

Strategic Planning Framework



Northern Sonoma County Fire Protection District Board Meeting
December 15, 2022

Strategic Plan Vision

- Sustain and improve fire protection, structural fire response, and emergency medical response in Region 6 through a redefinition, suitable for the fire and emergency risks of northern Sonoma County, of how fire protection services are organized and delivered
- Achieve optimum and efficient fire protection services through a mix of cooperation, contracts, and consolidation with other fire protection agencies serving northern Sonoma County
- Expand vegetation management and other wildfire hazard reduction efforts to meaningfully protect rural, WUI, and urban areas from devastating wildfires and related impacts, in Region 6 and beyond its southern border
- Fully integrate and support community-based fire risk reduction and resilience efforts (COPE, Fire Safe Councils, CERT, etc.)
- Protect key industries and critical infrastructure from the devastating effects of wildfires
- Coordinate fire prevention and vegetation management with resource management objectives including water quality and quantity, air quality and climate change adaptation, and habitat protection

Strategic Plan Preparation Approach

- Strategic Plan will be developed in an interactive effort extending through June 2023, led by the Board of Directors, supported by staff and consultants, engaging the local community, and neighboring fire fighting agencies
- Seven planning steps have been identified that will be completed in sequence during the next six months
- The organizing approach of the Strategy Plan preparation will be a set of Board of Directors Study Sessions during scheduled month Board meetings or conducted as single agenda special meetings
- Five Study Sessions are envisioned, prefaced with a ‘kick-off’ Session during December to review the proposed approach and make changes as may be directed
- Following the Study Sessions, a Draft Strategic Plan will be presented in a sequence of Service Zone-focused public meetings
- Following these public review meetings, the Strategic Plan will be subjected to public hearing and consideration for adoption

Tonight: Strategic Plan Scoping and Objectives

- This first meeting (December 2022) is a 'scoping meeting' -- allowing the Board and participating members of the public and cooperating firefighting agencies to comment, suggest edits, or add to the proposed scope of the Strategic Plan
- The following presentation slides covering each of the seven planning 'steps' of the process are offered and detailed for discussion purposes, not as a complete prescription or recommendation at this time
- Following this meeting a more formal work program will be prepared by staff outlining specific work tasks, assignments, and any direct costs involved in completing the Strategic Plan
- During the course of the Strategic Plan preparation there may be 'course correction' or additions in response to what is learned or from changing external conditions

Interim Strategic Actions

During the time that the Strategic Plan is under preparation will be necessary to further priority 'interim action items' – those actions already underway or needing attention presently:

1. Continued discussions with Cloverdale Fire Protection District regarding service delivery functional consolidation and potential for formal consolidation of the two Districts
2. Managing Service Zone funding measures including the two special tax districts, area-specific donations and services, and refinements to CWPPs and related planning efforts and pursuing other funding measures (e.g., new schedule of service charges).
3. Taking actions to sustain existing private sector provided ambulance services
4. Monitoring and interacting with any Countywide efforts related to vegetation management services or related funding efforts in a manner consistent with the Strategic Plan Vision.

Interim Staffing Changes

During the time that the Strategic Plan is under preparation it may be beneficial to make a number of staffing changes that align with Strategic Plan Objectives and proposed Steps:

1. Additional Fire Prevention Officer position (to augment current position)
2. Seek and retain a new administrative position, perhaps shared with the COPE and the Volunteer Firefighter's Association, that would focus on grant administration, grant writing, and community outreach (Service Zone constituents, general public, and community-based organizations)
3. Reassign existing Firefighter position to an Engineer position to increase fire response coverage by creating two teams, one Station #1 based and the other stationed 'forward' or on patrol to prevent fires or respond to emergencies
4. Develop a grant management plan, including needed staff positions or vendor support, for existing (and pending) grant awards including the \$7 million grant for vegetation management in the Cloverdale area

Key Technical Components

Completion of the Strategic Plan will require or benefit from a series of 'technical components' that will provide data and information for strategic consideration, developing service priorities, and evaluation of options; these components include:

