
Yolo County Fire Protection Districts

*Review of Challenges
and Strategic
Approaches*

JULY 2019

Yolo County

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Acknowledgments

Yolo County would like to acknowledge the Yolo County Fire Protection Districts, who provided important information and data regarding their operations. Their input was invaluable for the development of this report.

Foreword

Fire protection districts (FPD) perform a crucial role in rural communities through the provision of fire, emergency medical, and hazardous materials services. These districts are most commonly staffed with volunteers; which allows for the provision of services at a significant cost savings to rural communities. However, across the nation volunteer FPDs are struggling to maintain services in the face of volunteer and financial shortages. This struggle is also occurring locally for the volunteer fire protection districts of Yolo County and threatening their long term sustainability.

This report reviews the challenges facing the Yolo County volunteer FPDs and the strategic approaches of other county FPDs. It is the intention of the County that this report will shed light on the needs of the volunteer FPDs and aid in future discussions regarding long term options.

Methodology

Information for this report was gathered from multiple sources. Staff met with representatives of the volunteer Yolo County FPDs to gather information and data regarding their operational challenges. Staff also reached out to several counties in California to learn about their struggles, structural format, and any best practices for long term sustainability. Additionally, the 2016 Municipal Services Review of the Yolo County FPDs, by the Yolo County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo), served as a foundation for the report and is referenced frequently. Lastly, this material is coupled with national and state data as well as information from volunteer fire protection organizations.

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Executive Summary

Volunteer fire protection districts (FPDs) have a long history in the United States and to this day, remain the most common structure for fire protection in the nation. However, over time increases in industry requirements and cultural changes have created significant challenges for FPDs, particularly the traditional model of independent volunteer FPDs. In Yolo County, the unincorporated communities are served by fifteen rural volunteer FPDs. These districts are facing the same challenges experienced as FPDs throughout the nation and state of California; which is ultimately threatening their long-term sustainability.

This report reviews the challenges facing the Yolo County volunteer FPDs and the strategic approaches of other county FPDs in California.

Challenges

FPDs across the nation are facing two significant challenges: the recruitment and retention of volunteers as well as obtaining sufficient funding to maintain operations.

Recruitment and Retention of Volunteers

A large base of reliable trained volunteers is the backbone of the volunteer FPDs. According to the National Fire Protection Association, volunteers comprised 65% of all firefighters in the United States in 2017.¹ Despite the strong reliance on volunteer firefighters, FPDs have struggled with a steadily decreasing volunteer base. The volunteer numbers have fluctuated since the 1980s and have recently hit their lowest in the past thirty years. This problem has been further exacerbated by a triple increase in calls for service.²

The reduction in volunteer firefighters is believed to be the result of several causes: increased training requirements, increased time demands, and changes in sociological conditions. Training requirements have increased significantly over the years, particularly as the role of firefighters has expanded into handling emergency medical and hazardous materials. Additionally, the time commitments required for volunteer firefighters have increased. This is due to increased training requirements and significant increases in calls for service.³ Lastly, changes in society have placed a burden on the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters. Individuals are working more, with families often relying on two-incomes or multiple jobs.⁴ People

¹ **Volunteer Fire Service Fact Sheet. National Volunteer Fire Council. 2019.** <https://www.nvfc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/NVFC-Fact-Sheet-2019.pdf>.

² **Ibid.**

³ **Ibid.**

⁴ **Ibid.**

are also traveling farther distances for work.⁵ This creates less available time to dedicate to volunteer fire service.

Effect

The overall effect of a decline in the recruitment and retention of volunteers, is less staff at FPDs to respond to calls for service. This places a greater burden on paid and volunteer staff to conduct that work; which can result in burn out for volunteers and further retention issues. Depending on the severity, it can also lead to a reduction in firefighters responding to a call. Shasta County is authorized to deploy up to 385 volunteers, but had only 149 volunteers when the Carr fire occurred in 2018.⁶

The Yolo County FPDs are experiencing the same decrease in volunteers and increase in service calls seen across the nation and state. Between 2008 and 2018 the number of volunteers declined by 70; a decline of 29%. In addition to the decline in volunteers, service calls have increased by 27% for the region.⁷ This places a strain on the local FPDs and current volunteers to maintain operations.

Sufficient Funding for Operations

Another challenge facing FPDs across the country is obtaining sufficient funding to maintain operations. Over the years rising costs for equipment and the need to obtain staffing has created a financial strain on FPDs.

The largest expense for most FPDs is the cost to obtain, maintain and replace apparatus and equipment; of which the cost has increased considerably. Over the years the prices have risen due to evolving technology and safety standards. In the 1980s a fire pumper truck cost around \$100,000, but is almost five times that amount today.⁸ While there is no established best practice for apparatus service life, the National Fire Protection Association recommends safety consideration as the primary factor; advising careful consideration be given for use of fire apparatus in first-line service when it is over 15 years old.⁹ The 2016 Yolo County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) Municipal Services Review (MSR) recommended the maximum service life for apparatus at around 20-25 years.¹⁰ As a result, districts must plan and

⁵ Gutierrez, Melody, and Megan Cassidy. "As California Burns, Volunteer Firefighters Become Harder to Find." *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 11, 2018. <https://www.sfchronicle.com/california-wildfires/article/As-California-burns-volunteer-firefighters-13148559.php>.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Yolo County FPDs, 2019.

⁸ Senate Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee. Senator Lisa Baker. *A Special Report: The Challenges of Firefighting Today*. 2013-2014 Legislative Session.

⁹ NFPA 1911. "Appendix D.1: General". In *Standard for the Inspection, Maintenance, Testing and Retirement of Automotive Fire Apparatus*. 2017 Edition.

¹⁰ Yolo Local Agency Formation Commission. *Municipal Services Review and Sphere of Influence Study for the 15 Fire Protection Districts*. Vol. 1. 2016, 49.

save years in advance in order to have sufficient funds to maintain apparatus and equipment within their service life.

As the number of volunteers decline, some FPDs have turned to hiring paid personnel, also known as career firefighters. The number of career firefighters in the United States has increased steadily from 237,750 in 1986 to 373,600 in 2017, a 57% increase.¹¹ For volunteer FPDs, hiring career firefighters can help ensure a more stable roster and results in a mixed operational model of both paid and volunteer staff.

Effect

Funding struggles can result in long term sustainability issues. In California multiple FPDs have closed or consolidated with other districts due to financial instability. The board of the volunteer Julian-Cuyamaca FPD in San Diego voted in February 2018 to dissolve due to financial and staffing shortfalls.¹² Similarly, in San Bernardino County, a large budget deficit in the county fire prevention district led the Board of Supervisors in October 2018 to expand one of the fire prevention zones with the hopes of more evenly increasing and distributing tax revenue.¹³

A number of FPDs in Yolo County were identified in the 2016 Yolo County LAFCo MSR as having long term financial sustainability issues. This was most evident in the prevalence of apparatus/vehicles past their recommended service life of 25 years. When examined all together, as of 2016, 53% of the 70 fire apparatus/vehicles in the Yolo County FPDs were over 15 years of age, 37% were over 20 years of age, and 29% were over 25 years of age.¹⁴ The local FPDs are thus faced with the high cost of replacing these items.

Strategies

As summarized in the table below a number of strategies have been undertaken by FPDs in the nation and within counties in California to address these challenges. A more detailed case study of some California counties is provided in the Appendix.

¹¹ Evarts, Ben and Gary Stein. *U.S. Fire Department Profile 2017 Report*. National Fire Protection Association. March 2019, 4. <https://www.nfpa.org/-/media/Files/News-and-Research/Fire-statistics-and-reports/Emergency-responders/osfdprofile.pdf>.

¹² Sridhar, Priya. "Julian Volunteer Firefighters Battle to Preserve Their District." *KPBS News*, October 3, 2018. <https://www.kpbs.org/news/2018/oct/03/julian-volunteer-fire-fighters-fight-preserve-volu/>.

¹³ Estacio, Martin. "Judge Denies Request to Delay County Fire Tax." *Daily Press*, April 2, 2019. <https://www.vvdailypress.com/news/20190402/judge-denies-request-to-delay-county-fire-tax>.

¹⁴ Yolo Local Agency Formation Commission. *Municipal Services Review*. 2016, 49.

Challenge:	Strategies
Recruitment and Retention of Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Improve recruitment efforts ● Provide incentives ● Hire career firefighters ● Reduce the training burden ● Explore Operational Alterations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Consolidation or Countywide FPD ○ Coordinating Agency ○ Contracted Services
Sufficient Funding for Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maximize grant funding opportunities ● Increase tax or fee revenue ● Redirection of Proposition 172 Funds ● Explore Operational Alterations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Consolidation or Countywide FPD ○ Coordinating Agency ○ Contracted Services

Conclusion & Recommended Next Steps

The Yolo County FPDs are facing the same challenges as FPDs across the nation and throughout the state of California. These challenges create the greatest struggle for the traditional model of independent/dependent FPDs, where volunteers serve as the foundation. While changing recruitment practices or obtaining alternative sources of funds can assist, these challenges are likely to continue long term. As a result, many counties in California have or are in the process of exploring operational changes as alternatives to the traditional FPD model.

It is the request and recommendation of the Yolo County Fire Chiefs Association that additional funding be provided by the County to the fire districts. Specifically, the fire chiefs request that the Board of Supervisors consider a redirection of Proposition 172 funds so that a portion is provided to the fire districts.

Based on the request of the fire chiefs and the strategies implored by other California counties, it is the recommendation of staff that the County enter into a collaborative process with the fire chiefs to explore funding and operational options for long term sustainability. Through this process the County would not only discuss potential new funding opportunities but also evaluate regionally where operational alterations,

such as those seen in other counties, may be of benefit. Staff would then return to the Board with final recommendations.

Overview of FPDs

History

Fire protection districts (FPDs) have a long tradition in the United States. Since the early beginnings of the American colonies, firefighting was seen as the responsibility of those living in the community. Formal volunteer firefighting organizations first began to form in the 1700s particularly among the cities of Philadelphia, Boston and New York. It wasn't until after the Civil War that large cities turned firefighting into a career by hiring individuals to fight fires, thus forming fire departments.¹⁵ This tradition has continued where cities often have a higher proportion of paid staff in their fire departments and rural areas often rely on FPDs with volunteer staff or a mix of paid and volunteer staff.

Today the majority of fire departments in the United States remain volunteer and provide an expanded array of services. Specifically, 65% of the 29,819 fire departments in the nation are comprised entirely of volunteers with an additional 18% considered mostly volunteered.¹⁶ Generally, the smaller the population the greater the community is reliant on all volunteer firefighting services.¹⁷ Additionally, firefighters have taken on an expanded role, as FPDs now provide multiple services outside of fire protection including emergency medical services and hazardous materials.

Organizational Models

In reviewing the various counties in California, there appear four distinct organizational models for fire protection: independent/dependent FPDs, countywide FPDs, contracted fire protection, and coordinating agency.

Independent/Dependent FPDs

One of the most common and traditional models for fire services is a collection of independent and/or dependent FPDs. These districts are generally found in rural areas and are heavily reliant on volunteers. Traditionally, FPDs are formed, funded, and sustained through efforts of the community and the FPD, separate from the county. Although it is not uncommon for counties to provide some financial

¹⁵ Collins, Craig. *The Heritage and Evolution of America's Volunteer Fire Service*. In *A Proud Tradition: 275 Years of the American Volunteer Fire Service*, 10-20. Florida: National Volunteer Fire Council, 2015. https://www.nvfc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Anniversary_Publication.pdf.

¹⁶ *Volunteer Fire Service Fact Sheet*. National Volunteer Fire Council. 2019.

¹⁷ Verzoni, Angelo. "Shrinking Resources, Growing Concern." *NFPA Journal*. 2017 (July 1, 2017). <https://www.nfpa.org/News-and-Research/Publications-and-Media/NFPA-Journal/2017/July-August-2017/Features/Rural>

assistance. An FPD is considered dependent if the county Board of Supervisors serves as the board for the district; otherwise, a FPD is considered wholly independent. This model is seen in Nevada County where there are eight FPDs, one all-volunteer FPD, and a county water district that provide fire and emergency response.¹⁸ This is also the model in Yolo County.

