



# COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

AGENDA ITEM NO.

**6-3**

For the meeting of: December 8, 2015

Date: November 13, 2015

To: Board of Supervisors

From: Supervisor Ryan Sundberg and Supervisor Mark Lovelace

Subject: Board Discussion Regarding Sustainable Community Fire Protection and Emergency Services for Areas Currently Outside of Local District Jurisdictions

RECOMMENDATION(S): That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Receive a presentation on the challenges associated with sustaining community fire and emergency services to the out-of-district area between the Blue Lake, Willow Creek and Kneeland Fire Protection Districts within the context of a countywide review of service delivery;
2. Provide direction to staff to research solutions, including the formation of a county service area (CSA), for the challenges associated with providing sustainable emergency service for the area described above as well the potential applicability of any solution to other areas throughout the county and return to the Board with a specific proposal;
3. Discuss and provide direction as to whether the issue should be expanded to consider other out-of-district areas for inclusion within a CSA, and how the fire services subcommittee should be involved; and
4. Provide direction to staff to develop a proposal to provide interim financial support to sustain current levels of service that are jeopardized by a lack of resources until a long-term solution can be found and to present said proposal to the Board for review and approval.

SOURCE OF FUNDING: County staff time associated with this item is covered by Measure Z and Secure Rural Schools, Title III funding.

Signature Ryan Sundberg

Signature Mark Lovelace

Prepared by \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEW:	Auditor _____	County Counsel _____	Human Resources _____	Other _____
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TYPE OF ITEM:

Consent

Departmental

Public Hearing

Other Board Initiated (30 min.)

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Board Order No. \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting of: \_\_\_\_\_

**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS, COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT**  
 Upon motion of Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_ Seconded by Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_

Ayes \_\_\_\_\_

Nays \_\_\_\_\_

Abstain \_\_\_\_\_

Absent \_\_\_\_\_

**SEE ACTION SUMMARY**

and carried by those members present, the Board hereby approves the recommended action contained in this Board report.

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

By: \_\_\_\_\_

**Kathy Hayes, Clerk of the Board**

DISCUSSION: Emergency response services from local fire departments are currently jeopardized in the area located outside fire protection district (FPD) boundaries to the west of the Willow Creek FPD, the east of the Blue Lake FPD, and the northeast of the Kneeland FPD, hereinafter referred to as the Mad River-Redwood Creek Study Area. This area is currently served by “good-will”, out-of-district response from the three districts mentioned above. However, providing this good-will service places a strain on district resources that cannot be sustained without making some changes. Representatives from these districts, County personnel, and members of the Board of Supervisors have been working together to identify a solution to this problem since May of 2015.

This problem is not unique to the Mad River-Redwood Creek Study Area. Most fire related districts in Humboldt County respond to a significant number of emergency calls outside of their jurisdictional boundaries and are experiencing the associated strain on their service. Twenty-two of the 26 fire related districts in the County have mapped response areas outside their district boundary. As reported by fire chiefs, some of these districts respond to approximately 50 percent of their calls outside of their jurisdictional boundaries. In addition, fire and emergency services are provided by thirteen local fire companies that do not have an official jurisdictional boundary nor do they receive tax or fee based revenue. These issues were presented in the 2006 Humboldt County Master Fire Protection Plan, the 2013 Humboldt County Community Wildfire Protection Plan, the Humboldt County Fire Chief’s Association 2014 Annual Report, and the 2014-2015 Humboldt County Grand Jury Final Report.

Since 2004, the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors has been allocating funds for planning and support associated with fire district formation and establishing sustainable ongoing revenue sources. These funds have been used to support County staff research, outreach, and coordination with fire departments to form new districts and expand existing district to bring them into alignment with actual service areas. County funds have also been used to pay the fees, on behalf of local fire departments, associated with submitting Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) applications for district formations and annexations. Progress has been made, understanding of the issue has grown over the years, and significant mapping of fire service response areas has been completed and is refined as our understanding improves. This is a very complex problem with many obstacles in the path of a feasible and sustainable resolution. The attached presentation provides an overview of this countywide issue and reviews options and tools for finding a solution.

In recognition of the growing need to address the gap between local jurisdictional boundaries and where services are being demanded, as well as the lack of revenue to support increasing demand, the Humboldt County Fire Chief’s Association worked with County staff to include a planning component in their 2015-2016 Measure Z application for funding. Funding for the project was approved by the Board of Supervisors and is being used to continue the efforts described above. Funds will support County staff, LAFCo staff and will cover fees associated with the needed formation and expansion of jurisdictional boundaries.

