

LAFCO *of Monterey County*

LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION

2020 STUDY OF FIRE PROTECTION AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES IN UNINCORPORATED MONTEREY COUNTY

Board of Supervisors

October 13, 2020

Agenda Item No. 22

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Overview

- Purpose and Background**
- County's Role**
- Study Agencies and Facts**
- Key Findings**
- Options for Consideration; Other Service Models**
- Conclusion**

Purposes of LAFCO's June 2020 Study

- ❑ Meet State requirements
- ❑ Provide public information on the fire protection/EMS system
- ❑ Identify challenges facing fire districts and volunteer fire brigades
- ❑ Highlight potential responses to meet challenges



Background

- ❑ Fire services may be provided in a variety of ways
- ❑ Monterey County has a diverse population, geography and climate
- ❑ Fire service in the County is provided by a variety of Federal, State and local agencies
- ❑ Focused on local fire protection in unincorporated area

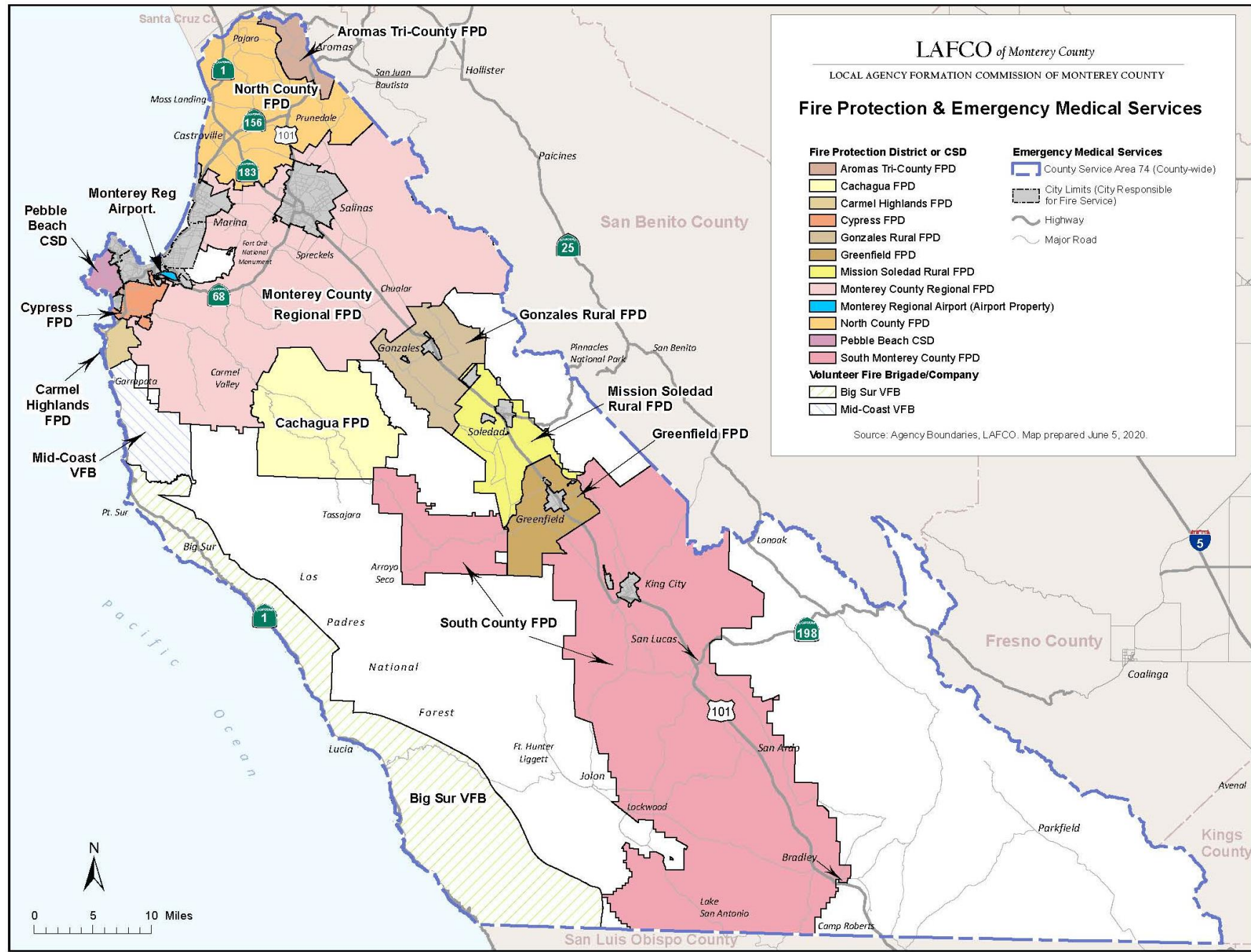


County's Role

- ❑ No mandate in State law for County government to provide fire protection
- ❑ Monterey County does not provide fire protection services
- ❑ County has direct roles in:
 - EMS (countywide ambulance contract)
 - Emergency dispatch
 - Regulating land use and development in the unincorporated area