Countywide FPD

Under this model one agency serves as the FPD for the majority or entirety of the unincorporated area of a county. The agency will often contract with cities to provide their fire service as well. In this way, the services provided are equal across the region. There appear to be several examples of this model in California. One example is seen in Ventura County which has a countywide fire protection district that is a dependent district of the county. This district serves the entire unincorporated area as well as six of the ten cities.¹⁹

Contracted Services

A common model among California counties is to contract with nearby fire departments or CalFire for the provision of fire services. In Yolo County some fire districts currently contract with city fire departments to provide fire protection services within their service area. Similarly, in Amador County the cities of Jackson Rancheria and Plymouth contract with the Amador Fire Protection District to provide services in their cities.

Contract arrangements with CalFire also occur and can cover all of the incorporated area or just a particular portion. For example, counties such as Napa, Riverside and Butte contract with CalFire to cover all of the unincorporated areas of the county, with the exception of one independent FPD in Butte County.²⁰ While the contract arrangements vary, CalFire can provide both fire and emergency medical services.

In addition, CalFire also provides funds through contracts with some FPDs for fire services. In Marin County, CalFire provides funds to the Marin County Fire Department for the provision of fire suppression services throughout the state. This includes staffing, fire equipment, administration services, and infrastructure improvements. Marin County therefore provides initial response to fires in State Responsibility Areas.²¹

¹⁸ "Fire Services Follow Up: A Survey of Several Other Counties." San Luis Obispo, Local Agency Formation Commission, April 2018.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Marin County Fire Department. "Marin County Fire Department Strategic Plan 2017-2020." November 20, 2017.

Coordinating Agency

In this model, sometimes referred to as a regional fire services framework, an agency serves as an administrative or coordinating body for FPDs. This agency can be a county department, county service area, community services district, joint powers authority, nonprofit or other body. The coordinating body can assist with training, fiscal oversight, cooperative purchasing, recruitment, as well as shared staffing and apparatus. In this way, districts retain their independence while benefiting from some shared resources and assistance through an economy of scale. An example of this model was seen in Sonoma County, which had a department dedicated to administrative oversight and coordination for volunteer fire protection districts in the County. Due to financial and efficiency issues, the County has recently moved to disband the department in favor of having larger consolidated FPDs.

Yolo County Fire Protection Districts

Service Provision

In Yolo County, the unincorporated communities are served by fifteen rural FPDs. These districts provide fire protection and emergency medical services to an estimated 31,200 rural constituents,²² which cover approximately 965 square miles (See Figure 1). Population growth is estimated to be fairly low in the region. According to a 2016 Municipal Service Review (MSR) by the Yolo County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) growth in the unincorporated population was projected at a very modest 1.4% increase over the next twenty years.²³

Many of these FPDs have existed for a significant time in the community in which they serve; nearly one hundred years for some. For this reason, in addition to the emergency medical service function, some FPDs also serve a social function in their small communities, with the fire station often used as a center for community meetings and events.

Structure

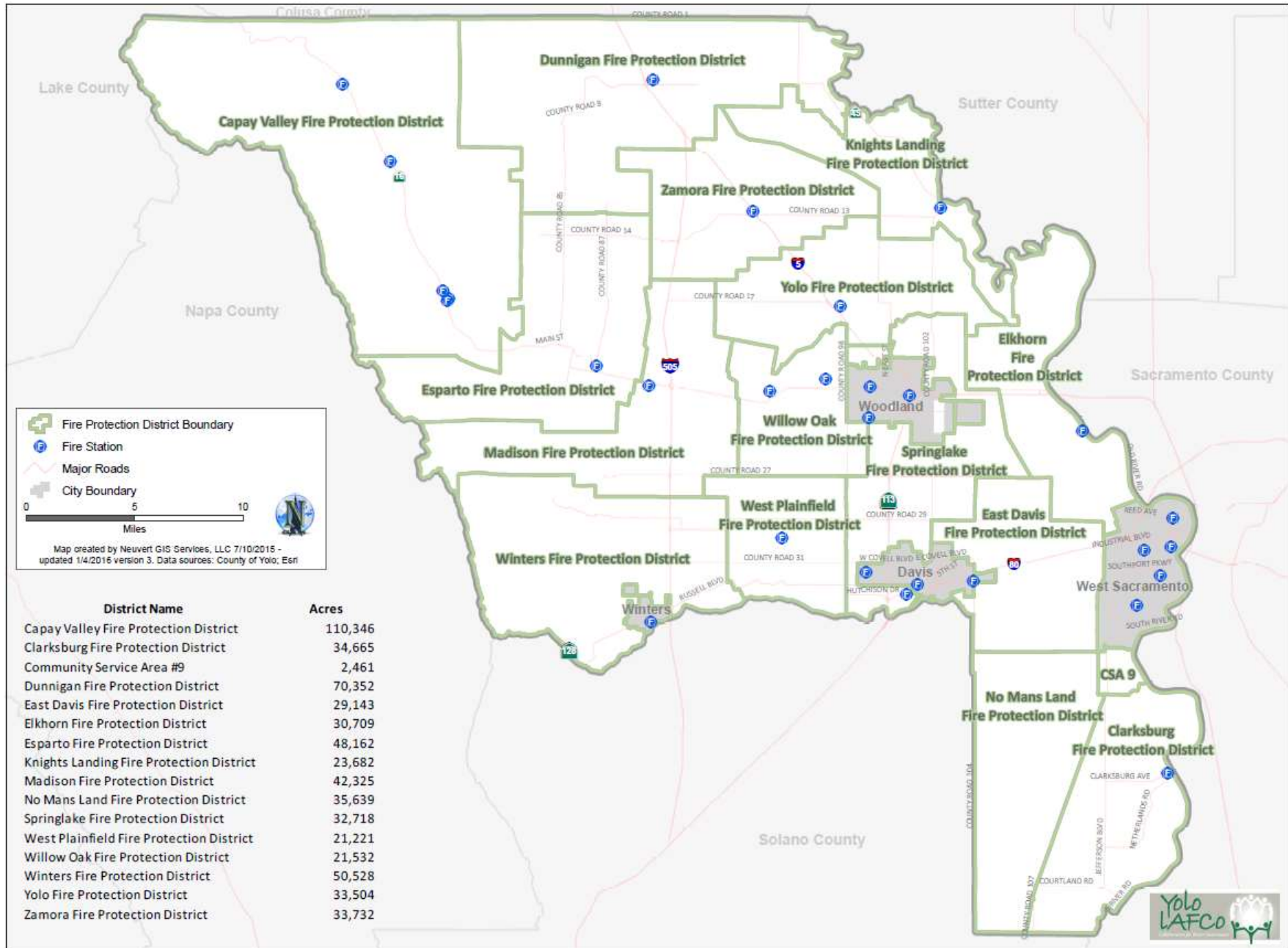
The fifteen FPDs in the county provide either direct or indirect services. An FPD provides fire and emergency medical services using volunteer or hired staff to the community in their sphere of influence as a direct services provider. Indirect services refers to the FPDs that contract with another FPD to provide these services in their community.

²² California Department of Finance, "E-1 Cities, Counties, and the State Population Estimates with Annual Percent Change-January 1, 2018 and 2019." (May 1, 2019).

<http://www.dof.ca.gov/Forecasting/Demographics/Estimates/E-1/>

²³ Yolo Local Agency Formation Commission. *Municipal Services Review*. 2016, 2.

Figure 1: Yolo County Fire Protection Districts



Eleven of the FPDs in Yolo County provide direct services with staff comprised of all volunteers or a combination of volunteer and paid individuals. The districts operate with funds collected or raised in each district, which are utilized to pay for operating, equipment costs, and capital improvements. While each of the direct service FPDs operate independently, with their own separate facilities and equipment, mutual aid agreements exist amongst the districts to share response resources.²⁴

The remaining four FPDs contract for the provision of services with a nearby city fire department. These are the East Davis, No Man's Land, Springlake and Winters FPDs. Therefore, the fees collected for these districts are used to pay the city fire department for services in accordance with an established contract. For this reason, these FPDs do not own fire stations or apparatus and do not have any staff (volunteer or paid) outside of their appointed Board members.

Each FPD is managed by an appointed five-member policy board, with the exception of the Yolo FPD that has an elected three-member Board of Directors. Of the fifteen FPDs, the Yolo County Board of Supervisors has "control" over nine FPDs which means, under state law, the Board can delegate any or all of its power to a Board of Fire Commissioners. The remaining six FPDs are under local control with their own governing board (see Table 1). Every FPD chief also serves as a member of the Yolo County Fire Chiefs Association which assists in coordination and communication among the various agencies.

Table 1: FPD Structure

FPD	Date Organized	Control	Board	Direct or Indirect	Contract
Capay	January 18, 1927	Board of Supervisors	Appointed	Direct	N/A
Clarksburg	December 17, 1946	Local	Appointed	Direct	N/A
Dunnigan	July 19, 1927	Board of Supervisors	Appointed	Direct	N/A
East Davis	January 23, 1953	Board of Supervisors	Appointed	Indirect	City of Davis
Elkhorn	May 24, 1965	Local	Appointed	Direct	N/A
Esparto	April 21, 1931	Board of Supervisors	Appointed	Direct	N/A
Knights Landing	May 11, 1942	Board of Supervisors	Appointed	Direct	N/A
Madison	May 5, 1950	Local	Appointed	Direct	N/A
No Man's Land	August 5, 1974	Board of Supervisors	Appointed	Indirect	City of Davis
Springlake	July 9, 1942	Local	Appointed	Indirect	Cities of Davis & Woodland
West Plainfield	January 6, 1930	Board of Supervisors	Appointed	Direct	N/A
Willow Oak	June 7, 1937	Board of Supervisors	Appointed	Direct	N/A
Winters	May 20, 1930	Board of Supervisors	Appointed	Indirect	City of Winters
Yolo	April 3, 1939	Local	Elected	Direct	N/A
Zamora	November 28, 1938	Local	Appointed	Direct	N/A

Source: Yolo LAFCo, "MSR," 2016 and the Yolo County Board of Supervisors, meeting 1986

²⁴ Yolo Local Agency Formation Commission. *Municipal Services Review. 2016.*

Personnel

Staffing for each of the FPDs varies by the direct/indirect structure and the agency itself. The indirect service FPDs, that contract with a city fire department, receive the services of that city's career and volunteer staff. For that reason, the only personnel of these FPDs are the appointed board; which are unpaid.

For the FPDs that perform direct services, the format of personnel depends on the district; a breakdown is provided in Table 2. Every FPD has a Fire Chief appointed by their board. This position oversees the volunteers and any paid staff. All of these FPDs rely heavily on volunteers for operations with volunteers comprising approximately 93% of personnel. This assists in providing significant cost savings to the agencies which would otherwise have to hire personnel. Five of the direct service FPDs rely entirely on volunteer personnel while the remaining six FPDs employ paid staff along with their volunteers. The personnel, both paid and volunteer, can serve multiple functions in the FPDs including administrative support, emergency medical, firefighter, and/or driver/operator for apparatus. However, the majority of paid positions (7.5 positions) are for officers, only one paid position is for a firefighter.

Table 2: FPD Personnel, 2018

Fire Protection Districts	Paid Personnel		Volunteer Personnel*
	Full Time	Part Time	
Capay FPD	0	0.5	14
Clarksburg FPD	0	0	25
Dunnigan FPD	1	0.25	24
East Davis FPD**	0	0	0
Elkhorn FPD	0	0	6
Esparto FPD	1	0.25	18
Knights Landing FPD	0	0	13
Madison FPD	1	0	13
No Man's Land FPD**	0	0	0
Springlake FPD**	0	0	0
West Plainfield FPD	2	0.5	7
Willow Oak FPD	4	0.25	3
Winters FPD**	0	0	0
Yolo FPD	1	1	19
Zamora FPD	0	0	13
TOTAL	10	2.75	155

*Does not include paid personnel

**Indirect service FPD

Source: Yolo County FPDs, 2018

Budget

State law dictates the budgeting practices and format for the local FPDs. According to a 2016 Yolo County LAFCo MSR, all of the districts appeared to conform to the state budgeting practices required by law as well as industry-recognized best practices for public agencies.²⁵

Revenue

FPDs have a combination of stable and variable income sources. The stable ongoing revenue sources, coming from taxes and fees, make up the vast majority of income for the FPDs at around 82%. All of the districts receive a share of the local property taxes, which often serve as the largest source of stable revenue. Some of the FPDs also receive funds from a parcel tax benefit assessment (which requires a majority approval from voters) and/or development impact fees.