The Measure Z project scope of work and past direction from the Board of Supervisors clearly support solutions such as district formation and expansion. However, further exploration into one of the options identified by the fire departments, forming a county service area (CSA), requires more specific authorization from the Board. The requested action, included in the Recommendations above, will allow County staff to work with fire service representatives and LAFCo to evaluate the formation of a CSA to support the sustained delivery of service in the Mad River-Redwood Creek Study Area. If authorization is given, the applicability of this solution to other areas throughout the county will also be evaluated.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: The funds to support the proposed actions are included in the approved Fiscal Year 2015-16 Public Works budget in revenue account 1100-289- 505101 and will be transferred from trust fund 3671. County staff time will also be billed to the Measure Z Project administered by the Humboldt County Fire Chief's Association.

The benefits achieved through the proposed actions will advance two of the County's core roles (create opportunities for improved safety and health and protect vulnerable populations).

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT: Humboldt County Administrative Office, Humboldt County Public Works, Humboldt County Planning and Building, Blue Lake Fire Protection District, Kneeland Fire Protection District, Willow Creek Fire Protection District, Humboldt Local Agency Formation Commission, Humboldt County Fire Chiefs Association, and the Humboldt County Fire Safe Council.

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS: Board discretion.

ATTACHMENTS: Sustainable Community Fire Service in Humboldt County Presentation

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# **Sustainable Community Fire Service**

In

Humboldt County

# The Problem

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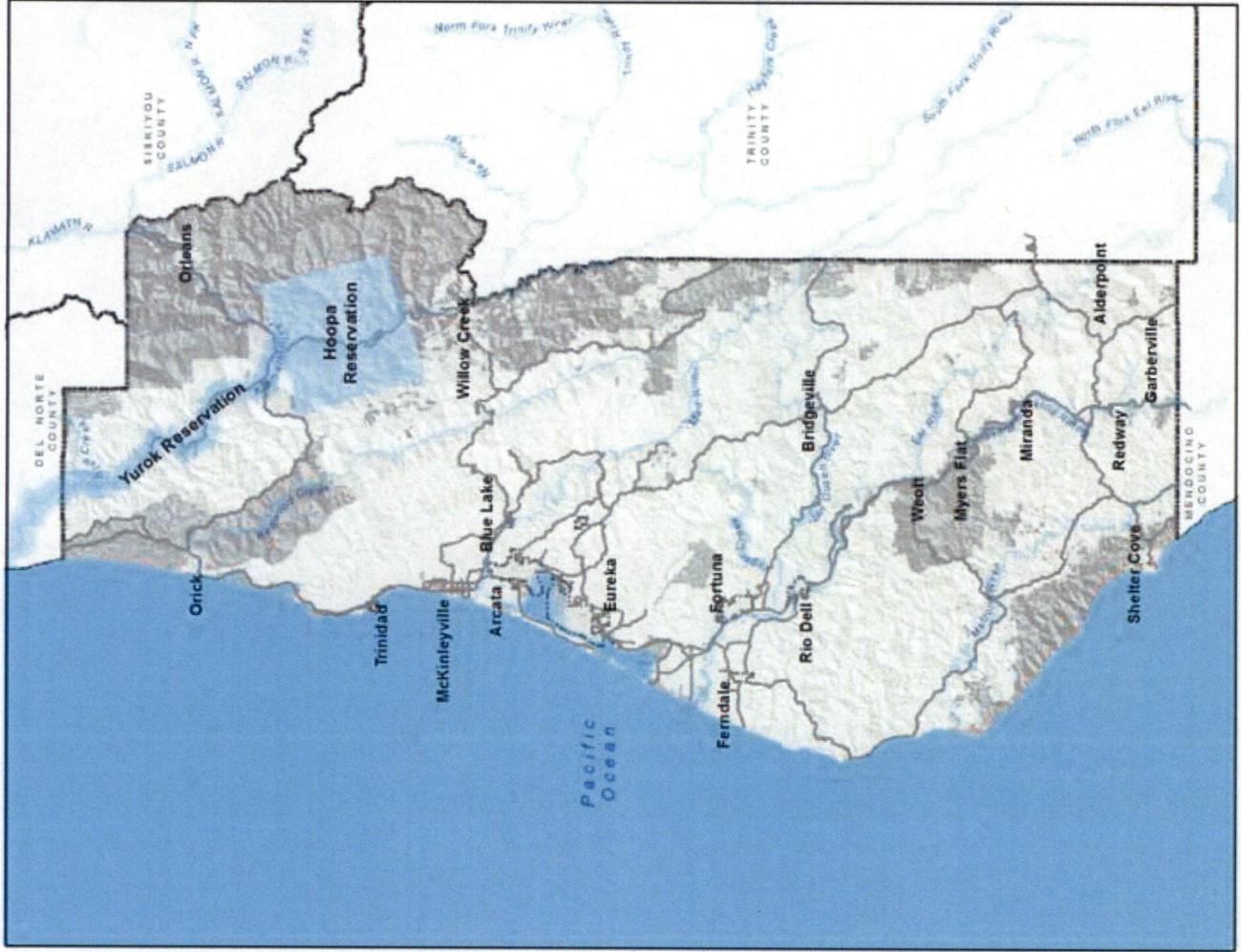
- Boundaries that do not match where services are provided.
- Lack of adequate funding to sustain current level of fire protection and emergency services (both in-district and out-of-district).
- Limited capacity and/or resources to address the issue.
- Current challenges and potential future impacts are not fully understood by all stakeholders.

