives include discouraging urban sprawl, encouraging the orderly formation and development of local governments based on local circumstances, promoting efficient and economical local governments and, where appropriate, guiding development away from agricultural and open space resources.

LAFCO regulates by approving or denying city and special district boundary changes and the extension of public services. It is empowered to undertake studies of local

agencies and to initiate updates to the spheres of influence. Typically, applications to LAFCO originate with affected landowners and/or developers and cities or districts seeking to annex territory.

The Commission is an independent agency, exercising a direct grant of legislative authority from the State government. Its decisions, while subject to judicial review, are not appealable to the County or any other local or State-wide administrative body.

3. Santa Barbara LAFCO

The SB LAFCO consists of seven regular members: two members appointed by the Board of Supervisors from its own membership; two members of city councils appointed by the mayors of the cities in the County; two members of special district board appointed by the presiding officers of the independent special districts in the County; and one public member, appointed by the other Commissioners.

There are also four alternates – one in each category of member - who vote in the absence of a regular member. Commissioners are appointed to four-year terms.

The day-to-day business of the Commission, including analysis and recommendations about proposals is the responsibility of the Executive Officer. The Commission has legal counsel for assistance.

4. Legislative History (Significant Changes Only)

Through a series of legislative amendments over the past 30 years LAFCO has become responsible for coordinating logical and timely changes in the local governmental structure, including annexations and detachments of territory, incorporations of cities, formations of special districts, consolidations, mergers and dissolutions, and to regulate the extension of services by cities and special districts outside of their boundaries.

A brief timeline of significant legislation and litigation that shaped LAFCO's current powers and duties is useful to understanding the need for Municipal Service Reviews.

- 1964 LAFCO is created as a regulatory agency in each county to regulate cities and districts, promote orderly boundaries and discourage urban sprawl.
- 1971 LAFCO becomes a planning agency when directed by the Legislature to prepare and adopt a “sphere of influence” of each city and special district
- 1976 Due to a legal challenge to a city annexation, the courts declare LAFCOs are subject to the California Environmental Quality Act and annexations are “projects” under CEQA
- 1983 Responding to a lawsuit involving a special district annexation, the Legislature creates firm time limits within which LAFCOs must adopt spheres of influence or lose the ability to approve annexations.

- 1985 LAFCO and boundary change statutes are combined into one volume, the Cortese/ Knox Local Government Reorganization Act
- 1993 Significant reforms include allowing LAFCO to initiate some special district reorganizations and waive certain conduct authority protest hearings
- 2000 LAFCO required to (1) review and update spheres a least every five years and (2) prepare Municipal Service Reviews when updating spheres

5. Legislative Requirement to Prepare Municipal Service Reviews

Two separate studies recommended that LAFCOs review local agencies.

Little Hoover Commission - A May 2000 Little Hoover Commission report, *Special Districts: Relics of the Past or Resources for the Future?*, focused on governance and financial problems among independent special districts, and barriers to LAFCO's pursuit of district consolidation and dissolution.

The report focused on the need for special districts oversight, noting "the underlying patchwork of special district governments has become unnecessarily redundant, inefficient and unaccountable." It raised concerns about a lack of visibility and accountability among some independent special districts and indicated many special districts have excessive reserve funds and questionable property tax revenue. The report expressed concern about the lack of financial oversight of the districts.

The report called on the legislature to increase the oversight of special districts by mandating that LAFCOs identify service duplications and that LAFCOs study reorganization alternatives when service duplications are identified, when a district appears insolvent, when district reserves are excessive, when rate inequities surface, when a district's mission changes, when a new city incorporates and when service levels are unsatisfactory. To accomplish this, the report recommended that the state strengthen the independence and funding of LAFCOs, require districts to report to their respective LAFCO, and require LAFCOs to study service duplications.

Commission on Local Governance - The second report, *Growth Within Bounds: Planning California Governance for the 21st Century*, had its genesis in legislation that created the Commission on Local Governance for the 21st Century in 1997. It was established to review current statutes on the policies, criteria, procedures and precedents for city, county and special district boundary changes.

The 21st Century Commission released its final report in January 2000. It examined how local government is organized and operates, and established a vision of how the state will grow by "making better use of the often invisible LAFCOs in each county".