More variable income for the FPDs can come from a variety of different sources. This can include interest accrual, intergovernmental revenue, service charges, donations and grants. Five of the districts, Capay Valley, Esparto, Madison, Willow Oak, and Yolo, receive an annual portion of tribal compact funds allocated from the County.

Due to the number of income sources, which differ by the size of the district and property valuations, the amount of revenue can vary greatly by FPD as shown in Table 3.

Expenses

The expenses for the direct service FPDs differs significantly from the indirect service districts. For the indirect service districts the majority of revenue goes towards the payment of the service contract with the cities. However, direct service FPDs must utilize revenue for cost of operations. Generally, the largest expense for these districts is maintenance and replacement of capital infrastructure which includes fire equipment, fire stations, and apparatus.

To prepare for these capital infrastructure needs as well as any contingencies, including the ending of a contract with the cities, all of the direct and indirect FPDs raise and store revenue in fiscal reserves (see Table 4). For this reason the FPDs generally net revenue each year but this amount can vary dramatically from year to year, particularly if any capital asset purchases or facility repairs are made.

²⁵ Yolo Local Agency Formation Commission. *Municipal Services Review. 2016.*

Table 3: Yolo County FPD Revenue Sources for FY17-18

FPD	Ongoing Stable Revenues			Investments	Intergovernmental Revenue	Service Charges**	Other	Total
	Property Tax (Percentage for Average TRA)*	Benefit Assessment	Development Impact Fees					
Capay Valley	\$156,513.50 (District: 7.47%) (County: 13.04%)	\$0	\$10,017.12	\$11,136.01	\$38,895.78	\$0	\$60,000	\$276,562.41
Clarksburg	\$82,549.53 (District: 1.91%) (County: 13.49%)	\$81,601.78	\$1,934.93	\$5,448.27	\$10,789.86	\$13,615.82	\$0	\$195,940.19
Dunnigan	\$171,692.47 (District: 7.47%) (County: 13.04%)	\$0	\$19,376.20	\$3,507.17	\$2,249.83	\$48,432.39	\$19,649.18	\$264,907.24
East Davis	\$524,677.01 (District: 9.57%) (County: 10.76%)	\$210,513.88	\$0	\$19,057.60	\$10,723.60	\$0	\$0	\$764,972.09
Elkhorn	\$49,939.56 (District: 3.13%) (County: 12.35%)	\$67,364.00	\$0	\$3,704.67	\$28.79	\$0	\$0	\$121,037.02
Esparto	\$162,752.71 (District: 3.77%) (County: 13.23%)	\$59,997.00	\$15,931.67	\$5,728.24	\$133,498.58	\$0	\$25,524.52	\$403,432.72
Knights Landing	\$75,700.22 (District: 6.67%) (County: 11.01%)	\$15,931.50	\$415.82	\$5,182.31	\$9,870.96	\$0	\$726.70	\$107,827.51

Madison	\$161,053.93 (District: 6.20%) (County: 12.86%)	\$23,006.78	\$4,640.46	\$3,678.64	\$108,855.20	\$0	\$7,200	\$308,435.01
No Man's Land	\$7,475.82 (District: 1.92%) (County: 12.29%)	\$16,259.14	\$0	\$580.42	\$234.72	\$0	\$0	\$24,550.10
Springlake	\$428,270.64 (District: 7.23%) (County: 11.56%)	\$50,656.90	\$0	\$1,552.44	\$1,000.07	\$0	\$2,182.17	\$483,662.22
West Plainfield	\$329,194.64 (District: 13.68%) (County: 10.51%)	\$0	\$0	\$5,419.73	\$1,500.43	\$0	\$26,054.33	\$362,169.13
Willow Oak	\$320,326.02 (District: 4.87%) (County: 12.15%)	\$58,399.90	\$20,912.00	\$9,113.39	\$27,033.80	\$94,415.85	\$27,266.27	\$557,467.23
Winters	\$310,699.46 (District: 10.99%) (County: 11.27%)	\$0	\$0	\$6,918.01	\$2,795.16	\$0	\$0	\$320,412.63
Yolo	\$95,247.23 (District: 3.60%) (County: 12.38%)	\$33,826.80	\$41,903.64	\$4,513.79	\$30,380.70	\$2,442.88	\$15.00	\$208,330.04
Zamora	\$113,059.22 (District: 6.84%) (County: 12.42%)	\$16,352.00	\$0	\$5,357.83	\$202.98	\$0	\$265.00	\$135,237.03

*The percentages display the percent of property tax received by the fire district and by the County General Fund when examining the average TRA for each respective fire district's jurisdiction in FY17-18.

**Revenue that may fall under the "Service Charges" category includes strike team or state response.

Source: Yolo County Department of Finance

Table 4: Yolo County FPD Revenue, Expenses & Reserves

District		FY16-17	FY17-18	Reserve Funds As of July 1, 2018*	
Capay FPD	Revenue	\$337,391.66	\$276,562.41	Committed	\$59,668.23
	Expenses	\$196,672.43	\$74,639.49	Assigned	\$424,111.32
	E/R Ratio	58.29%	26.99%	Unassigned	\$474,497.29
Clarksburg FPD	Revenue	\$195,534.87	\$195,940.19	Committed	\$2,669.44
	Expenses	\$329,973.13	\$161,860.97	Assigned	\$371,746.84
	Net	168.75%	82.61%	Unassigned	\$55,226.37
Dunnigan FPD	Revenue	\$201,571.55	\$264,907.24	Committed	\$41,434.47
	Expenses	\$172,957.01	\$230,705.01	Assigned	\$183,534.08
	Net	85.8%	87.09%	Unassigned	\$84,388.75
East Davis FPD**	Revenue	\$738,157.79	\$764,972.09	Committed	\$0
	Expenses	\$675,173.43	\$718,423.96	Assigned	\$1,238,558.45
	Net	91.47%	93.92%	Unassigned	\$97,374.35
Elkhorn FPD	Revenue	\$185,912.08	\$121,037.02	Committed	\$0
	Expenses	\$106,892.65	\$23,502.73	Assigned	\$0
	Net	87.5%	19.42%	Unassigned	\$343,663.21
Esparto FPD	Revenue	\$267,933.83	\$403,432.72	Committed	\$85,972.81
	Expenses	\$209,591.91	\$420,854.01	Assigned	\$195,213.97
	Net	78.23%	104.32%	Unassigned	\$240,154.50
Knights Landing FPD	Revenue	\$201,655.51	\$107,827.51	Committed	\$110,900.82
	Expenses	\$169,672.54	\$78,159.18	Assigned	\$153,198.78
	Net	84.14%	72.49%	Unassigned	\$160,643.53
Madison FPD				Restricted	\$50,000.00
	Revenue	\$214,170.69	\$308,435.01	Committed	\$12,360.03
	Expenses	\$196,207.57	\$234,211.03	Assigned	\$44,732.67
	Net	91.61%	75.94%	Unassigned	\$251,602.08
No Man's Land FPD**	Revenue	\$24,116.70	\$24,550.10	Committed	\$4,786.75
	Expenses	\$69,175.24	\$1,493.22	Assigned	\$55,404.00
	Net	286.84%	6.08%	Unassigned	-\$38,686.75
Springlake FPD**	Revenue	\$475,370.00	\$483,662.22	Committed	\$0
	Expenses	\$583,417.13	\$486,300.36	Assigned	\$0
	Net	122.73%	100.55%	Unassigned	-\$2,638.14
West Plainfield FPD	Revenue	\$456,705.71	\$362,169.13	Committed	\$0
	Expenses	\$406,910.05	\$278,698.94	Assigned	\$253,035.40
	Net	89.1%	76.95%	Unassigned	\$239,456.35
Willow Oak FPD	Revenue	\$529,307.19	\$557,467.23	Committed	\$190,372.78
	Expenses	\$424,718.91	\$421,800.75	Assigned	\$398,705.01

	Net	80.24%	75.66%	Unassigned	\$226,753.62
Winters FPD**	Revenue	\$301,444.53	\$320,412.63	Committed	\$83,121.37
	Expenses	\$295,472.42	\$313,751.39	Assigned	\$384,475.06
	Net	98.02%	97.92%	Unassigned	\$43,246.04
Yolo FPD				Restricted	\$76,595.30
	Revenue	\$247,089.70	\$208,330.04	Committed	\$67,769.91
	Expenses	\$200,942.42	\$150,910.08	Assigned	\$109,303.51
	Net	81.32%	72.44%	Unassigned	\$125,085.99
Zamora FPD	Revenue	\$197,574.41	\$187,026.05	Committed	\$3,145.12
	Expenses	\$117,503.10	\$138,100.24	Assigned	\$323,913.75
	Net	59.47%	73.84%	Unassigned	\$126,359.82

Source: Yolo County Department of Finance

Challenges Facing Volunteer FPDs

FPDs across the nation are facing two significant challenges: the recruitment and retention of volunteers as well as obtaining sufficient funding to maintain operations. While felt nationally these struggles are also occurring across the state of California and locally within the FPDs of Yolo County. What follows is a description of those challenges, first on the national and state level and then followed by the effect on the Yolo County FPDs.

Recruitment and Retention of Volunteers

Reduction

A large base of reliable trained volunteers is the backbone of the volunteer FPDs. According to the National Fire Protection Association, volunteers comprised 65% of all firefighters in the United States in 2017. Additionally, the majority of fire departments in the nation are volunteer.²⁶ This is most prevalent in the rural areas where all-volunteer fire departments make up 74% of communities with a population between 2,500 to 4,999 and 92.7% for communities with a population below 2,500.²⁷

In California volunteers have a strong role as well. In the state one third of the estimated 28,000 firefighters are volunteers and most are in the rural areas.²⁸

The use of volunteers provides large cost savings to rural communities. Without volunteers FPDs would need significantly more funding to hire an equivalent number of paid career staff. As a result, the National Fire Protection Association estimates annual cost savings from volunteer firefighters at \$46.9 billion.²⁹

Despite the strong reliance on volunteer firefighters, FPDs have struggled with a steadily decreasing volunteer base. As shown in Figures 2 and 3, volunteer numbers have fluctuated since the 1980s and have recently hit their lowest in the past thirty years. When the rates of volunteer firefighters per 1,000 people protected for mostly or all volunteer departments are examined, the rates show a downward trend and range from a high of 8.05 in 1987 to a low of 5.8 in 2017 per 1,000 population protected. This problem is further exacerbated by the triple increase in calls for service.³⁰

²⁶ *Volunteer Fire Service Fact Sheet. 2019.*

²⁷ *Verzoni. "Shrinking Resources, Growing Concern." 2017.*

²⁸ *Gutierrez & Cassidy. "As California Burns." 2018.*

²⁹ *Volunteer Fire Service Fact Sheet. 2019.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

As previously mentioned, over the years the role of firefighters has expanded outside of regular fire services. While fire services vary, many FPDs provide emergency medical and hazardous materials services.³¹ The growth in these additional roles for firefighters over the years has created greater demand on their services. In fact, emergency medical calls are more common than calls regarding fire.³² This creates a significant challenge for FPDs, particularly those made entirely or partially of volunteers, to keep up with the demand despite a dwindling number of volunteer staff.

Causes

The reduction in volunteer firefighters is believed to be the result of several causes. These include training requirements, time demands, and changes in sociological conditions.

Training Requirements

Training requirements have increased significantly over the years, particularly as the role of firefighters has expanded into handling emergency medical services and hazardous materials. While each state adopts its own training requirements, California state law requires volunteer firefighters to take the same certification training as paid firefighters.³³ Initial training can take anywhere from 240-480 hours to meet the minimum mandated and recommended requirements before a volunteer can respond to emergency incidents; which is then followed by annual training of 259-287 hours.³⁴ A result of these requirements are that volunteer firefighters are prepared at a much higher skill level than their predecessors.³⁵ However, the increased training requirements creates a burden that often results in a large barrier for recruiting volunteers willing to dedicate the amount of time to train.

³¹ Seeger, Eric. *Volunteer Fire Service Today*. In *A Proud Tradition: 275 Years of the American Volunteer Fire Service*, 28-35. Florida: National Volunteer Fire Council, 2015. https://www.nvfc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Anniversary_Publication.pdf.

³² Ibid.

³³ Gutierrez & Cassidy. "As California Burns." 2018.