# Humboldt County Communities and Land Ownership

**Tribal Lands**

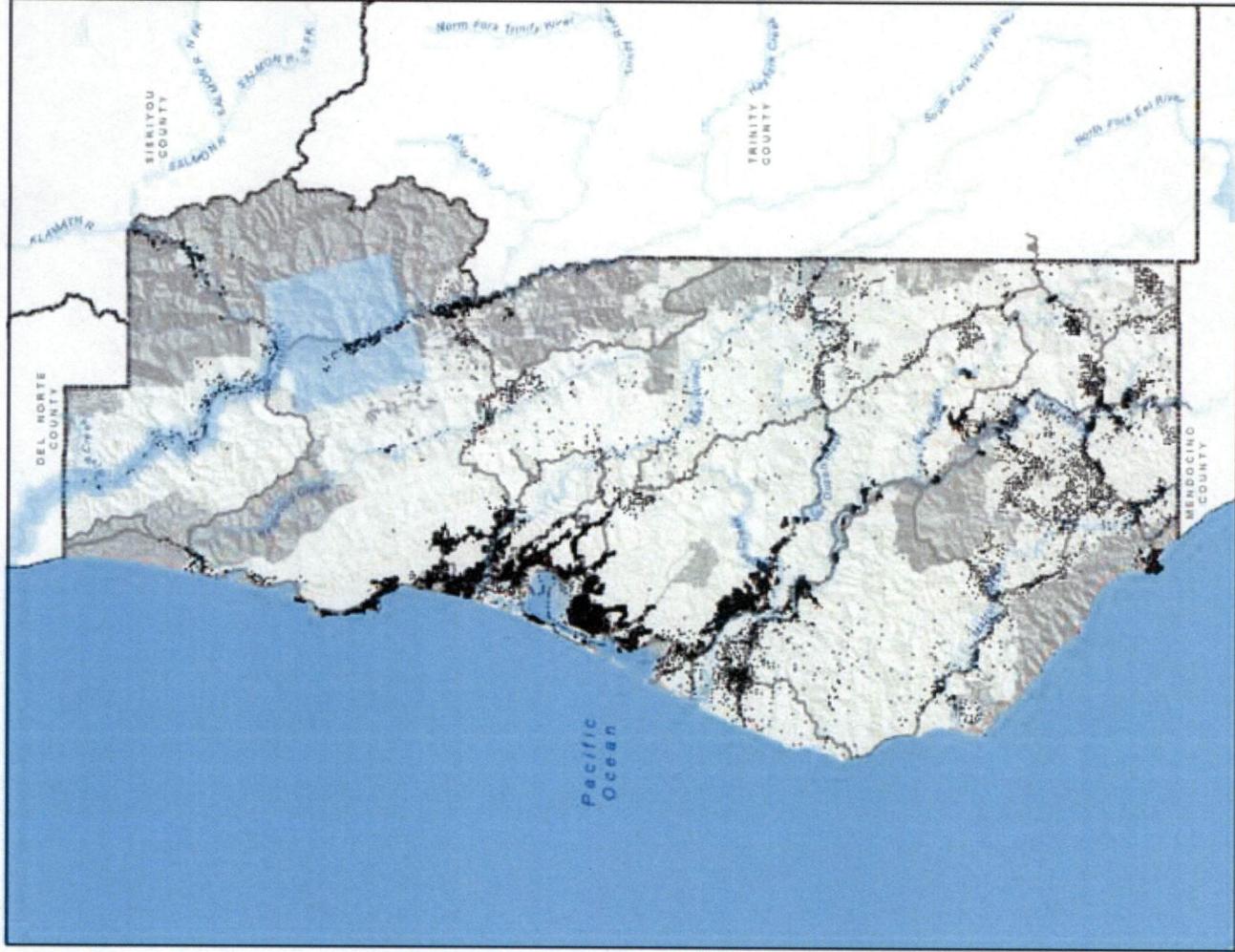
**Public Lands**

**Private Lands**



# General Representation of Where Homes Are in Humboldt County

Improved  
Parcels



**Tribal Lands**



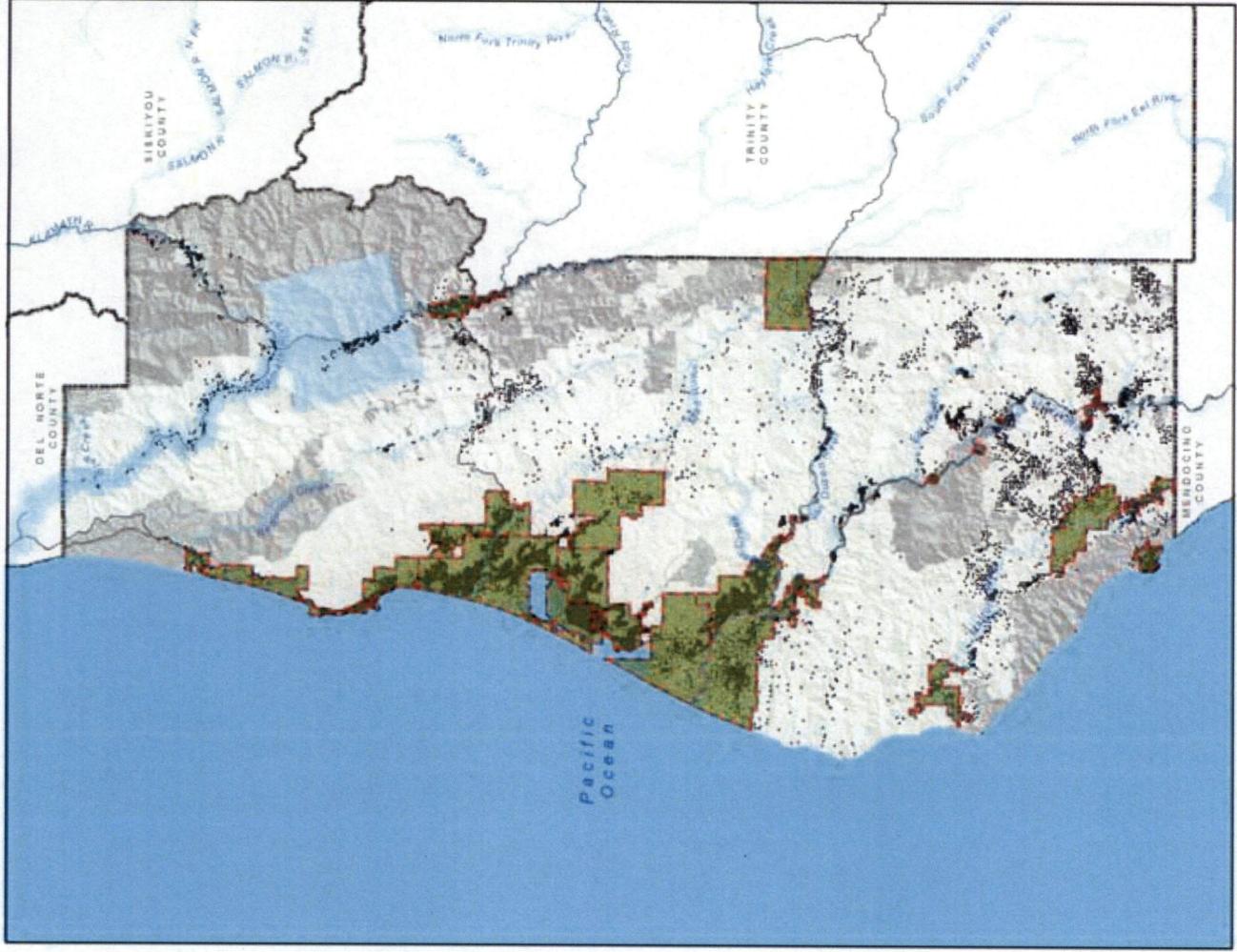
**Fire**

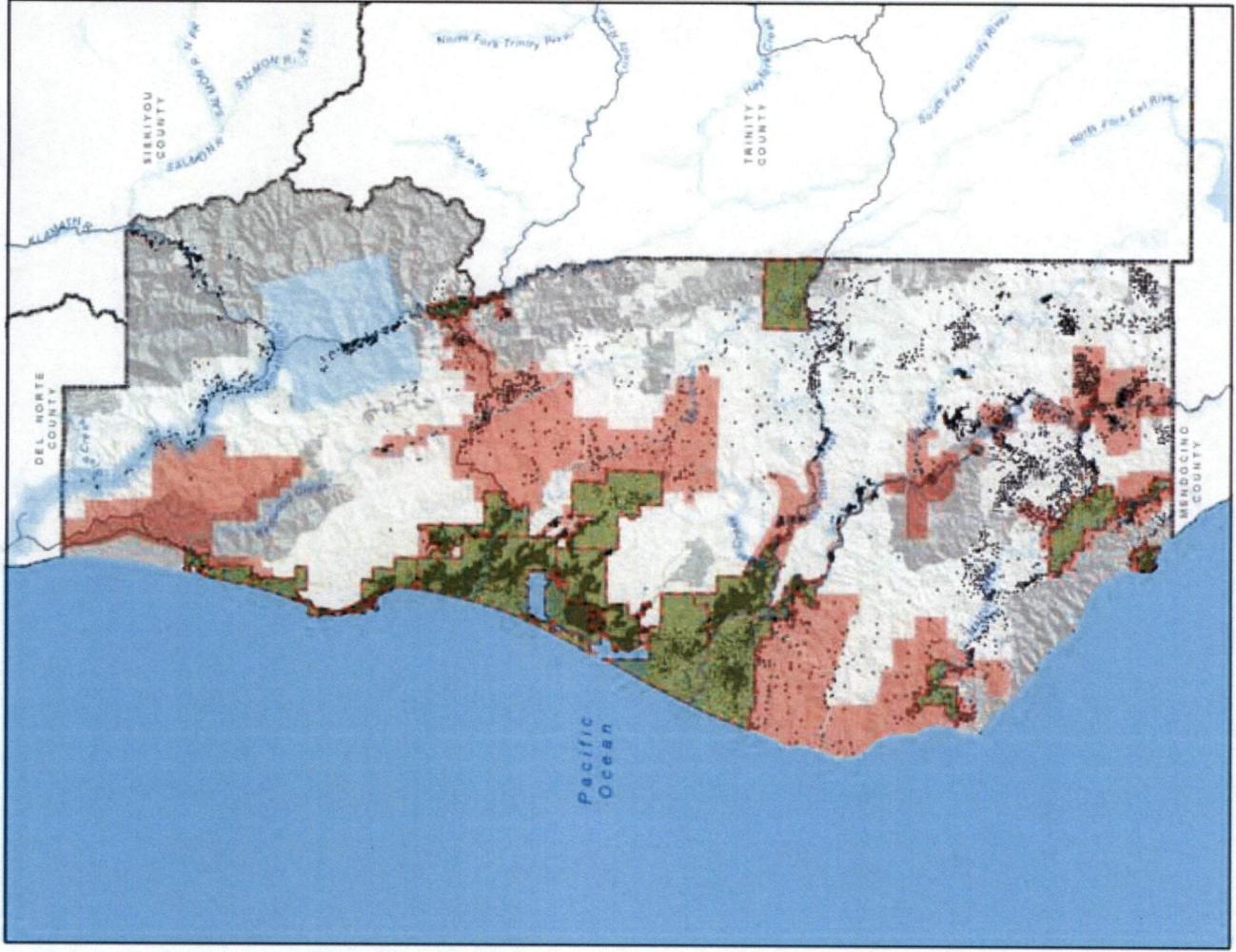