The report points to the expectation that California's population will double over the first four decades of the 21st Century, and raises concern that our government institutions were designed when our population was much smaller and our society

was less complex. The report warns that, without a strategy, open spaces will be swallowed up, expensive freeway extensions will be needed, job centers will become farther removed from housing, and this will lead to longer commutes, increased pollution and a more stressful lifestyle. The report suggests local governments face unprecedented challenges in their ability to finance service delivery since voters cut property tax revenues in 1978 and the legislature shifted property tax revenues from local government to the schools in 1993.

The report recommended encouraging effective, efficient and easily understandable government and suggested that LAFCOs cannot achieve their fundamental purposes without a comprehensive knowledge of the services available within its county, the current efficiency of providing service within various areas of the county, future needs for each service, and expansion capacity of each service provider. Further, the report asserted that many LAFCOs lack such knowledge, and should be required to conduct such reviews to ensure that municipal services are logically extended to meet California's future growth and development.

The Report's recommendations were made part of the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000. The law requires LAFCO periodically update spheres of influence and review municipal services before updating them.

MSRs are intended to provide LAFCO and the public with a comprehensive study of existing and future public service conditions and evaluate organizational options to accommodate growth, prevent urban sprawl and ensure that critical services are provided efficiently and cost-effectively.

Government Code Section 56430, which became effective on January 1, 2001, requires LAFCO to review municipal services provided in geographic areas appropriate to the service or services to be reviewed, and prepare a written statement of 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, including advantages and disadvantages of consolidation or reorganization of service providers;
8. Evaluation of management efficiencies; and
9. Local accountability and governance.

MSRs do not require LAFCO to initiate changes based on service review findings, only to make determinations regarding the provision of public services. LAFCO, local agencies and the public may subsequently use the determinations to analyze

prospective changes of organization or reorganization or to establish or amend spheres of influence.

MSRs are not “projects” under the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act; they are feasibility or planning studies for *possible* future action that LAFCO has not approved.

The outcome of conducting an MSR may implement a recommended change of organization or reorganization. Either LAFCO or a local agency that submits a proposal may be the lead agency for compliance with CEQA and conduct an appropriate environmental review.

6. Legislative Requirement to Update Spheres of Influence

Since 1971 LAFCO has been obligated to develop and adopt a sphere of influence for each city and special district within the county. The statute states “The Commission shall develop and determine the sphere of influence of each local governmental agency within the county and enact policies designed to promote the logical and orderly development of areas within the sphere.” (Government Code Section 56425)

Section 56076 defines a sphere of Influence as:

A plan for the probable physical boundaries and service area of a local agency, as determined by the commission.

The Cortese/Knox/Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000 requires LAFCO, for the first time, to “review and update, as necessary, the adopted sphere not less than once every five years.” (Government Code Section 56425 (f)).

LAFCO is prohibited from approving a boundary change that is inconsistent with the adopted sphere for the affected agencies. It is therefore a planning tool to provide guidance for individual proposals involving jurisdictional changes. They are intended to encourage the efficient provision of public services and prevent service duplication.

The direct relationship between MSRs and Sphere of Influence Updates is in Government Code Section 56430, which states that “In order to prepare and to update spheres of influence 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.”

In addition to the written determinations needed to adopt an MSR, whenever LAFCO adopts or amends a sphere of influence it must make the following additional written determinations:

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

The statute contains procedural requirements for LAFCO to review and update spheres. The Commission must notify affected agencies 21 days before holding a public hearing to consider the sphere. The Executive Officer must issue a report and recommendations on the sphere updates under consideration at least five days prior to the public hearing.

7. Multi-Purpose vs. Single-Purpose Local Agencies

Two local independent special districts serve the residents of the Cuyama Valley, the valley-wide Recreation & Park District and the much smaller Community Services District that includes only the townsite of New Cuyama.

There be greater efficiencies in providing local services, with continued political accountability to the residents of the community, by having a multi-purpose special district rather than two limited purpose agencies.

Concerns voiced by the Community Services District regarding the possibility of “co-mingling” or the loss of funds can be addressed by the creation of zones for water and wastewater service within the consolidated agency.

An efficient method to achieve a single agency would be to (1) expand the boundaries of the CSD to resemble the Recreation & Park District and (2) dissolve the RPD while transferring its assets and revenues to the CSD.