- ❑ Cooperative role in promoting defensible space and fuel reduction

Studied Agencies

- Ten fire protection districts
- One community services district
- One airport district
- Two (volunteer) fire companies
- CSA 74: County Emergency Medical Services Agency



Facts and Figures: Overall

- ❑ Estimated population: 107,645
- ❑ Calls for service: 15,334
- ❑ Square miles served: 1,497
- ❑ Per capita annual revenue ranges from \$109 for Cachagua FPD (property tax rate of 0%) to \$3,067 (property tax rate of 25% of each property tax dollar)
- ❑ Approximately 2% of the unincorporated area population in “unprotected area”

Key Findings Summary

- ❑ All of the agencies reported being able to sustain services for at least five years
- ❑ Revenue limitations, primarily property taxes, have not kept up with costs
- ❑ Wide variations of district finances, resulting in unequal service levels in different regions
- ❑ Past annexations/consolidations have been effective, but limited further opportunities without added funding
- ❑ Districts not currently seeking LAFCO action for annexations/consolidations
- ❑ Significant financial gap between cost of volunteers compared to career staffing

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2020 Municipal Service Review and
Sphere of Influence Study:

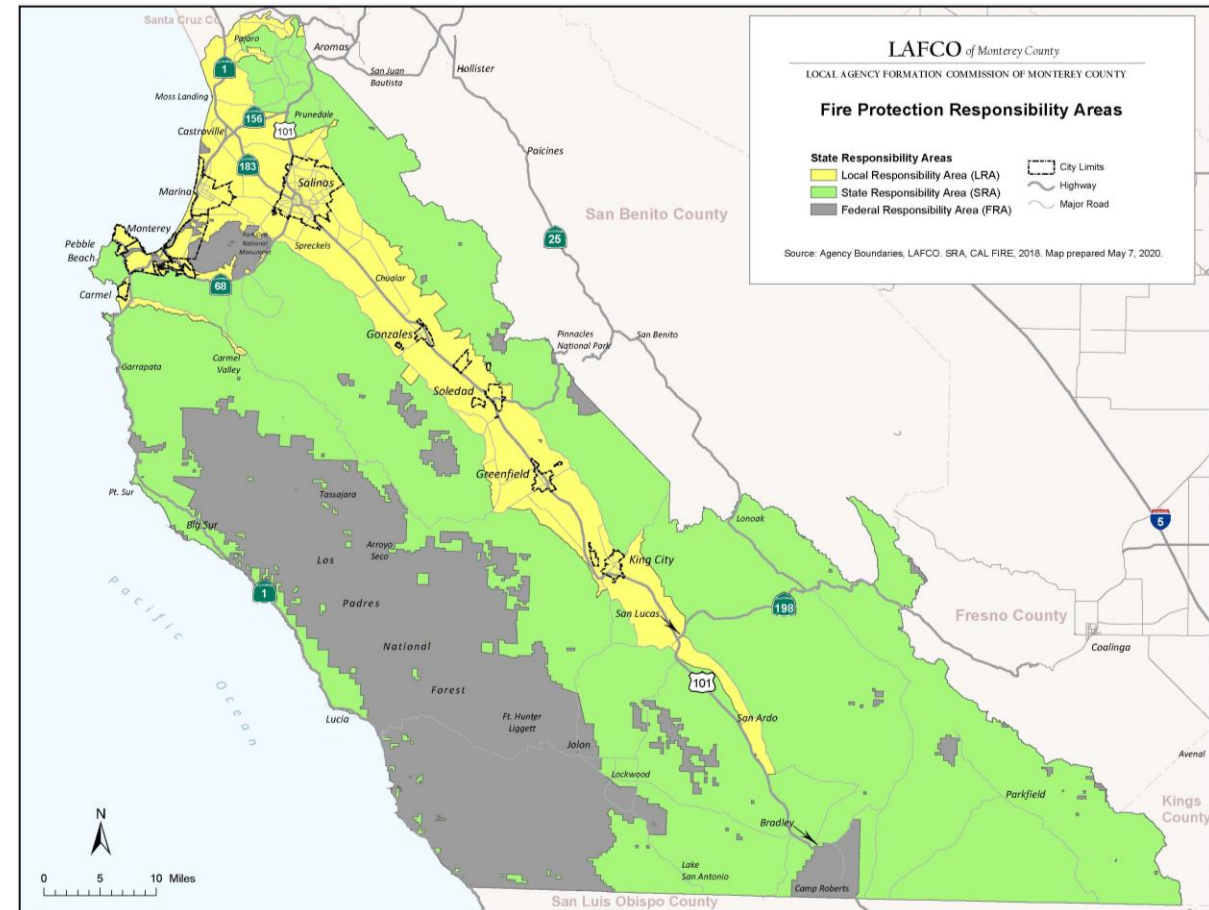
Special Districts Providing Fire Protection
and Emergency Medical Services in
Unincorporated Monterey County