- Documenting 'Baseline Conditions' (including financial conditions, Station facilities and equipment inventory, existing agreements with other fire fighting agencies, personnel resources, active and pending grant programs, status of the Property Tax Exchange with County, and vegetation management efforts underway)
- Fire District Budget and Service Scenario Financial Forecasting Model
- Development of an interactive browser-based Service Zone Property Data Base that allows ongoing updating in cooperation with the COPEs and other community-based organizations
- Further development of the Wildfire Risk Reduction Treatment Strategy Mapping System that provides risk assessment, project identification and monitoring and other related information
- Governance Options 'Decision Tree' that illustrates the various options available, the choices involved, and the implications of these choices

Step 1 – Articulate Strategic Plan Objectives

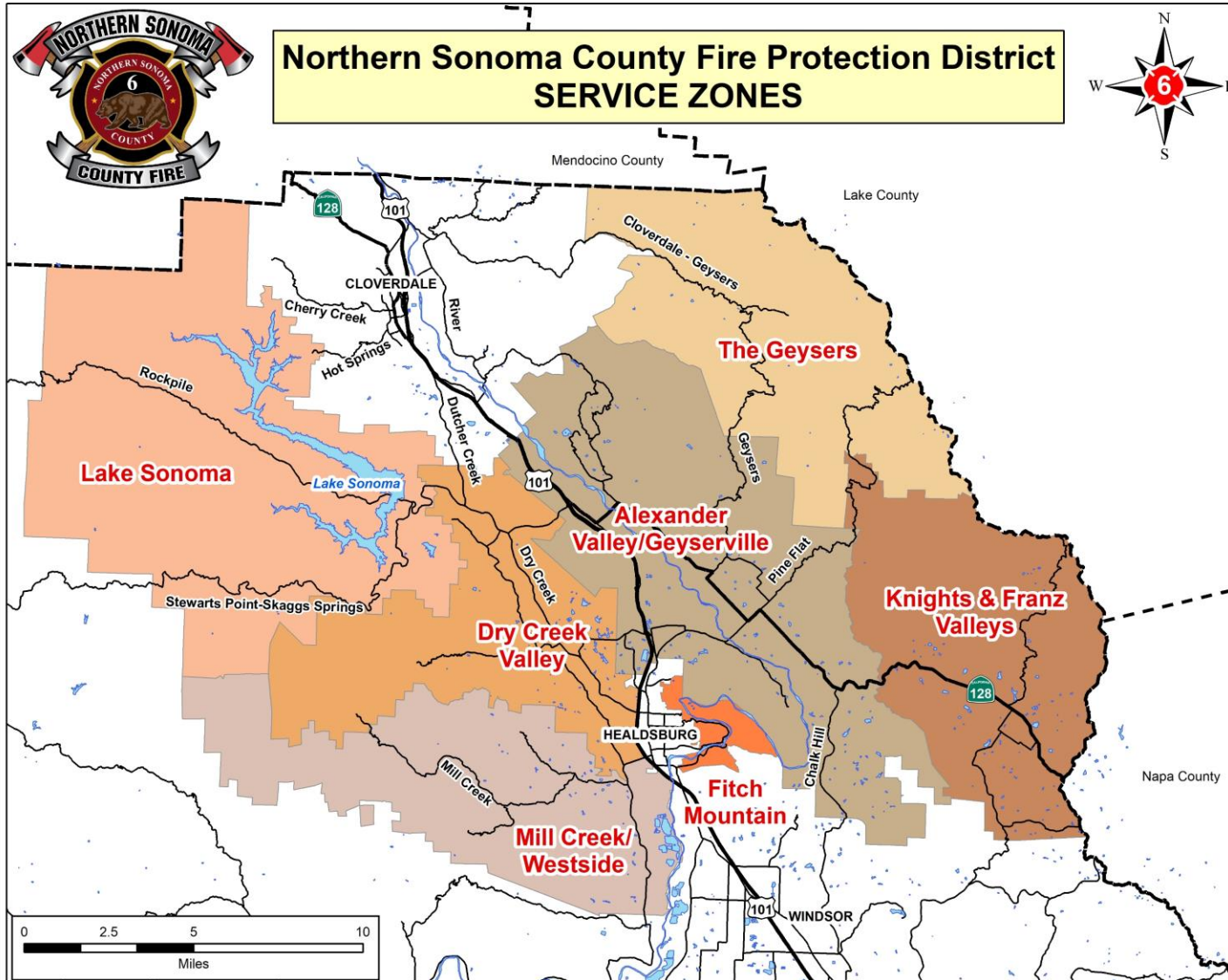
1. Sustain and improve fire protection and emergency medical response in Region 6 as an independent fire protection district in cooperation with neighboring fire protection agencies
2. Achieve comprehensive fuel reduction and vegetation management at sufficient a scale to protect urban, rural residential, and wildland-urban interface areas from devastating wildfires throughout Region 6 and beyond its southern border
3. Resolve the most beneficial, efficient, and cost-effective organizational structures and service delivery options available to northern Sonoma County fire protection agencies
4. Determine the most efficient and cost-effective array of 'fixed asset fire stations' and related priorities
5. Support and sustain community-based fire risk reduction and resilience efforts (COPE, Fire Safe Councils, CERT, etc.) as integral part of fire protection services
6. Develop a sustainable and resilient Financial Plan, building on existing funding resources (primarily property taxes, grants) and including expanded fees for services, additional Service Zone or District-wide special parcel taxes, development impact fees, and formalized grant seeking and administration