Government Code §56001 contains the following legislative policy language that may be relevant to the local government structure in the Cuyama Valley.

The Legislature finds and declares that a single multipurpose governmental agency is accountable for community service needs and financial resources and, therefore, may be the best mechanism for establishing community service priorities, especially in urban areas.

8. Other Local Agencies within the Cuyama Valley Area

In addition to cities and special districts discussed in the this report, the Cuyama Valley includes countywide or regional districts that were identified and discussed in Municipal Service Review reports already prepared for other areas. These include:

- County Service Area No. 32

This County-governed special district encompasses the entire unincorporated area and provides an accounting mechanism to help fund law enforcement services the unincorporated area. The District has no separate staff and functions as a source of revenue for the Sheriff's office.

- Santa Barbara Coastal Vector Control District

This is a countywide special district except for the Cities of Buellton, Lompoc, Santa Maria and Solvang. LAFCO has approved a proposal to annex the Cities of Buellton and Solvang to the District; that process has not be completed.

The District provides abatement of mosquitoes, roof rats and other disease vectors and routine surveillance of vector-borne disease.

- Cachuma Resource Conservation District

This countywide special district provides technical assistance to landowners and services related to improving land capabilities, conserving resources, preventing and controlling soil erosion and public education.

CUYAMA COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT

MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW AND SPHERE OF INFLUENCE UPDATE

Report to the
**Santa Barbara Local Agency
Formation Commission**

April 2006

1. INTRODUCTION

This report regarding the Cuyama Community Services District was prepared by the Santa Barbara Local Agency Formation Commission (“LAFCO”) in accordance with Section 56430 of the California Government Code. It responds to the requirement that LAFCO conduct a Municipal Service Review (MSR) to study the delivery of municipal services and update spheres of influence.

The MSR evaluates services provided by the District and issues regarding its sphere of influence. MSR Guidelines prepared by the State Office of Planning and Research were referred to in developing information, performing analysis and organizing this study.

This report describes service delivery and related issues for LAFCO to consider and presents determinations as required by law. The decision to approve or disapprove any determinations or policies rests entirely with the Commission.

Written determinations regarding the MSR and sphere of influence update are provided for the Commission’s consideration. This report is an informational document and does not substitute for discretionary decisions that can only be made by the Commission.

This Report is subject to reconsideration and revision as directed by the LAFCO staff or by the Commission during the course of its deliberations.

2 . MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW

Description of District

The Cuyama Community Services District was formed in December, 1977 and operates pursuant to the Community Services District Act (Government Code. Sec. 61000 et seq.).

It is located in northern Santa Barbara County, on State Highway 166 in the Cuyama Valley. It encompasses the town of New Cuyama.

A five-member board of directors, elected at-large, governs the District. A General Manager is responsible for administrative functions.

The District's boundaries and sphere of influence are coterminous, including the recently annexed Ranchoil tract. A map of the District and its sphere are included.

District Services

The District provides retail water delivery and collects, treats and disposes of wastewater. The District services approximately 250 connections.

Other Governmental Agencies within the District

Local agencies that overlap the District are the Cachuma Resource Conservation District, County Service Area 32 (Law Enforcement), Cuyama Recreation & Park District, Santa Barbara County Fire Protection District and Santa Barbara Coastal Vector Control District.

3 . MSR DETERMINATIONS

This portion of the report addresses the factors specified in LAFCO's governing statute for the MSR for the Cuyama CSD.

Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies

Water Facilities

An arsenic removal water treatment plant is currently being installed to comply with new regulatory requirements for arsenic levels in drinking water, after which the District will be in compliance with water quality standards. It has a sufficient supply of water to accommodate all known and prospective service demands.

Wastewater Facilities

A new wastewater treatment plant was completed in 2000 which provides sufficient treatment quality and quantity for known and prospective service demands.

Growth and Population Projections

The District accepts Association of Government growth projections for use in Municipal Service Reviews. Little population growth is anticipated in the Cuyama Valley.

Financing Constraints and Opportunities

District customers are billed monthly for water and sewer services that fund operating expenses. The District maintains an emergency fund.