Public Review Draft as of June 17, 2020

Key Findings Summary (Cont.)

- ❑ Volunteer firefighter demographics have changed
- ❑ Wildfires have impacted fire insurance and needs for vegetation management
- ❑ Tourism impacts of Big Sur Coast (and all districts) and desire for sustainable operations
- ❑ Districts with small population could face difficulty recruiting board members
- ❑ CSA 74 provides funding for training and part of EMS Agency's operation
- ❑ 9-1-1 Center is coping with staff shortages and increasing equipment costs



Options for Consideration

1. State legislative actions – primarily funding-related
2. **Potential County-level / countywide options** (see Executive Summary, page 10)
3. Local fire agency options
4. **Communications-related options** (see Executive Summary, page 11)
5. Big Sur and Mid-Coast (support ongoing collaborative efforts)

County-Level Options for Consideration

- a) Develop a countywide funding strategy to augment fire protection
- b) Continue coordination with allied agencies in support for defensible space and vegetation management/fuel reduction
- c) Develop an “outcome-based” EMS delivery system that integrates Fire and EMS response
- d) County and fire agencies to coordinate on future development potential in areas without local fire/EMS protection
- e) Seek federal Payment In Lieu of Taxes (“PILT”) support for local fire agencies providing services to federal jurisdictions

Communications-Related Options for Consideration

- a) Explore solutions to County Emergency Communications Department's (ECD's) resource challenges such as staffing needs
- b) Support continued efforts between ECD and CAL FIRE regarding connection of the computer aided dispatch (CAD) systems
- c) Develop a strategic plan to replace and fund needed radio infrastructure, working with County Information Technology Dept.
- d) Assure policies, procedures, and accountability are in place for interoperable radio communications between fire units and AMR
- e) Develop robust use of cost-effective Geographic Information System (GIS) collaboration among County IT and fire agencies

Other Service-Delivery Model Examples Around the State

1. Joint Powers Authority (JPA): Orange County Fire Authority
 - ❑ Serves unincorporated areas and 24 cities
 - ❑ Approximately 2 million people served within its boundaries
2. County Fire Department: San Luis Obispo County
 - ❑ Protects unincorporated areas of County outside of special districts
 - ❑ Governed by County Board of Supervisors
3. County Services Areas (CSAs): Santa Cruz County
 - ❑ CSA 4 and 48 protect unincorporated areas of County outside of special districts
4. Independent Fire Protection District: Fresno County
 - ❑ 2,655 square miles and serves a population of more than 220,000
5. Dependent Fire Protection District: San Bernardino County
 - ❑ Serves 60 Communities/Cities in an area over 19,000 square miles

Conclusion

- ❑ Fire and EMS services in unincorporated Monterey County vary widely, depending on availability of funding
- ❑ All of the studied agencies are very cooperative, engaged, and working hard to provide services
- ❑ County plays an important role in managing a countywide ambulance contract, providing emergency dispatch, and in exercising its land use authority, including in high-fire-hazard areas
- ❑ Changes in fire severity, public expectations, volunteer availability and lack of funding are straining the fire protection system