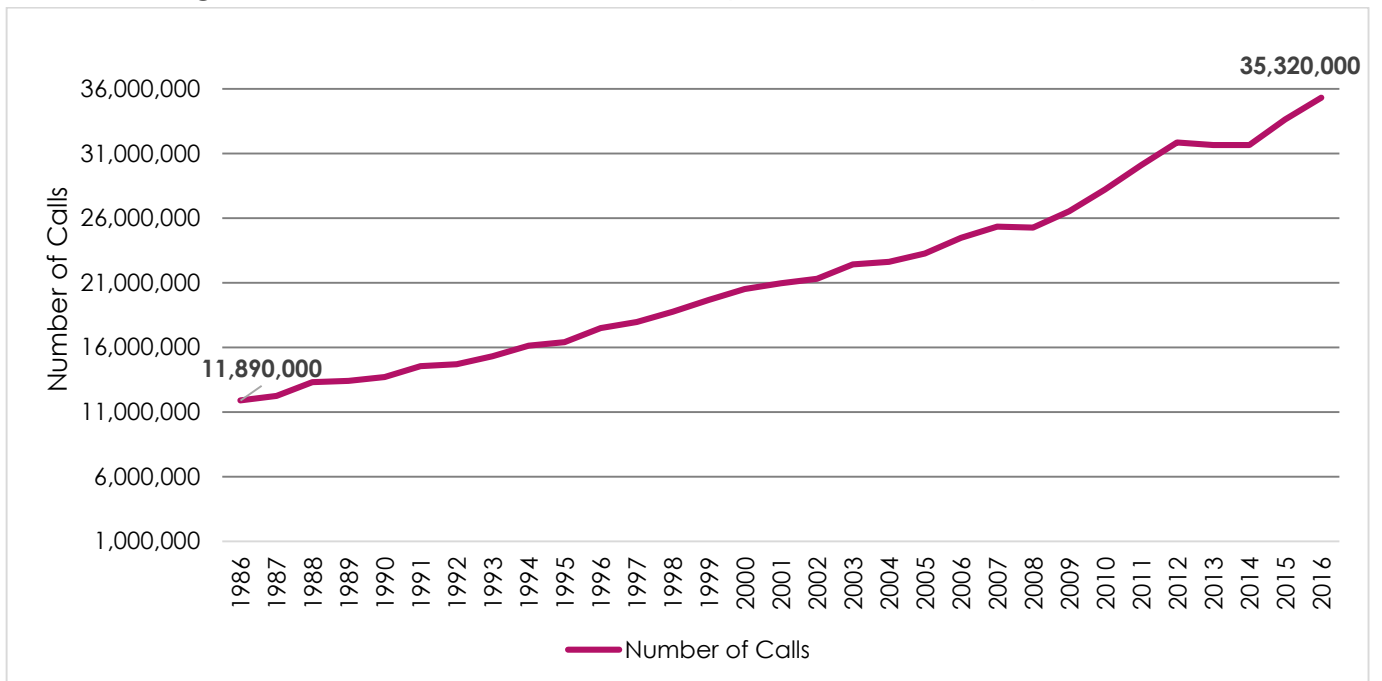
³⁴ Yolo Local Agency Formation Commission. *Municipal Services Review*. 2016.

³⁵ Seeger. *Volunteer Fire Service Today*. 2015.

Figure 2: Number of Volunteer Firefighters and Rate per 1,000 people in U.S.³⁶



Figure 3: Number of U.S. Fire Department Calls by Year³⁷



³⁶ Evarts & Stein. *U.S. Fire Department Profile 2017*. 2019, 4.

³⁷ *Volunteer Fire Service Fact Sheet*. 2019.

Time Demands

The time commitments required for volunteer firefighters have also increased. This is due to the increasing training requirements and significant increase in calls for service;³⁸ both of which can be linked to the expanded role of fire departments. Currently, calls for emergency medical services occur more frequently than calls for fire and, with the baby boomer population aging, it is anticipated that medical calls will continue to grow.³⁹ This is coupled with a higher fire demand, particularly in the state of California.⁴⁰ As a result, the time commitment expectations for volunteer firefighters have increased. This can make it difficult not only to recruit new volunteers but to retain current volunteers.

Changes in Sociological Conditions

Changes in society have also placed a burden on the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters. Individuals are working more, with families often relying on two-incomes or multiple jobs.⁴¹ This creates less available time to dedicate to volunteer fire service. Additionally, people are traveling farther distances for work.⁴² Rather than working locally in rural communities, people are commuting to urban areas where economic and job growth is more common. This distance means that volunteers have less flexibility to leave their jobs and respond to a service call. Similarly, employers outside of the rural community are less likely to allow their employees that flexibility.⁴³

Some sources also point towards a generational change as a cause for the decline in volunteers. As generations work more and gravitate towards job opportunities outside the rural areas, there is less community connection. This disconnect from the local community can be a contributing factor to a decline in volunteering.⁴⁴ Furthermore, as younger generations move toward more urban areas, rural population growth reduces. According to the 2000 and 2010 U.S. Census, the population in rural areas is decreasing across the nation.⁴⁵ This is evident as well in the aging volunteer firefighter workforce. With less volunteers from younger generations, the ages of volunteers are increasing. In a 2017 survey, adults 50 years and older made up 32% of firefighters for communities with a population under 2,500 compared

³⁸ *Volunteer Fire Service Fact Sheet. 2019.*

³⁹ *Seeger, Eric. Volunteer Fire Service Today. 2015.*

⁴⁰ *Gutierrez & Cassidy. "As California Burns." 2018.*

⁴¹ *Volunteer Fire Service Fact Sheet. 2019.*

⁴² *Gutierrez & Cassidy. "As California Burns." 2018.*

⁴³ *Volunteer Fire Service Fact Sheet. 2019.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Verzoni. "Shrinking Resources." 2017.*

to 15.9% in 1987.⁴⁶ If population growth in the rural areas continues to slow, then the pool of volunteers in those areas is likely to continue to decrease.

Effects

The overall effect of a decline in the recruitment and retention of volunteers, is less staff at FPDs to respond to calls for service. This places a greater burden on paid and volunteer staff to conduct that work. Which can result in burn out for volunteers and further retention issues.

Depending on the severity, it can also lead to a reduction in firefighters responding to a call. According to then Fire Chief Kim Zagaris in 2018, of the California Office of Emergency Services, a quick response time is paramount and a small volunteer force places rural communities at greater risk.⁴⁷ This can be particularly difficult in rural communities, which often handle the brunt of wildfire activity.⁴⁸

In California, where fires have continued to increase in number and severity, rural FPDs have begun to raise alarm at staffing decline. In 2018 Cliff Allen, the president of the state union for paid firefighters, Cal Fire Local 2881, described the increase in fires as the “new normal” and expressed concern that staffing was not keeping pace with the demand.⁴⁹ Tuolumne County conducted an aggressive marketing campaign in 2017 that brought their volunteers from 36 to 70. However, this was still far below the fire warden’s estimate of 250 to 300 volunteers needed to meet adequate staffing.⁵⁰ Similarly, Shasta County is authorized to deploy up to 385 volunteers, but had only 149 volunteers when the Carr fire occurred in 2018.⁵¹

Yolo County Effect

Volunteer Decrease

The Yolo County FPDs are experiencing the same decrease in volunteers and increase in service calls seen across the nation and state. As shown in Figure 4, the total number of active volunteers, not including paid staff, for all of the Yolo County FPDs has steadily decreased over the past ten years. In fact, between 2008 and 2018 volunteers dropped by 29%. If that trend continues, by the year 2028 volunteers could reduce to around 123; almost half the amount of volunteers seen twenty years prior.

⁴⁶ *Volunteer Fire Service Fact Sheet. 2019.*

⁴⁷ *Gutierrez & Cassidy. "As California Burns." 2018.*

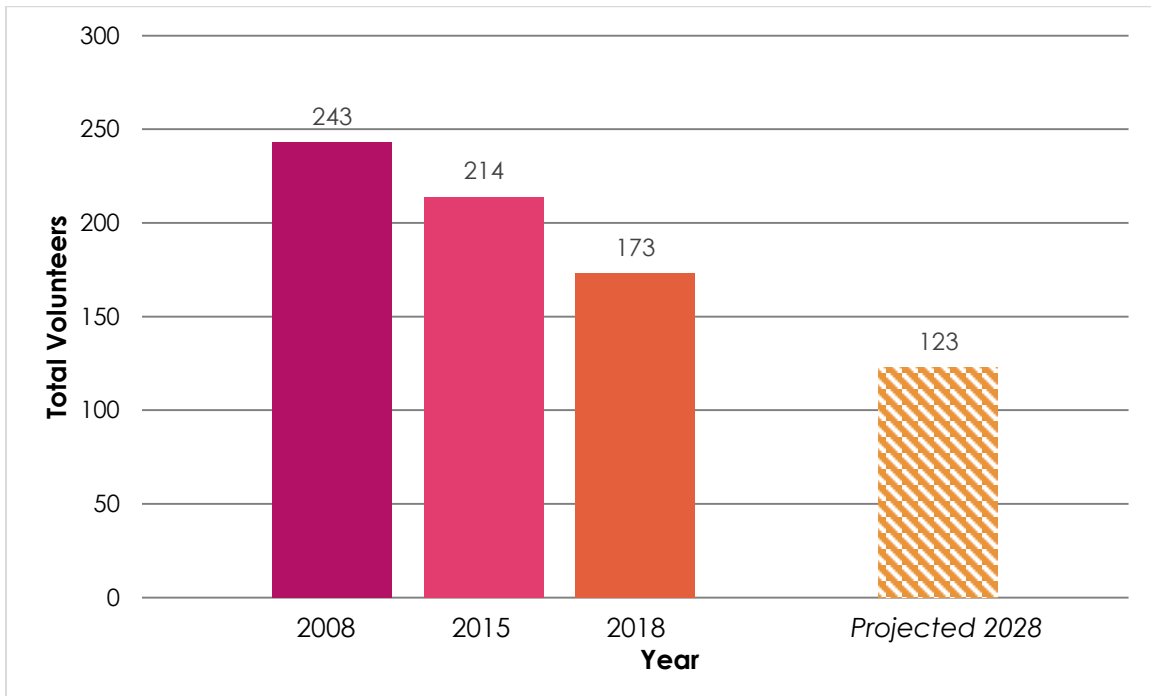
⁴⁸ *Verzoni. "Shrinking Resources." 2017.*

⁴⁹ *Gutierrez & Cassidy. "As California Burns." 2018.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

Figure 4: Total Active Volunteers for Yolo County FPDs, 2008-2018*



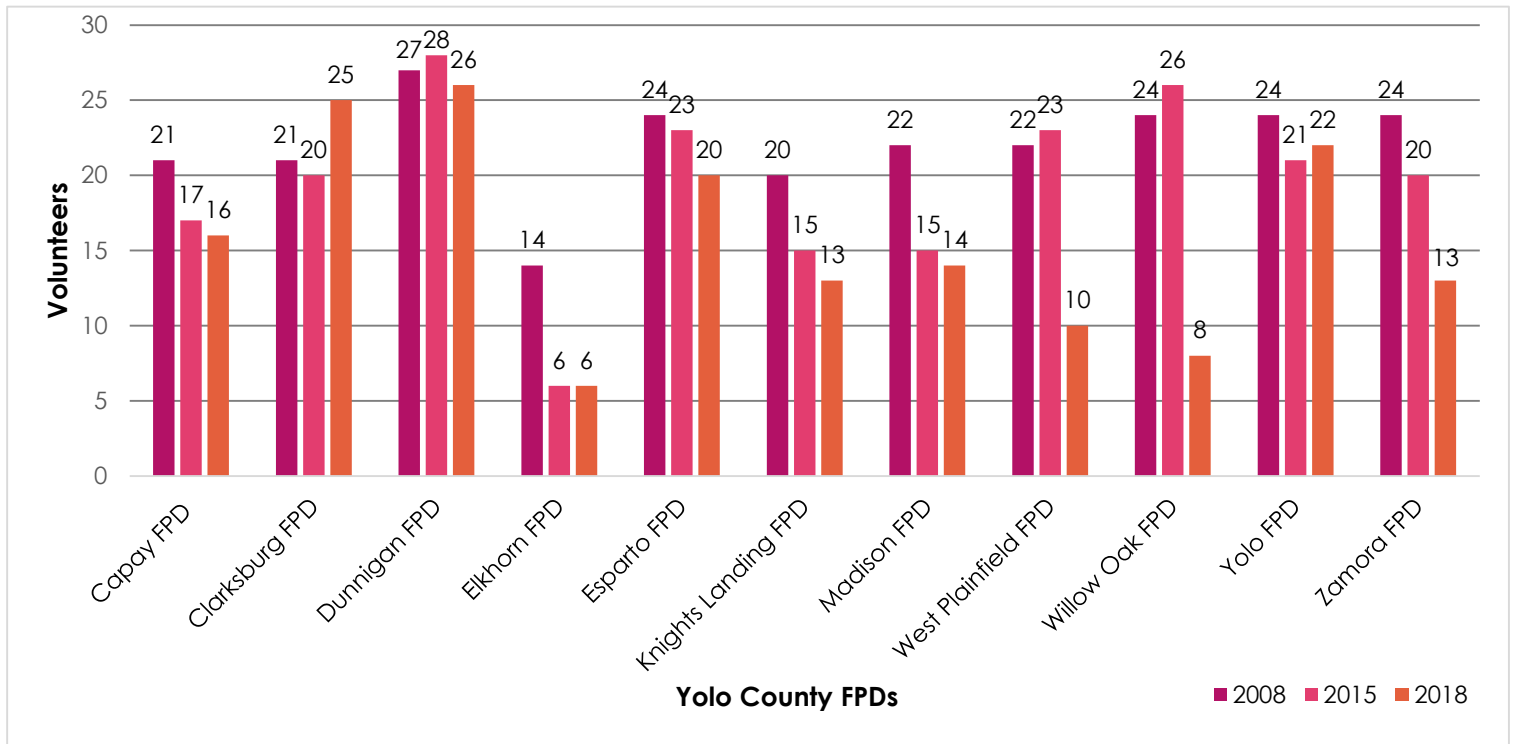
Source: Yolo County FPDs, 2018

*Includes paid staff and does not include FPDs that provide indirect services.