Capital improvements are financed by contributions from the District and USDA loans and grants. For the new wastewater treatment plant the District contributed \$150,000, a USDA grant provided \$441,900, the USDA issued Certificates of Participation (COPs) in the amount of \$205,500 and the USDA loaned \$42,600. The District will repay the loan and COPs over forty years.

The District contributed \$125,800 to the arsenic removal treatment plant; a USDA grant was issued for \$770,200 and the USDA loaned \$230,980. The District will repay the loan over forty years.

Cost-Avoidance Opportunities

There are no obvious cost avoidance opportunities in water or wastewater operations.

Opportunities for Rate Restructuring

There are no obvious opportunities for rate restructuring.

Opportunities for Shared Facilities

There are no obvious opportunities for shared facilities in the operations of the District, though the District shares administrative space in the community hall with the Cuyama Recreation & Park District.

Government Structure Options

There may be possible savings by having a single policy board and administrative staff for the District and the Cuyama Recreation & Park District, though neither agency has proposed such a consolidation.

Management Efficiencies

The District exhibits the characteristics of a small, isolated agency operating efficiently and serving its residents and customers effectively.

Local Accountability and Governance

The District is a small, compact government, which enhances the ability of the public to participate in its activities. The Board of Directors is elected by and accountable to the voters who reside in the District. The District posts its agendas at the District office and the New Cuyama Post Office.

4. SPHERE OF INFLUENCE REVIEW AND UPDATE

Description of Current Sphere of Influence

The District's boundaries and sphere of influence are coterminous, including the recently annexed Ranchoil tract. A map of the District and its sphere are included.

No Proposed Sphere Changes

In response to the MSR Request for Information, the District responded as follows:

Do you feel that your agency's boundary is correct at this time? Yes

Are there areas your agency desires or plans to serve that are not now within its boundaries or its sphere of influence? Yes

The response refers to the Ranchoil Subdivision that has recently been annexed to the District.

Are there areas your agency currently serves that might be served more efficiently by another agency? No

Sphere of Influence Determinations

Inasmuch as no changes in the sphere of influence are proposed at this time it is not necessary for the Commission to adopt or approve any determinations.

5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & REFERENCES

The Santa Barbara LAFCO staff prepared this Municipal Service Review. Responsibility for any errors or omissions rests with those who prepared the report.

The Cuyama CSD provided the basic information and documents upon which the evaluation is based. The District staff, notably General Manager U.S. Wilson was instrumental in providing data.

Mapping services were provided by JDL Mapping.

Available Documentation

The “Request for Information for Municipal Service Reviews” submitted by the District and the supporting documents referred to therein are available in the LAFCO office.

6 . R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S

In consideration of information gathered and evaluated during the Municipal Service Review it is recommended the Commission affirm the current Sphere of Influence and that it not be expanded or revised at this time.

CUYAMA RECREATION AND PARK DISTRICT

MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW AND SPHERE OF INFLUENCE UPDATE

Report to the
**Santa Barbara Local Agency
Formation Commission**

April 2006

7. INTRODUCTION

This report regarding the Cuyama Recreation and Park District was prepared by the Santa Barbara Local Agency Formation Commission (“LAFCO”) in accordance with Section 56430 of the California Government Code. It responds to the requirement that LAFCO conduct a Municipal Service Review (MSR) to study the delivery of municipal services and update spheres of influence.

The MSR evaluates services provided by the District and issues regarding its sphere of influence. MSR Guidelines prepared by the State Office of Planning and Research were referred to in developing information, performing analysis and organizing this study.

This report describes service delivery and related issues for LAFCO to consider and presents determinations as required by law. The decision to approve or disapprove any determinations or policies rests entirely with the Commission.

Written determinations regarding the MSR and sphere of influence update are provided for the Commission’s consideration. This report is an informational document and does not substitute for discretionary decisions that can only be made by the Commission.

This Report is subject to reconsideration and revision as directed by the LAFCO staff or by the Commission during the course of its deliberations.

8. MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW

Description of District

The District was formed August 27, 1958 and operates pursuant to the Recreation and Park Act (Public Resources Code, Section 5780 et seq.).

Located in northern Santa Barbara County this District encompasses almost the entire Cuyama Valley, on State Highways 33 and 166, including the town of New Cuyama.

A five-member board of directors, elected at-large, governs the District. A Recreation Director is responsible for administration.