Step 2 - Quantify Fire Protection Service Needs

The need for each of the following services will be describe and quantified for each of the Service Zones, creating a 'Plan of Service' for each of the seven existing Service Zone (see Map, next slide):

- Structural fire suppression response
- Emergency medical response
- Ambulance Services
- Wildfire suppression response
- Fuel Reduction and Vegetation Management
- Fire Prevention Services
- Fire protection administration and management

Step 2 - Service Zone Map



Step 3 – Identify Strategic Challenges

Developing and implementing the Strategic Plan will require facing and resolving a range of existing challenges, both ‘internal’ and ‘external’, these challenges include:

1. The Large size of the District and dispersed development pattern
2. Extreme wildfire hazard conditions that cover most of the District
3. Resolving circumstances or conditions that inhibit effective cooperation with neighboring fire protection agencies
4. Responding to the apparent continued pursuit of Countywide consolidation of fire protection services by the County government
5. Limited existing recurring financial resources (taxes, etc.)
6. Reducing current heavy reliance on non-recurring grant funding while sustaining grant-funded projects

Step 5 – Assess Funding Needs and Identify Sources

- Achieving Objectives for expanded and improved fire protection in Region 6 will require more funding that is available from Property Tax Exchange and continuing reliance on State and federal grants
- This additional funding is needed for improved facilities, equipment, staffing and firefighter compensation needed to bring basic fire protection up to an ‘industry standard’ level
- Costs for existing and anticipated contract services in portions of Region 6 are likely to increase as they are renegotiated
- Additionally, expansion of vegetation management and other fire hazard risk reduction services will require additional recurring funding
- It is estimated that an annual budget of \$5 million (an increase of \$2 million over existing agency budgets) will be required for the envisioned fire district
- New funding being pursued by the County (including a ½ cent sales tax and possibly a special parcel tax applied to CSA #41 areas could contribute to the needed funding.

Step 5 - Develop Strategic Plan Action Program

1. Develop individual 'Plan of Service' for each Service Zone
2. Sustain and refine cooperation and coordination with surrounding fire protection agencies
3. Secure and expand funding sources
4. Expand service capacity commensurate with funding available
5. Increase paid positions on priority basis consistent with Plan
6. Pursue additional fire stations and forward staging facilities
7. Develop Capital Improvement Program linking capital expenditures to related services and funding sources

Step 6 – Prioritize Service Expansion and Improvement

- Expanding and improving services through each of the Strategic Plan Actions will be limited by funding capacity over time
- Setting Strategic Priorities will provide a guideline for sustaining and improving services over time
- Priority-setting will involve a formal decision-support system wherein alternative service improvements and investments are periodically ranked in a criteria-based point priority system
- The ranking system is intended to derive what is the most cost effective and efficient expenditure given the wide scope of potential investments as articulated in the Strategic Plan Actions

Step 7 – Assemble and Review Draft Strategic Plan

- Assemble the results of the technical efforts conducted and the direction offered by the Board of Directors (and public comments) into a Draft Strategic Plan document
- Develop an outreach effort to the Service Zones to engage the local population and businesses and to receive comments and any recommendations for the Strategic Plan
- As may be necessary conduct outreach to neighboring fire fighting agencies to discuss existing and future cooperation, consolidation, or contractual agreements
- Following public review and input finalize the Draft Strategic Plan, conduct public hearing, and adopt the Strategic Plan along with specific implementing instructions

Questions, Discussion & Direction