When examining the number of volunteers by individual FPD, the experience varies. Almost all of the direct service FPDs have experienced a decrease (shown in Figure 5). The most striking decline occurred in the West Plainfield and Willow Oaks FPDs where both jumped from over twenty volunteers to ten or less in three years. However, the exception to the volunteer decline is the Clarksburg FPD, which experienced a slight increase over the ten year period, and the Yolo and Dunnigan FPDs, which remained relatively stable. Nonetheless, according to the 2016 Yolo LAFCo Municipal Service Review, the low numbers of volunteers has persisted despite continual recruitment efforts conducted by the districts.⁵²

⁵² Yolo Local Agency Formation Commission. *Municipal Services Review*. 2016.

Figure 5: Active Volunteers by Yolo County FPDs, 2008-2018*



*Includes paid staff and does not include FPDs that provide indirect services.

Source: Yolo County FPDs, 2018.

Service Demand Increase

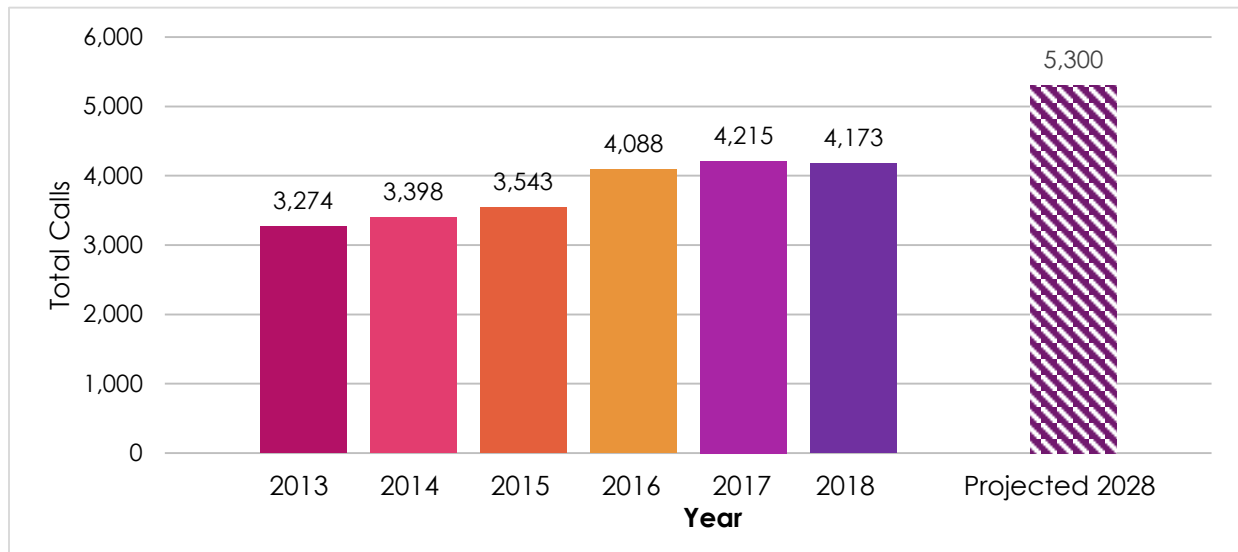
In addition to the decline in volunteers, service calls have increased for the region. These include calls for fire, medical and other emergency incidents. As reported by each of the Yolo FPDs in Figure 6, from 2013 to 2018 service calls increased by 27%. The 2016 LAFCo MSR, found that the majority of service calls (55%) for all the districts tended to occur for EMS rather than fire (11%).⁵³

The increase in service calls coupled with the decrease in volunteers, creates a burden on the FPDs to maintain service levels. Despite these challenges, the 2016 LAFCo MSR found all 15 FPDs met reasonable expectations in both their capacity and adequacy of service. This conclusion was based on measures including the FPDs response time, incident staffing, and turnout time.⁵⁴ Therefore, while the Yolo County FPDs have managed to maintain levels of service with less volunteers and increased calls for service, long term solutions are needed.

⁵³ Yolo Local Agency Formation Commission. *Municipal Services Review*. 2016.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 2.

Figure 6: Total Calls for Service for Yolo County FPDs



Source: Yolo County FPDs, 2018.

Sufficient Funding for Operations

Another challenge facing FPDs across the country is obtaining sufficient funding to maintain operations. Over the years rising costs for equipment and the need to obtain staffing has created a financial strain on FPDs.

Rising Equipment Costs

The largest expense for most FPDs is the cost to obtain, maintain and replace apparatus and equipment; and the cost of these has increased considerably. Particularly, the various engines and vehicles utilized for service call response. According to the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC), the cost of equipment for one firefighter can amount up to \$14,000 in some incidences.⁵⁵ Similarly, the costs of vehicles are significant, particularly in California where stricter requirements can drive the prices higher than in other parts of the country. The Yolo County Fire Chiefs estimated the cost of a quality ladder truck from \$900,000-\$1,500,000 and a fire pumper truck ranging from \$500,000-\$750,000; with the costs often increasing 3-5% each year. Over the years the prices have risen due to evolving technology and safety standards. In the 1980s a fire pumper truck cost around \$100,000, but is five times that amount today.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ *Volunteer Fire Service Fact Sheet*. 2019.

⁵⁶ *Senate Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee. Senator Lisa Baker. A Special Report: The Challenges of Firefighting Today*. 2013-2014 Legislative Session.

While there is no established best practice for apparatus service life, the National Fire Protection Association recommends safety consideration as the primary factor; advising careful consideration be given for use of fire apparatus in first-line service when it is over 15 years old.⁵⁷ The Yolo County 2016 LAFCo MSR recommended the maximum service life for apparatus at around 20-25 years.⁵⁸ As a result, districts must plan and save years in advance in order to have sufficient funds to maintain apparatus and equipment within their service life.

Staffing Costs

As the number of volunteers decline, some FPDs have turned to hiring paid personnel, also known as career firefighters. For all volunteer FPDs, hiring career firefighters can help ensure a more stable roster and results in a mixed operational model of both paid and volunteer staff. As shown in Figure 7 the number of career firefighters in the United States has increased steadily from 237,750 in 1986 to 373,600 in 2017, a 57% increase. When compared to population growth, the number of career firefighters appears to have remained relatively level over time. However, this still displays an increasing presence of career firefighters considering that the number of volunteer firefighters has dropped relative to the population (previously shown in Figure 2).⁵⁹ Overall, career firefighter's result in a new cost consideration for FPDs that have traditionally operated solely on volunteers.

An increase in staffing costs is also occurring through the provision of financial incentives. Financial incentives can include items such as small stipends, retirement accounts, and state or local tax credits.⁶⁰ These are utilized by some districts to help recruit and retain volunteers in the face of increasing time and training demands. However, staffing and financial incentives can be expensive and creates a further strain on districts already struggling to maintain and raise funding for operations and equipment.

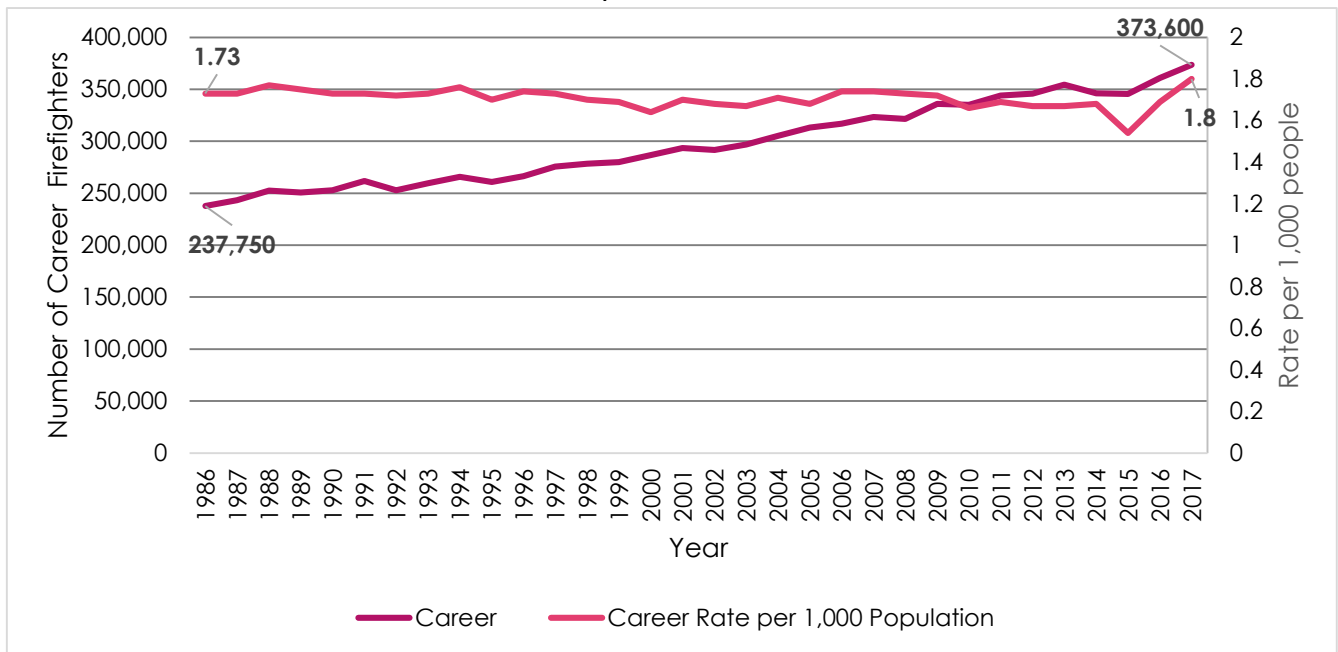
⁵⁷ NFPA 1911. "Appendix D.1: General". 2017.

⁵⁸ Yolo Local Agency Formation Commission. *Municipal Services Review*. 2016, 49.

⁵⁹ Evarts & Stein. *U.S. Fire Department Profile 2017*. 2019.

⁶⁰ Gutierrez & Cassidy. "As California Burns." 2018.

Figure 7: Number of Career Firefighters and Rate per 1,000 People in U.S.⁶¹



Effects

Funding struggles can result in increased time commitments and outdated equipment. With rising costs, more time must be spent on obtaining funding through grant applications or fundraising efforts. This requires additional time commitment from volunteers already feeling overburdened by training commitments. If sufficient funds are not obtained, then FPDs are at risk of relying on equipment that is outdated and beyond its service life.