The District's boundaries and sphere of influence are coterminous, except for a few small "islands" within the District. A map of the District and its sphere is included.

District Services

The District owns and operates a public park located in the community of New Cuyama and provides or coordinates public recreation and leisure time programs including the use of a community meeting hall and a transit van for special events. The District serves the approximately 1,000 residents of Cuyama Valley.

Other Governmental Agencies within the District

Overlapping local agencies are Cachuma Resource Conservation District, County Service Area 32 (Law Enforcement), Cuyama Community Services District, Santa Barbara County Fire Protection District and Santa Barbara Coastal Vector Control District.

9. MSR DETERMINATIONS

This report addresses the MSR factors specified in LAFCO's governing statute.

Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies

District facilities appear to be adequate for the population that is served.. However, if the population increases, adequate maintenance of the facilities could be a challenge.

Growth and Population Projections

The District accepts Association of Government growth projections for use in Municipal Service Reviews. Limited population growth is anticipated in the Cuyama Valley

Financing Constraints and Opportunities

The District receives a share of the general property tax and fees for service including the use of the community meeting hall and transit fees for use of the van.

Cost-Avoidance Opportunities

There are no obvious cost avoidance opportunities in District operations since the most significant costs are related to levels of property maintenance and recreation programs.

Opportunities for Rate Restructuring

There are no obvious opportunities for rate restructuring.

Opportunities for Shared Facilities

There are no obvious opportunities for shared facilities in the operations of the District, though it makes administrative space and equipment available in the community hall for the Cuyama Community Services District.

Government Structure Options

There may be possible savings by having a single policy board and administrative staff for the District and the Cuyama Community Services District, though neither agency has proposed such a consolidation.

Management Efficiencies

The District exhibits the characteristics of a small, isolated agency operating efficiently and serving its residents and customers effectively.

Local Accountability and Governance

The District is a community-centered agency, which enhances the ability of the public to participate in its activities. The Board of Directors is elected by and accountable to the voters who reside in the District. The District publishes its meeting agendas in a monthly newsletter and are posted on the town bulletin board.

10. SPHERE OF INFLUENCE REVIEW

Description of Current Sphere of Influence

The District's boundaries and sphere of influence are coterminous, except for a few small "islands" within the District. A map of the District and its sphere is included.

No Proposed Boundary Changes

In response to the MSR Request for Information, the District responded as follows:

| | |
|---|-----|
| Do you feel that your agency's boundary is correct at this time? | Yes |
| Are there areas your agency desires or plans to serve that are not now within | No |
| Are there areas your agency currently serves that might be served more efficiently by another agency? | No |

Sphere of Influence Determinations

Inasmuch as no changes in the sphere of influence are proposed at this time it is not necessary for the Commission to adopt or approve any determinations.

11. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & REFERENCES

The Santa Barbara LAFCO staff prepared this Municipal Service Review. Responsibility for any errors or omissions rests with those who prepared the report.

The Cuyama Recreation and Park District provided basic information and documents upon which the evaluation is based. Recreation Director Dorothy Batiste was instrumental in providing data.

Mapping services were provided by JDL Mapping.

Available Documentation

The "Request for Information for Municipal Service Reviews" submitted by the District and the supporting documents referred to therein are available in the LAFCO office.

12. RECOMMENDATIONS

In consideration of information gathered and evaluated during the Municipal Service Review it is recommended the Commission affirm the current Sphere of Influence and that it not be expanded or revised at this time.

**SANTA BARBARA COUNTY
FIRE PROTECTION
DISTRICT**

**MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW AND
SPHERE OF INFLUENCE UPDATE**

Report to the
**Santa Barbara Local Agency
Formation Commission**

April 2006

13. INTRODUCTION

This report regarding the Santa Barbara County Fire Protection District was prepared by the Santa Barbara Local Agency Formation Commission (“LAFCO”) in accordance with Section 56430 of the California Government Code. It responds to the requirement that LAFCO conduct a Municipal Service Review (MSR) to study the delivery of municipal services and update spheres of influence.

The MSR evaluates services provided by the District and issues regarding its sphere of influence. MSR Guidelines prepared by the State Office of Planning and Research were referred to in developing information, performing analysis and organizing this study.