**Related**

**Districts -  
Pre-2012**



**Improved  
Parcels**





**Tribal Lands**



**Fire**

**Related**

**Districts -**

**Pre-2012**



**Out of**

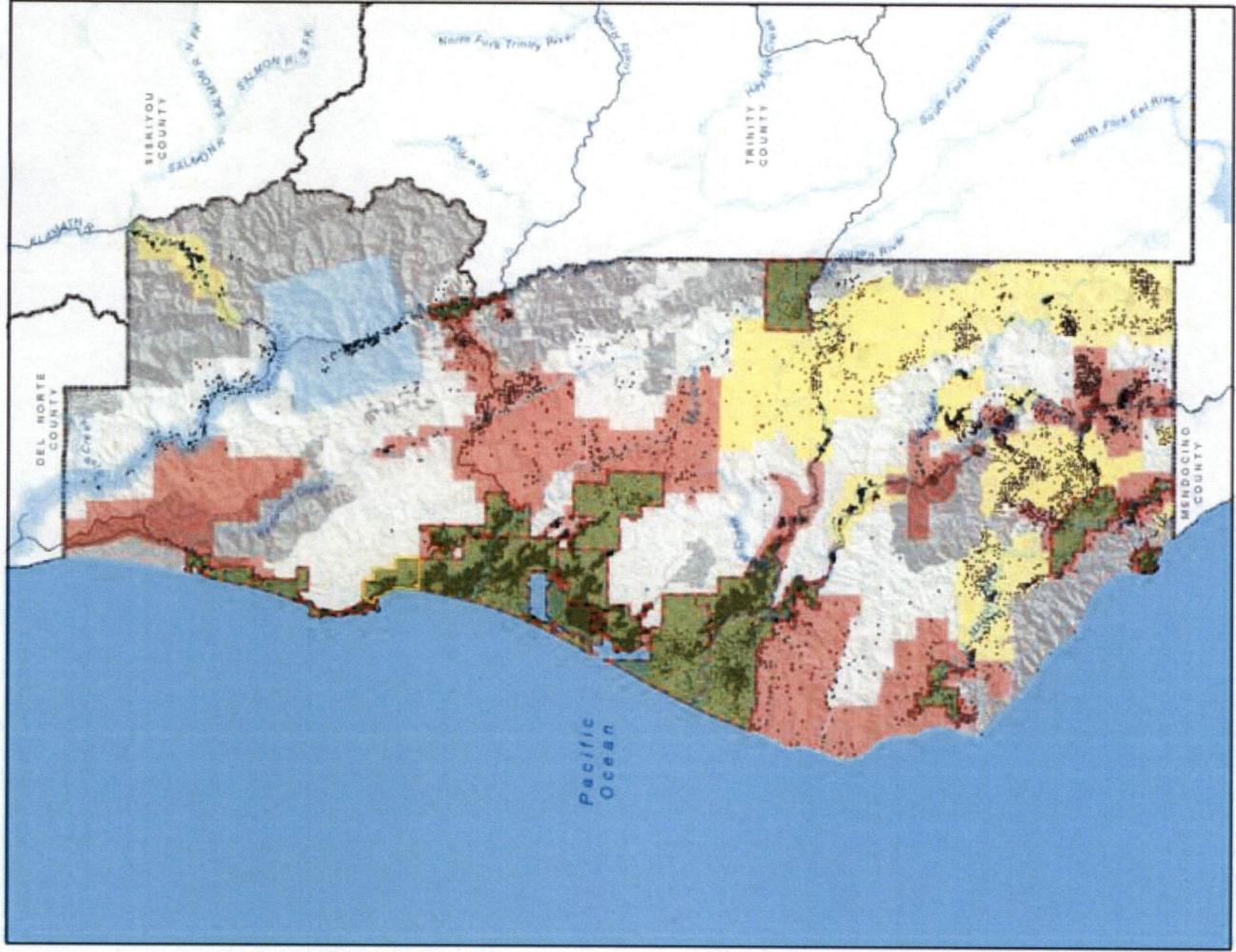
**District**

**Response**

**(Goodwill**

**Service)**





**Tribal Lands**



**Fire Related Districts - Pre-2012**



**Out of District Response (Goodwill Service)**

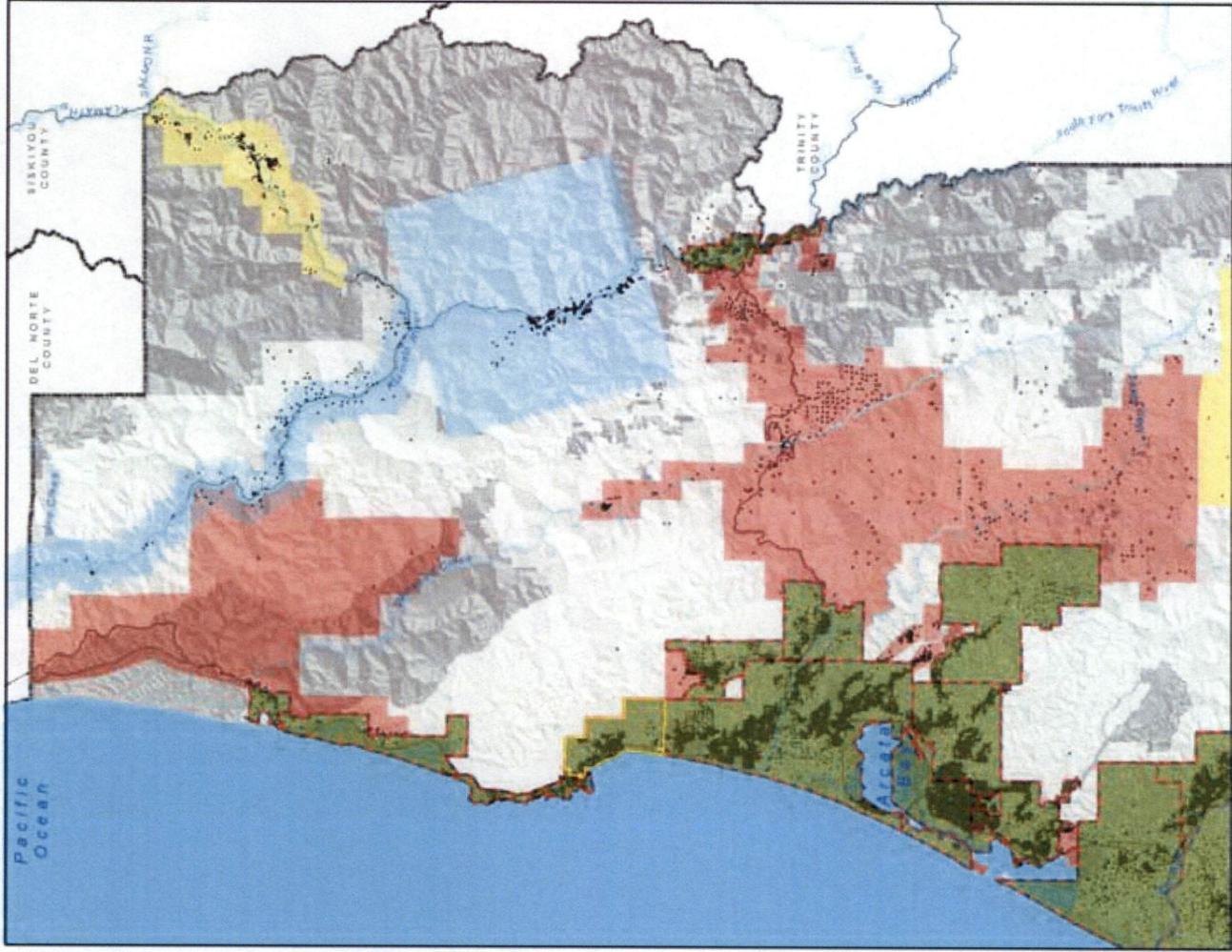