Additionally, operational changes often result when efficient funds are not obtained. In California multiple FPDs have closed or consolidated with other districts due to financial instability. The board of the volunteer Julian-Cuyamaca FPD in San Diego voted in February 2018 to dissolve due to financial and staffing shortfalls.⁶² Similarly, in San Bernardino County, a large budget deficit in the county fire prevention district led the Board of Supervisors in October 2018 to expand one of the fire prevention zones with the hopes of more evenly increasing and distributing tax revenue.⁶³

Yolo County Effect

A number of FPDs in Yolo County have been highlighted as having financial sustainability issues. The 2016 LAFCo MSR identified sustainability concerns with almost

⁶¹ Evarts & Stein, *U.S. Fire Department Profile 2017*. 2019, 4.

⁶² Sridhar, Priya. "Julian Volunteer Firefighters Battle to Preserve Their District." 2018.

⁶³ Estacio, Martin. "Judge Denies Request to Delay County Fire Tax." *Daily Press*, April 2, 2019.

<https://www.vvdailypress.com/news/20190402/judge-denies-request-to-delay-county-fire-tax>.

half of the FPDs, as shown in Table 5. The determinations of the report were based on a fiscal analysis of multiple factors projected over a 20 year period; including fiscal reserves, debt service, expenditure/revenue ratio, ability to fund infrastructure replacement, and infrastructure age. Additionally, the analysis came to its conclusions while using conservative revenue projections and including costs for replacement of capital equipment with new equipment after 25 years of service life.⁶⁴ Each district was described under one of three categories: contract district, full or partial fiscal capacity, or needs fiscal assistance. It should be noted that these determinations are based on data prior to 2016 and therefore the current fiscal standing of the FPDs may differ.

Table 5: Yolo County FPD Fiscal Health and Sustainability

District	Category	Fiscal Sustainability
East Davis	Contract District	Sustainable
No Man's Land	Contract District	Sustainable
Springlake	Contract District	Sustainable
Winters	Contract District	Sustainable
Capay Valley	Full or Partial Fiscal Capacity	Sustainable
Esparto	Full or Partial Fiscal Capacity	Sustainable*
Willow Oak	Full or Partial Fiscal Capacity	Sustainable
Zamora	Full or Partial Fiscal Capacity	Sustainable
Clarksburg	Full or Partial Fiscal Capacity	Likely Sustainable
West Plainfield	Full or Partial Fiscal Capacity	Likely Sustainable*
Dunnigan	Needs Fiscal Assistance	Questionable Sustainability
Elkhorn	Needs Fiscal Assistance	Questionable Sustainability
Knights Landing	Needs Fiscal Assistance	Questionable Sustainability
Madison	Needs Fiscal Assistance	Questionable Sustainability
Yolo	Needs Fiscal Assistance	Questionable Sustainability

Source: Yolo Local Agency Formation Commission. Municipal Services Review. 2016, 76.

*Assuming savings from a standardized fire apparatus inventory; where each station has no more than the recommendation of 2 engines, 1 water tender, 1 rescue squad (if had already) and each district has 1 reserve engine.

Contract Districts: The four FPDs that contract for services were all considered fiscally sustainable on a 20 year outlook. Since these districts contract with adjacent cities for fire protection services, they do not have capital infrastructure or the liability associated with that infrastructure.

⁶⁴ Yolo Local Agency Formation Commission. Municipal Services Review. 2016, 75.

Districts with Full or Partial Fiscal Capacity:

The Capay Valley, Willow Oak, and Zamora FPDs were all found to be fiscally sustainable on a 20 year outlook with fiscal capacity to replace their capital equipment on its 25 year service life. Some of the other FPDs were found fiscally sustainable if they reduced their fire apparatus inventory to a recommended standardized fire apparatus inventory. This recommended inventory is for each fire station to have no more than 2 engines, 1 water tender, 1 rescue squad (if had already) and each district to have 1 reserve engine.⁶⁵ The Esparto FPD was found fiscally sustainable if it reduced its fire apparatus inventory. Similarly, the Clarksburg, and West Plainfield FPDs were found likely fiscally sustainable due to the need to reduce some operating expenses or increase revenue and, in the case of West Plainfield, the recommendation to reduce its capital fire apparatus inventory.⁶⁶

Needing Assistance to Achieve Fiscal Sustainability: Based on the analysis the Dunnigan, Elkhorn, Knights Landing, Madison, and Yolo FPDs were found not fiscally sustainable on a 20 year outlook without significant additional revenues to maintain capital infrastructure. This determination was based on financial projections and fire apparatus replacement at the end of service life. The Dunnigan FPD was of particular concern as it was projected to have fiscal instability, even without apparatus replacement. The report also saw potential for the Elkhorn FPD to achieve sustainability by contracting for services with a nearby city fire department. However, the LAFCo MSR report detailed that the districts could reach fiscal sustainability if mitigation measures are taken, such as reduction of expenses, increases of revenue, and replacement of capital equipment with previously-owned equipment.

Apparatus

Some of the Yolo County FPDs have apparatus past the recommended service life and are thus faced with the high cost of replacing them. Each of the FPDs have their own apparatus, with the exception of the districts that contract for services with the cities. As previously stated, the recommended service life for district fire apparatus is no more than 25 years. When examined all together, as of 2016, 53% of the 70 fire apparatus/vehicles in the Yolo County FPDs were over 15 years of age, 37% were over 20 years of age, and 29% were over 25 years of age.⁶⁷ The estimated cost to replace all of the equipment over 25 years of age was \$5.51 million.⁶⁸ As a result,

⁶⁵ Yolo Local Agency Formation Commission. *Municipal Services Review*. 2016, 72.

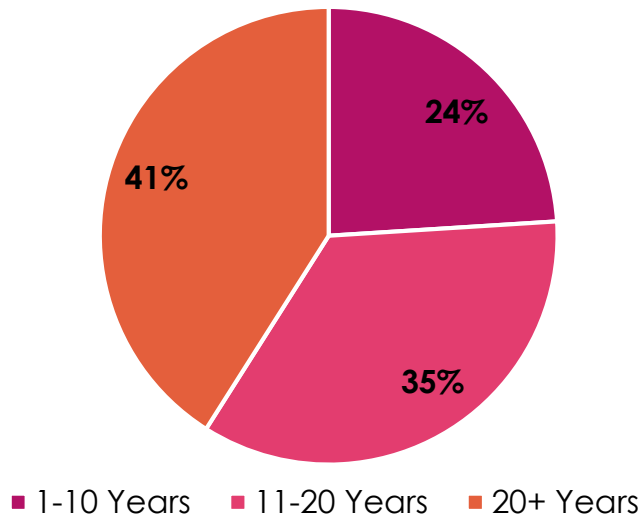
⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 80.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 49.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 69.

some of the FPDs have taken to lease purchasing some of their apparatus.⁶⁹ Ultimately, the district's identified as most in need were Elkhorn, Knights Landing, Madison and Zamora; which each had 40% or more of their apparatus at more than 25 years old.⁷⁰ For two of the districts, Madison and Elkhorn, their facility space was also deemed not adequate to store one or more of their apparatus.⁷¹ More current data on apparatus service life, shown in Figure 8, displays how approximately 41% of apparatus is nearing or at the end of service life.

Figure 8: Age Range of Yolo County FPDs' Apparatus



Source: Yolo County FPDs, 2019

In order to fund repair and replacement of apparatus, each FPD maintains a fiscal reserve fund. However, the balances in these funds varies widely by district and do not appear sufficient in the long term for many districts.⁷² According to the 2016 LAFCo MSR, capital equipment replacement was a key fiscal issue and the biggest fiscal challenge for the 11 FPDs that provide direct services.⁷³ The LAFCo MSR, analyzed projected fund balances over a 20 year period for the districts to determine the ability of each district to fund replacement of apparatus at 25 year service life. Ultimately, the report deemed 7 direct service districts not fiscally sustainable when assuming best-case annual revenues and 10 districts were deemed not fiscally sustainable when assuming ongoing stable annual revenues only.⁷⁴ Based on those results, many of the Yolo County FPDs appear to not have sufficient long term reserves to meet apparatus replacement needs.

⁶⁹ Yolo Local Agency Formation Commission. *Municipal Services Review*. 2016, 75.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 50.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 51.

⁷² *Ibid*, 66.

⁷³ *Ibid*, 67.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 71.

Paid Staffing

As the number of volunteers declines for the Yolo County FPDs, the number of paid staff have increased. As shown in Table 6, from 2008 to 2018, paid staffing more than doubled. Specifically, over that time period there was an increase in 6 full time positions and 1.75 part-time positions. This creates an additional financial burden on the FPDs, which are already struggling to maintain adequate funds for apparatus repair and replacement.

Table 6: Paid Staffing by Direct Service District 2008 to 2018

District	2008		2018		Difference	
	FTE	PT	FTE	PT	FTE	PT
Capay Valley FPD	0	0	0	0.5	0	0.5
Clarksburg FPD	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dunnigan FPD	0	0.5	1	0.25	1	-0.25
Elkhorn FPD	0	0	0	0	0	0
Esparto FPD	1	0	1	0.25	0	0.25
Knights Landing FPD	0	0	0	0	0	0
Madison FPD	0	0.5	1	0	1	-0.5
Sprinklake FPD	0	0	0	0	0	0
West Plainfield FPD	0	0	2	0.5	2	0.5
Willow Oak FPD	3	0	4	0.25	1	0.25
Winters FPD	0	0	0	0	0	0
Yolo FPD	0	0	1	1	1	1
Zamora FPD	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	4	1	10	2.75	+6	+1.75

Source: Yolo County FPDs, 2018.

Strategies

As described, the challenges of recruitment and retention of volunteers as well as obtaining sufficient funding for operations are occurring in FPDs across the nation and the state of California. For that reason, a number of strategies have been undertaken by FPDs to address these challenges. What follows is a description of those strategies along with examples of actions in some California counties. A more detailed case study of these California counties is provided in Appendix A.

Challenge: Recruitment and Retention of Volunteers

Strategy: Improve Recruitment Efforts

In order to combat a reduction in volunteers, FPDs across the nation have sought to improve their recruitment efforts. For many FPDs this includes increasing recruitment with more expansive recruitment campaigns or drives. However, these have shown limited success. The Lakehead volunteer fire station in Shasta County held two recruitment drives over the course of two years. After receiving no serious applicants, the station was closed in August 2017 due to lack of volunteers.⁷⁵ According to the 2016 Yolo County LAFCo MSR, the Yolo County FPDs have continually conducted recruitment efforts and still struggle to maintain an adequate roster of volunteer firefighters.⁷⁶

Recruitment efforts can also be structured to target youth as well as non-emergency volunteer roles. In response to the volunteer decline, the National Volunteer Firefighter Council (NVFC) created the National Junior Firefighter programs in 2007 to help develop a new generation of volunteers. This program allows local fire departments or organizations to educate and engage youth in firefighting to spark potential interest for future members. A local example is seen in the Sacramento Metropolitan FPD which hosts an annual fire camp for youth. Additionally, the NVFC also established FireCorps which assists local fire departments and organizations in establishing a network of community volunteers to perform non-emergency roles, such as bookkeeping, fire prevention education, website maintenance, and more. By targeting recruitment to these groups, FPDs can help encourage a growth in the younger generation for volunteer firefighters and reduce volunteer firefighter workload by filling non-emergency roles.

⁷⁵ Solis, Nathan. "Lack of Volunteers Forces County to Close Lakehead Fire Station." *Record Searchlight*, August 28, 2017. <https://www.redding.com/story/news/2017/08/28/lack-volunteers-forces-county-close-lakehead-fire-station/588290001/>.

⁷⁶ Yolo Local Agency Formation Commission. *Municipal Services Review*. 2016, 44.

Strategy: Provide incentives

In order to increase recruitment as well as retention, some districts have sought to provide incentives. These can be indirect monetary incentives such as passes to local venues or personal use of a fire department vehicle. However, the most popular are direct monetary incentives. This can take a variety of forms including stipends, tax breaks, tuition reductions, life or health insurance, length of service awards (quasi-retirement programs), and local business discounts.⁷⁷ In Yolo County, the Dunnigan FPD provides small stipends, but this is only provided to one firefighter per day while on duty.⁷⁸ While monetary incentives may assist, it can place a financial burden on already struggling departments.