This report describes service delivery and related issues for LAFCO to consider and presents determinations as required by law. The decision to approve or disapprove any determinations or policies rests entirely with the Commission.

Written determinations regarding the MSR and sphere of influence update are provided for the Commission’s consideration. This report is an informational document and does not substitute for discretionary decisions that can only be made by the Commission.

This Report is subject to reconsideration and revision as directed by the LAFCO staff or by the Commission during the course of its deliberations.

14. MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW

Description of District

The Santa Barbara County Fire Protection District was formed in April 1926 and operates pursuant to the Fire Protection District Law of 1987 (Health and Safety Code, Section 13800 et seq.).

The District is Countywide except for the Cities of Guadalupe, Lompoc, Santa Barbara, Santa Maria and Solvang and the Carpinteria/Summerland, Montecito and Orcutt Fire Protection Districts.

The District is governed by the Board of Supervisors and administered by the County Fire Chief.

The District's boundaries and sphere of influence are coterminous. As land is annexed to one of the cities that provide fire protection it is detached from the District.

District Services

The District provides fire prevention and suppression, emergency medical response and transport, search and rescue, building permits and inspections and participates in the County Office of Emergency Services.

Other Governmental Agencies within the District

Local agencies that overlap the District in the Cuyama Valley are the Cachuma Resource Conservation District, County Service Area 32 (Law Enforcement), Cuyama Community Services District, Cuyama Recreation & Park District and Santa Barbara Coastal Vector Control District.

15. MSR DETERMINATIONS

This report addresses the MSR factors specified in LAFCO's governing statute.

Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies

The District operates Fire Station No. 41 at 41 Newsome Street, New Cuyama, which serves the Cuyama Valley. It appears the District is able to accommodate potential service demands in the area from this facility, provided sufficient funding is available to adequately staff these station.

The County's Capital Improvement Plan projects capital needs for the District to serve projected growth in its entire service area and estimates funds that will be needed for proposed capital improvements to serve anticipated needs.

Growth and Population Projections

The District will provide services as population growth occurs. It does not affect the rate or location of population development.

Financing Constraints and Opportunities

The District receives a portion of the general property tax levied within its boundaries and fees to mitigate impacts of development projects. It is not clear whether these will avoid long-term, unfunded financial obligations for improvements or operations for this service, especially if the State continues to transfer funding from local government.

Cost-Avoidance Opportunities

The District participates in mutual aid and response agreements with other emergency response agencies to obtain increased levels of service and coverage.

Opportunities for Rate Restructuring

There are no obvious opportunities for rate restructuring in the operations of the District.

Opportunities for Shared Facilities

There may be possible savings by sharing administrative and field staff and/or facilities and equipment. See response below to Government Structure Options.

Government Structure Options

While no proposals have been made to LAFCO, the District reports that “fiscal and service efficiencies could be attained through county-wide regionalization of the types of services provided by the District.”

Management Efficiencies

Given its extensive service area the District exhibits the characteristics of a well-managed agency operating efficiently and serving its residents and customers effectively.

Local Accountability and Governance

The District is governed by the Board of Supervisors, which is elected by districts each of which include approximately 20% of the total County population.

16. SPHERE OF INFLUENCE REVIEW AND UPDATE

Description of Current Sphere of Influence

The District's boundaries and sphere of influence are coterminous. As lands are annexed to one of the cities or districts that provide fire protection it is detached from the District.

No Proposed Sphere Changes

There are no known sphere changes proposed at this time.

Sphere of Influence Determinations

Inasmuch as no changes in the sphere of influence are proposed at this time it is not necessary for the Commission to adopt or approve any determinations.

17. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & REFERENCES

The Santa Barbara LAFCO staff prepared this Municipal Service Review. Responsibility for any errors or omissions rests with those who prepared the report.

The Santa Barbara County Fire Protection District provided the basic information and documents upon which the evaluation is based.

Mapping services were provided by JDL Mapping.

Available Documentation

The "Request for Information for Municipal Service Reviews" submitted by the District and supporting documents referred to therein are available in the LAFCO office.

18. RECOMMENDATIONS

In consideration of information gathered and evaluated during the Municipal Service Review it is recommended the Commission affirm the current Sphere of Influence and that it not be expanded or revised at this time.