

Agency Profile

Pioneer Fire Protection District (PIO) was formed pursuant to the Health and Safety Code on December 30, 1980 by LAFCO Resolution L-80-26. PIO is located in the central southern portion of El Dorado County (refer to Map K). The district boundary includes the communities of Grizzly Flats, Somerset, Outingdale, Fairplay, Mt. Aukum, and Omo Ranch. Major access roads/inhabited corridors include Highway 16/Mt. Aukum Road, Sand Ridge Road, and Grizzly Flats Road.

Land Use Character

PIO's boundary encompasses approximately 296 square miles or 189,000 acres. According to the United States Forest Service, most of the district's territory (96,920 acres) is within the Eldorado National Forest. The forest lands are mountainous with steep slopes and many inaccessible areas. An additional 30,000 acres are in Timber Preserve Zones and the remaining 62,000 acres are privately owned and taxable. The majority of private land use is agricultural, of which 3,000 acres are under Williamson Act contract. According to the El Dorado County Development Department, the remaining private land is developed as bands of low to medium density residential and a smattering of commercial and miscellaneous use parcels.

Level of Service

PIO provides a moderate level of services to its residents district-wide. Its per capita district expenditure was \$126.05 in Fiscal Year 2003-2004. Its main funding mechanisms for these services are property taxes, County Supplement Funds and development impact fees with some funds provided by grants to a lesser degree. Its six fire stations provide sufficient coverage for the district; however, some of those stations are staffed seasonally.

Commission's Policies and Guidelines

LAFCO Policy 4.4 requires the Commission to review the following topics before making sphere of influence determinations. The Commission's recent review of fire suppression and emergency services addressed these requirements as noted below. All citations are from the Final Countywide Fire Suppression and Emergency Services Municipal Services Review, adopted by the Commission in August, 2006.

1. *Service capacity, level and types of services currently provided by the agency, and areas where these services are provided*

Refer to pages 193-194, "Services and Programs;" pages 194-195, "Infrastructure and Facilities;" pages 195-196, "Equipment and Vehicles;" pages 196-197, "Personnel and Staffing;" page 286, "Table 107 – Comparative Ratio of Firefighters to Population per Agency;" page 302, "Pioneer FPD (PIO);" and Map 9 – "South County Stations."

2. Financial capabilities and costs of service

Refer to pages 200-201 “Funding and Budget;” pages 319-321, “Agency Funding;” page 342, “Table 113 – Comparative Ratio of Fire Protection Expenditures to Population per Agency;” and page 343, “Table 114 – Comparative Personnel Cost Percentage of Total Budget per Agency.”

3. Topographic factors and areas of social and economic interdependencies

Refer to pages 191-192, “Pioneer Fire Protection District;” and page 309, “Table 111 – El Dorado County Land Use Forecasts.”

4. Existing and planned land uses, land use plans and policies, consistency with county and city general plans, and projected growth in the affected area

Refer to page 192, “Growth and Population;” and pages 307-312, “Growth and Population Projections for the Affected Area.”

5. Potential effects on agricultural and open space lands

The overwhelming land uses within PIO are agricultural, natural resource or open space. Due to the number of development restrictions in the district (national forest lands, Williamson Act contracts, etc.), it is unlikely that the land use character of the district will change. In addition, fire suppression and emergency medical services, in and of themselves, would not induce urban growth or the premature conversion of agricultural, open space or forest land to urban uses. On the contrary, the district’s services protect forests and resources by responding to emergencies in undeveloped areas and minimizing the financial cost that a fire could cause.

6. A description of the services that will be provided to any areas which may be added to the sphere and the timing and method for funding expansion of facilities or services

Refer to pages 193-194, “Services and Programs;” pages 194-195, “Infrastructure and Facilities;” pages 195-196, “Equipment and Vehicles;” pages 196-197, “Personnel and Staffing;” page 286, “Table 107 – Comparative Ratio of Firefighters to Population per Agency;” page 302, “Pioneer FPD (PIO);” and Map 9 – “South County Stations.”

7. An analysis of the effects of a proposed sphere of influence on other agencies and their service capabilities:

Refer to pages 336-339, “Government Structure and Cost Effectiveness.”

DETERMINATIONS

In determining the sphere of influence for each local agency, Government Code §56425(e) requires the Commission to consider and prepare a written statement of determinations with respect to four factors. Staff recommends the following determinations for amending the sphere for PIO:

1. *The present and planned land uses in the area, including agricultural and open space lands.*

Two-thirds of the present land use in PIO is designated as permanent open space, as a recreational area or in timber production. The remaining third is composed of rural residential areas clustered on the western end of the district and in the communities of Fairplay, Grizzly Flat, Mt. Aukum, Outingdale and Somerset. Growth and development is not expected to change substantially as a direct result of this review. There are no known substantial development proposals expected to occur within the fire protection district boundary; there is also no known development plans that may require the expansion of the agency sphere of influence.

There are approximately 4,800 acres currently within the PIO sphere that are not within the district boundaries, with most of them in the Eldorado National Forest. Only a handful of these parcels are not in timber or other agricultural production. While these parcels are not within a fire protection agency, the vast majority of the area in question is surrounded on all sides by PIO boundaries, indicating that it would be the most likely agency to respond to a fire or medical emergency. This creates an issue of fiscal inequity to PIO, because it does not receive revenue from these parcels to offset the potential costs of service.

2. *The present and probable need for public facilities and services in the area.*

At present, all developed areas within PIO receive sufficient fire suppression and emergency response services as needed. There are no areas outside of the current PIO service boundaries that are likely to require inclusion consideration within its sphere of influence in the foreseeable future. The agency may, however, consider detaching the State or Federal forest areas on the eastern portion of its service boundaries. These parcels do not generate property tax revenue for the district and fire suppression and emergency services are provided largely by those State and Federal agencies.

3. *The present capacity of public facilities and adequacy of public services that the agency provides or is authorized to provide.*

PIO appears to provide adequate fire suppression and emergency response services within and, in cases of mutual aid responses, outside its boundaries. The district is compensated for these services primarily through property taxes and County Supplement Funds.

4. *The existence of any social or economic communities of interest in the area if the Commission determines that they are relevant to the agency.*

PIO serves multiple distinct communities including the Fairplay, Grizzly Flat, Mt. Aukum, Outingdale and Somerset; however, there are no large, concentrated, social or economic communities of interest that are relevant to the agency. The respective community populations are expected to remain relatively stable.

Based upon the information contained in this document, it is recommended that Pioneer FPD Sphere of Influence be updated to affirm the current sphere, which encompasses the service area “holes” within its boundaries (please refer to Map K).