Strategy: Hire career firefighters

When volunteers are limited, some FPDs have turned to recruiting and hiring paid staff to work alongside volunteers. This helps to increase staffing numbers and can reduce the time burden on volunteers, which can aid in retention of firefighter personnel overall.⁷⁹ An example of this is seen in Amador County, where a half cent sales tax increase in 2009, along with the formation of a community facilities district to collect a special tax for fire protection, assisted the Amador Fire Protection District in hiring what is now 30 career firefighters.⁸⁰ Similarly, Sonoma County is considering hiring additional firefighters for a new consolidated district as part of an overall plan to aid their struggling FPDs.⁸¹ While career firefighters can aid declining volunteer numbers, it comes at a cost and requires sufficient funds in order to sustain.

Strategy: Reduce Training Burden

One of the top reasons for declining firefighting personnel is a lack of available time to volunteer, which is further exacerbated by extensive training requirements. To combat this the NVFC recommends finding ways to reduce the training burden. One way is through use of the NVFC FireCorps program, which allows for community members to volunteer in non-emergency functions without having to take the extensive training. Additionally, providing flexibility in training. This can occur in several ways such as offering a variety of training days/times, utilizing online courses, only

⁷⁷ *Retention and Recruitment for the Volunteer Emergency Services: Challenges and Solutions*. Emmitsburg, MD: United States Fire Administration, 2007.

<https://www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/publications/fa-310.pdf>.

⁷⁸ Yolo Local Agency Formation Commission. *Municipal Services Review*. 2016, 84.

⁷⁹ Verzoni. "Shrinking Resources." 2017.

⁸⁰ "Board of Supervisors Approve Measure M Distribution Formula." *Local TV TSPN Amador County*, December 1, 2009. <https://tspntv.com/item/10004-board-of-supervisors-approve-measure-m-distribution-formula>.

⁸¹ Rossmann, Randi. "New Sonoma County Fire District Emerges amid Reshuffling of Departments." *The Press Democrat*, April 3, 2019. <https://www.pressdemocrat.com/news/9456763-181/new-sonoma-county-fire-district?sba=AAS>.

requiring advanced courses for officers, and eliminating cross training requirements for fire and EMS more than is needed.⁸² This may assist some individuals in more easily completing and retaining training requirements.

Challenge: Sufficient Funding for Operations

Strategy: Maximize grant funding opportunities

While FPDs generally receive their stable revenue from property taxes and benefit assessments, rising costs make districts more reliant on alternative funding sources like fundraising and grants. Grants, such as the Assistance to Firefighters Grant through the Federal Emergency Management Agency, can often provide one-time funds for pricey equipment purchases.⁸³ However, grant writing can be a struggle for volunteer districts and while grants help with one-time purchases, they generally cannot address ongoing financial needs (such as for staffing positions). Currently, the Yolo County FPDs receive some grant writing assistance, particularly for the Assistance to Firefighters Grant, through the Yolo County Office of Emergency Services.

Strategy: Increase tax or fee revenue

In order to meet the growing financial need to cover the costs of apparatus and career staff, some districts have sought to increase stable revenue sources. This can include increasing assessments, development fees, sales taxes, and/or local government assistance. As previously described, Amador County increased firefighting staffing and funding through a half cent sales tax increase and the collection of a special tax through the formation of a community facilities district. Similarly, Sonoma County's plans for a new consolidated FPD includes a potential increase in the local parcel tax.⁸⁴ This strategy can help to bring additional stable revenues, but would need voter approval.

Strategy: Redirection of Proposition 172 Funds

Additional revenue for FPDs can come from redirection of county Proposition 172 funds. In 1993 Proposition 172 was enacted in California, establishing a half-cent sales tax statewide to support local public safety functions in cities and counties. These funds were meant to partially replace losses in property tax funds which were shifted from local agencies to local school districts, referred to as the Educational Revenue Augmentation Fund (ERAF). The Proposition 172 funds can be distributed to local public safety agencies such as law enforcement, fire, corrections, district attorney, probation, and county district attorneys. For counties the Board of Supervisors

⁸² *Retention and Recruitment for the Volunteer Emergency Services*. 2007.

⁸³ Verzoni. "Shrinking Resource." 2017.

⁸⁴ Rossmann. "New Sonoma County Fire District Emerges." 2019.

determines distribution of the funds.⁸⁵ Since these funds only partially replaced property tax losses from ERAF, their distribution is carefully determined. As a result, the use of funds varies by county with some providing a portion of total funds or specific contributions for apparatus. For example, Nevada County provides a significant portion of its Proposition 172 funds towards its eight FPDs (with mostly paid staff), one small volunteer FPD, and a county water district that provides fire services.⁸⁶ Similarly, Sonoma County fire services receive 50% of Proposition 172 fund growth up until they reach a total of 8% of the funding.⁸⁷ This means that each year half of the newly available Proposition 172 funds, which are not allocated to any particular agency, are provided to fire services. However, it is estimated that around 15 counties do not include FPDs in their Proposition 172 fund distributions.⁸⁸

In Yolo County, the use of Proposition 172 funds do not currently include a distribution to the local FPDs. While the Proposition 172 funds were originally intended to offset the loss of ERAF for local public safety agencies, in actuality the funds have not fully covered that loss (see Table 7). Estimations for FY2017-2018 displayed a net shortfall of \$16,675,839 for Yolo County when comparing the ERAF Shift and Prop 172 amounts. The cities and special districts also experienced a net shortfall. The overall effect of this shortfall may vary by agency depending on how large a portion of their revenue came from ERAF. Ultimately, this means that the Prop 172 funds do not cover the full public safety needs in Yolo County.⁸⁹ Therefore, in order to provide these funds to the local FPDs, funds would need to be taken away from other public safety agencies; a recent distribution list is provided in Table 8.

Table 7: Estimated ERAF Shift and Prop 172 Amounts for FY2017-2018

	ERAF Shift Amounts	Prop 172 Amounts	Net Shortfall**
Yolo County	\$36,776,819	\$20,090,980	-\$16,675,839
Cities	\$9,486,181	\$1,057,420	-\$8,428,761
Special Districts*	\$1,025,751	\$0	-\$1,025,751

*Fire districts, as well as other special districts, are included in the ERAF shift.

⁸⁵ Yolo Local Agency Formation Commission. *Municipal Services Review*. 2016, 57.

⁸⁶ "Fire Services Follow Up", San Luis Obispo, Local Agency Formation Commission. 2018.

⁸⁷ Sonoma County. *Fiscal Year 2018-2019 Recommended Budget Sonoma County*. June 30, 2018.

⁸⁸ Anderson, Glenda. "Mendocino County fire districts to get cut of public safety tax." *The Press Democrat*. May 8, 2016.

⁸⁹ California State Association of Counties. "ERAF Shift & Proposition 172 Amounts; FY 2017-18 Actual & FY 2018-19 Estimates." March 11, 2019.

Table 8: Yolo County Prop 172 Budgeted Distributions FY17-18

Agency	Budgeted Distribution
District Attorney's Office	\$4,018,196 (20%)
Probation Department	\$4,018,196 (20%)
Sheriff's Office	\$12,054,588 (60%)
TOTAL	\$20,090,980

Challenges: Recruitment and Retention of Volunteers & Sufficient Funding for Operations

Strategy: Explore Operational Alterations

In an effort to tackle both of the aforementioned challenges, the recruitment and retention of volunteers as well as sufficient funding for operations, many counties in California have or are currently exploring operational alterations. These alterations match three of the organizational models previously detailed at the beginning of this report: countywide FPD, coordinating agency, and contracted services. What follows is a description of the benefits and challenges of those models compared to the traditional model of independent and dependent FPDs.

First, it is important to note the benefits and challenges that arise from the independent and dependent FPDs model. This model can be beneficial in allowing local communities to more directly control decisions regarding their fire protection and level of service; with the independent, as opposed to the dependent districts, having the strongest local control. Additionally, it ensures that the staff and volunteers for the district are well versed in the conditions and topography of the area served. However, the decentralized nature of individual FPD means there are varying levels in the resources and quality of services for different communities in the county. This is often due to the variability in funding sources and reliance on available and active volunteers.

Consolidation or Countywide FPD

In order to tackle the problems of limited volunteers and financial instability, some FPDs have sought to merge or consolidate. These can be consolidations of adjacent districts into a larger FPD or the creation of a countywide FPD with the intention that the sharing of resources will allow for greater stability.

In California, consolidation and mergers of struggling fire departments has occurred frequently in an effort to maintain adequate services. Sonoma County has seen multiple consolidations over the years moving from fifty FPDs down to approximately three dozen to improve efficiency and aid struggling volunteer districts. The county is

currently in the process of consolidating four agencies into a new FPD to aid a district struggling financially.⁹⁰ A smaller example is Mount Shasta Fire, which was established through a merger of the Mount Shasta Fire Department and Mount Shasta City fire to share staffing.⁹¹

Benefits and Challenges

This approach can provide benefits through increased coordination, a more equal provision of services across a region, and the potential for greater efficiencies. This occurs through shared funding, shared purchases and apparatus, staffing, training, and administrative oversight. Additionally, by having coordination in this way staff receive the same training and are trained on the same equipment, which can aid in service efficiency. However, in order to be successful a countywide FPD would still need sufficient funding and staffing, just like the independent/dependent FPDs. During consolidation if an FPD with a parcel tax annexes an FPD without a parcel tax, that tax is applied in the newly annexed area. Therefore, consolidations can bring about some additional and more equal funding. Nonetheless, the community may also be concerned over the loss of some local control and the social or cultural role the independent/dependent FPDs may serve.

Coordinating Agency

In this model, sometimes referred to as a regional fire services framework, an agency serves as an administrative or coordinating body for the FPDs. In this way the independent role of the FPDs are maintained but the agency provides shared service benefits and remove some administrative burden from the FPDs. As detailed by Yolo County LAFCo's 2016 MSR, an established agency can provide both financial assistance as well as operational support. This could include training oversight, common training and performance standards, standardization of fire apparatus design specifications, cooperative purchasing, shared reserve apparatus, shared volunteer firefighters, and weekday staffing of selected districts with stipended firefighters to provide regional on-duty response coverage. This entity can be a non-profit, the fire chiefs association, an existing training consortium, joint powers agreement agency, community services district, or county service area.⁹² An example of this model was seen in Sonoma County, which had a department dedicated to administrative oversight and coordination for volunteer fire protection

⁹⁰ Rossmann. "New Sonoma County Fire District Emerges." 2019.

⁹¹ Lamanna, Giovanni. "Mt. Shasta Seeks Solutions for Volunteer Firefighter Shortage." *Mt. Shasta News*, February 14, 2018. <https://www.mtshastanews.com/news/20180214/mt-shasta-seeks-solutions-for-volunteer-firefighter-shortage>.

⁹² Yolo Local Agency Formation Commission. *Municipal Services Review*. 2016, 87.

districts in the County. Due to financial and efficiency issues, the County has recently moved to disband the department in favor of having larger consolidated FPDs.

Benefits and Challenges

Ultimately, this appeared the least common model among the counties reviewed. However, conceptually it is a bridge between the models of the independent/dependent FPDs and countywide FPD since it provides the benefit of a regional coordinating body while allowing local districts to retain their independence. This independence is often important for local communities that wish to maintain control over fire services in their area and preserve the social and/or cultural role that the district may hold in the community. At the same time, the coordination provides the opportunity for some shared personnel, cost savings, and more equal service provision throughout the region.

Contracted Services

When volunteers are scarce, some FPDs and/or counties have taken to contracting with nearby fire departments or CalFire for fire and emergency medical services. This is a common model among California counties with four Yolo County FPDs already contracting with city fire departments for service provision. Similarly, Napa, Butte and Riverside counties contract with CalFire to cover all of the unincorporated areas of the county with the exception of one independent FPD in Butte County.⁹³ Additionally, the San Diego Fire Authority has contracted with CalFire, at least temporarily, to provide emergency medical services for the area served by the Julian-Cuyamaca Fire Prevention District, which recently voted to dissolve due to financial and staffing shortfalls.⁹⁴

Benefits and Challenges

This model allows for the provision of fire and emergency medical service without the administrative burden of providing and maintaining FPDs and staff. However, it comes at a cost. Counties must have sufficient funds to pay for the fire services contract and, depending on the contract arrangement, may still need to supply apparatus. Additionally, some rural communities may have concerns as to whether an outside department or agency will provide quick response times and have sufficient local knowledge of the area.

⁹³ "Fire Services Follow Up", San Luis Obispo, Local Agency Formation Commission. 2018.

⁹⁴ Sridhar, Priya. "Julian Volunteer Firefighters Battle to Preserve Their District." 2018.

Conclusion

The Yolo County FPDs are facing the same challenges as FPDs across the nation and throughout the state of California. Changing requirements and societal circumstances have resulted in a continual reduction of volunteers. Similarly, rising costs have made funding staff as well as necessary equipment and apparatus, increasingly difficult. These challenges create the greatest struggle for the traditional model of independent/dependent FPDs, where volunteers serve as the foundation.

While changing recruitment practices or obtaining alternative sources of funds can assist, these challenges are likely to continue long term. As a result, many counties in California have or are in the process of exploring alternatives to the traditional operational model. For the purpose of ensuring the long-term sustainability of fire protection in Yolo County, further exploration of these strategies, including operational changes, should occur to determine if opportunities exist for improved funding, staffing and cost savings.

Recommended Next Steps

It is the request and recommendation of the Yolo County Fire Chiefs Association that additional funding be provided by the County to the fire districts. Specifically, the fire chiefs request that the Board of Supervisors consider a redirection of Proposition 172 funds so that a portion is provided to the fire districts.

Based on the request of the fire chiefs and the strategies implored by other California counties, it is the recommendation of staff that the County enter into a collaborative process with the fire chiefs to explore funding and operational options for long term sustainability. Through this process the County would not only discuss potential new funding opportunities but also evaluate regionally where operational alterations, such as those seen in other counties, may be of benefit. Staff would then return to the Board with final recommendations.

Appendix: County Case Studies

Amador County

Current Structure: Independent/Dependent FPD Model & Countywide FPD

Amador County has a large Amador Fire Protection District (AFPD) which serves as a dependent district under the Board of Supervisors. In addition, there are three small independent FPDs in the county. The AFPD was formed in 1990, through the consolidation of eight all-volunteer fire districts, and serves approximately 85% of the unincorporated area while also serving the cities of Plymouth, Jackson Rancheria, and the Lockwood Fire Protection District.⁹⁵ The district utilizes a mix of thirty paid staff and around twenty volunteers. The full time paid staff provide 24 hour coverage at four of the AFPD's seven stations, while the other three are staffed by volunteers. The AFPD is funded largely through sales tax revenue obtained through a ballot measure (Measure M), contracted services, and a special tax collected through a community facilities district. The district also receives funding from special assessments, fees for service, impact fees and property taxes. Amador County also provides a general fund contribution to AFPD to fund a contract with CalFire and staffing related to a specific fire station during the winter months when the station would otherwise close.

Challenges and Strategic Approach:

In 2009 Amador County voters approved Measure M. This enacted a half cent sales tax which was split 50/50 among each of the FPDs in Amador County using a formula based on population and call volume.⁹⁶ In the 2014 Amador County LAFCo MSR, the AFPD reported that Measure M along with the formation of a community facilities district, that collects a special tax for fire protection services provided by AFPD, assisted them in hiring personnel. However, as of 2012, current revenues did not support the staffing level required to deliver fire protection services at all stations, particularly the struggle to maintain a sufficient and diverse pool of volunteers. The AFPD also expressed interest in consolidating all fire services into one agency in the county.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ "Amador Fire Protection District: 2017-2022 Strategic Plan." Amador Fire Protection District. August 2017. <http://amadorfire.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Strategic-Plan-2017-2022.pdf>.

⁹⁶ "Board of Supervisors Approve Measure M Distribution Formula." *Local TV TSPN Amador County*. 2009.

⁹⁷ "Amador Fire Protection District." In Amador LAFCo Municipal Service Review for Amador County. 2014. Amador LAFCo. <https://www.amadorgov.org/home/showdocument?id=19698>.

Napa County

Current Structure: Contracted Services

Napa County contracts with CalFire for the provision of fire services through the Napa County Fire Department (NCFD). The county has contracted with CalFire in some form since 1932. Under this contract, CalFire provides administrative support and coordination for five full-time paid stations and nine volunteer fire companies operating under a County Fire Plan that is approved by the Board of Supervisors. Since 1970 the volunteer fire departments have operated under a memorandum of agreement with the county. This contract allows the stations to maintain their bylaws, charters, and ownership of their stations, but brought administrative, training, purchasing, warehouse and other functions under CalFire. The NCFD has around 200 volunteers and 58 paid CalFire employees. Funding for the NCFD comes mainly through taxes, such as property tax, and approximately \$10 million of that goes to the CalFire contract. Remaining funds go towards equipment, apparatus, and facility maintenance. The county also has a number of automatic aid agreements with surrounding city fire departments, nearby county departments, and the Napa State Hospital.⁹⁸

Challenges and Strategic Approach:

Through a detailed strategic planning process, the NPDF identified a number of critical issues and services gaps to address. The top critical issue listed was the workload compared to current staffing levels. This was attributed in part to increases in calls for service. The strategic approach identified to address this need, was the development of a succession management and professional development work plan. Through these plans the NPDF seeks to provide leadership and career growth opportunities in the agency to seemingly increase volunteer interest and aid in retention. Additionally, the need for a regular maintenance plan for apparatus/equipment was also identified and included for development in the Strategic Plan.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ "Napa County Fire Department Strategic Plan: 2016-2019 Strategic Plan." Napa County Fire Department. March 2016. <https://www.countyofnapa.org/DocumentCenter/View/832/Napa-County-Fire-Strategic-Plan-PDF>

⁹⁹ "Napa County Fire Department Strategic Plan." Napa County Fire Department. 2016.

Orange County

Current Structure: Countywide FPD Model

Up to 1980 the unincorporated areas of Orange County along with 9 cities received their fire services from the California Department of Forestry, until the County formed the Orange County Fire Department. Over the years, as population dynamics changed and some unincorporated areas incorporated into cities, over 80% of the department's service was to city residents. As a result, a Joint Powers Agency (JPA), called the Orange County Fire Authority (OCFA), launched in 1995 through the efforts of the county and cities. Over the years the OCFA has become a countywide fire protection agency. Today the OCFA includes the unincorporated portions of the county as well as 24 cities. The OCFA does contract with some city fire agencies to provide fire service to unincorporated county islands that are surrounded by non-member cities. Activities of the OCFA are overseen by a Board of Directors and funded by the member agencies. Some members provide a portion of their property tax designated for fire protection and some member cities pay through a contract with the JPA.¹⁰⁰

Challenges and Strategic Approach:

Despite increasing costs and volunteer reductions, the OCFA appears to be operating well. This has led the city of Garden Grove to consider joining. The city fire department has struggled with increasing operational costs and rising pension costs. Initial estimates with OCFA showed the annual cost of membership to be almost \$3 million less than the cost for the city to run the service and would allow the city to pass future pension obligations on to the JPA. By joining the countywide agency, Garden Grove anticipates still keeping and maintaining its fire stations but transferring all other operations and expenses to OCFA. This would include increased incident staffing, updated vehicles and apparatus, and some estimate increased response times.

Some cities, such as Irvine and Placentia, have talked about leaving the OCFA due to the funding structure. OCFA charges cities based on their property taxes, which some cities have viewed as unfair, and Placentia was dismayed by cost increases. While Irvine has since completed negotiations on a new agreement with OCFA, Placentia has been reviewing their options.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ "Orange County Fire Authority: FY18/19 Adopted Budget." Orange County Fire Authority. July 2018. <https://ocfa.org/Uploads/Transparency/OCFA%202018-2019%20Adopted%20Budget.pdf>.

¹⁰¹ Goulding, Susan. "Garden Grove Poised to Join OCFA, the 'Home Depot of Fire Service'." *The Orange County Register*, March 22, 2019. <https://www.ocregister.com/2019/03/22/garden-grove-poised-to-join-ocfa-the-home-depot-of-fire-service/>.

Sonoma County

Current Structure: Independent/Dependent FPD Model & Coordinated Agency Model

The County of Sonoma has approximately three dozen FPDs some with all volunteer staff and some with a mix of volunteer and paid staff.¹⁰² These districts are funded through a combination of property taxes, fees, fundraising, and grant funds. Until recently, the districts received administration and support through the county's Department of Fire and Emergency Services, which is currently in the process of being dismantled. For 25 years the department assisted rural volunteer FPDs with fiscal and administrative services, training, coordination of fire service activities, provision of protective equipment, a hazardous materials unit, and fire protection code compliance services.¹⁰³ The department has been funded largely through fees for service, state and federal funds, property tax funds, as well as county general funds.¹⁰⁴

Challenges and Strategic Approach:

Over time the County department has experienced criticism regarding use of funding and perceived inefficiencies, with fire agencies viewing the financial support from the department as insufficient. As a result, the Board of Supervisors began dismantling the department in 2018.¹⁰⁵

At the same time, many of the FPDs in Sonoma County have struggled with financial and volunteer shortages. In fact multiple FPDs within the organization have begun consolidating into larger agencies to combine financial resources and to share staff. Currently, four districts are in the process of consolidating to form the Sonoma County Fire Protection District. Through this consolidation they hope to increase efficiencies with shared use of apparatus, a reduction in redundant roles, standardized training, shared staffing, and sharing the tax burden over a larger number of tax payers.¹⁰⁶ Subsequently, the Board of Supervisors has been transferring property taxes originally received by the County department to some of the larger consolidated districts. Overall, consolidation is an ongoing trend in the district which used to have up to 55 FPDs in prior years.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² Rossmann, Randi. "County Supervisors Ponder \$4.6 Million Plan to Improve Fire Services, Hire More Firefighters." *The Press Democrat*, March 18, 2019. <https://www.pressdemocrat.com/news/9386339-181/county-supervisors-ponder-46-million>.

¹⁰³ Rossmann, Randi. "Sonoma County Disbanding Its Fire Department to Beef up Regional Agencies." *Press Democrat*, December 13, 2018. <https://www.pressdemocrat.com/news/9062795-181/sonoma-county-disbanding-its-fire?sba=AAS>.

¹⁰⁴ "Recommended Budget 2018-2019." County of Sonoma. June 2018. <https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=2147559087>

¹⁰⁵ Rossmann. "Sonoma County Disbanding Its Fire Department." 2018.

¹⁰⁶ Pardiac, Andrew. "New Fire District to Become Official." *The Windsor Times*, March 28, 2019. http://www.sonomawest.com/the_windsor_times/news/new-fire-district-to-become-official/article_2f5eee7a-5195-11e9-800e-47c3333da545.html.

¹⁰⁷ Rossmann. "Sonoma County Disbanding Its Fire Department." 2018.

Tuolumne County

Current Structure: Independent/Dependent FPD & Contracted Services

The County of Tuolumne contracts with Cal Fire for the staffing and management of ten fire stations as the Tuolumne County Fire Department. This contract costs about \$4 million annually and provides 24/7 staffing of one fire captain and fire engineer. Additionally, the county has eight independent fire districts.

Challenges and Strategic Approach:

The county contracted with an independent party to conduct an evaluation of the county's overall fire protection system. This two-year study recently concluded and the results deemed the current operations unsustainable. The study found the budget shortfall for the fire protection system of \$1.5 million in 2017 to potentially reach more than \$2 million by 2022. These budgeting challenges were also evident in the county's apparatus, of which almost one-third was found to be more than 25 years old with an estimated replacement cost of \$5.4 million to \$7.4 million over the next three to five years. Additionally, the fire agencies were having to rely more on paid firefighters due to a decline in volunteers.

The final recommendation of the study was to form a countywide fire district that could contract with various agencies and allocate funding to districts based on the proportion of service calls. This district could operate through contracts with city departments, local FPDs and CalFire for the provision of fire services. Additionally, the study recommended the exploration of a benefit assessment to stabilize funding.¹⁰⁸

The Tuolumne Fire Chiefs Association also expressed disagreement with the recommendation believing some of the data and analysis to be flawed.¹⁰⁹ However, at their June 11, 2019 meeting, the Board of Supervisors directed staff to further pursue the migration to a countywide fire system.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ "Presentation of the First Responder and EMS Study." Tuolumne County Administrator's Office. Board of Supervisor's meeting. June 5. 2019.

https://tuolumneco.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=5&clip_id=353&meta_id=54651

¹⁰⁹ Maclean, Alex. "Study: Fire Services in Tuolumne County Aren't Sustainable, Need Change." *The Union Democrat*, June 7, 2019. <https://www.uniondemocrat.com/localnews/7216606-151/study-fire-services-in-tuolumne-county-arent-sustainable>.

¹¹⁰ "Presentation of the First Responder and EMS Study." Tuolumne County Administrator's Office. 2019.