**Non-District Fire Companies**



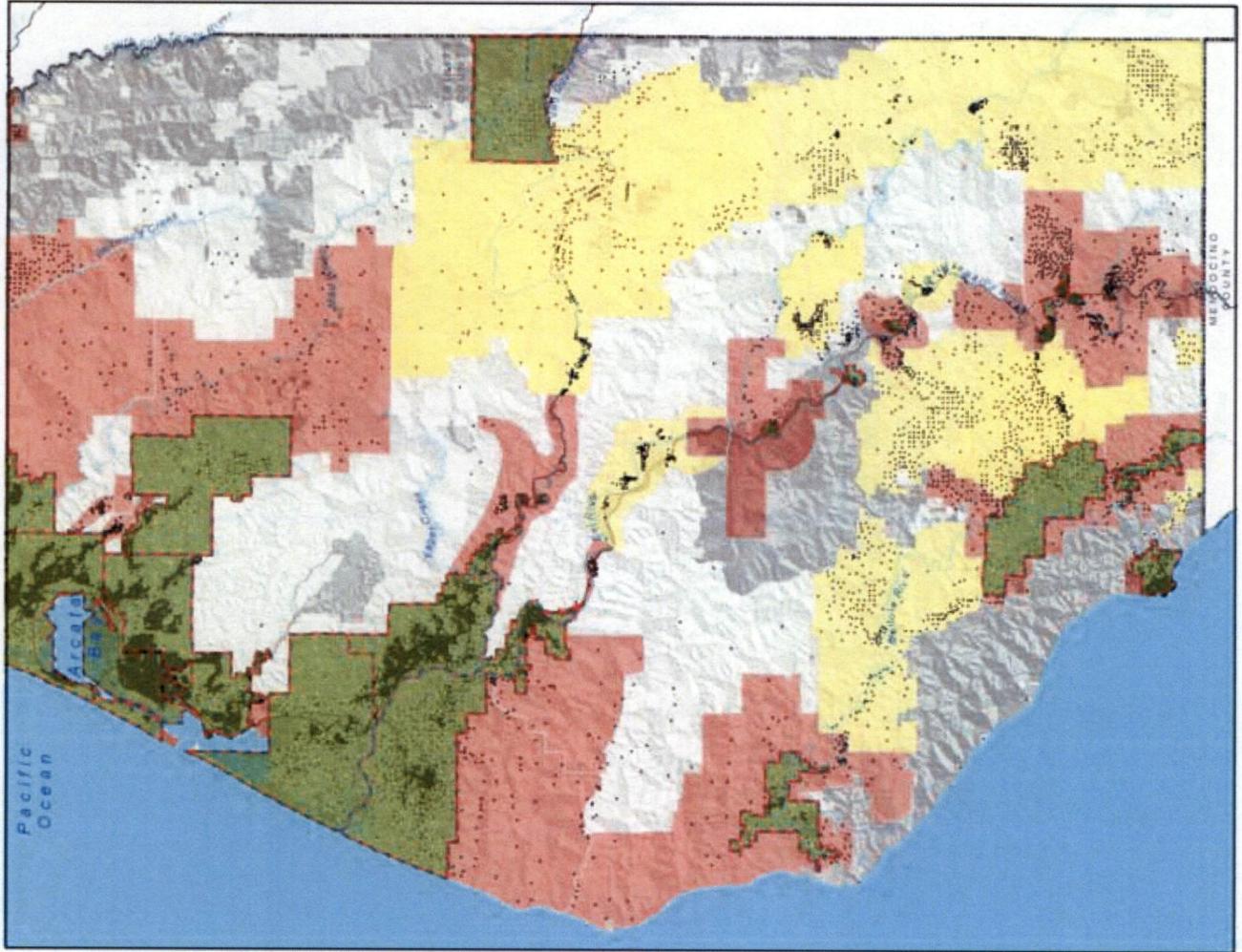
# North View

- Tribal Lands
- Fire Related Districts - Pre-2012
- Out of District Response (Goodwill Service)
- Non-District Fire Companies



# South View

- Fire Related Districts - Pre-2012 
- Out of District Response (Goodwill Service) 
- Non-District Fire Companies 



# Consequences/Impacts of no Action:

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- Loss or reduction of fire and emergency services provided to residents and travelers by local fire department first responders.
- Limitations on future development in areas outside districts (Subdivision requirement).
- Weakened network of local firefighting resources to support CAL FIRE, especially during extreme events such as a lightning complex.

# A Shared Problem

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The threat to the survival and functional health of the local fire service is a problem shared by many:

- Fire Departments,
- Service Recipients (property owners, residents, and visitors),
- The County,
- CAL FIRE,
- EMS/Ambulance, Law Enforcement, and...

# Possible Solutions

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- Bring all service areas within district boundaries or under contract with local agencies, tribes or property owners through a combination of:
  - Special District Annexations – bring goodwill service areas into existing jurisdictions;
  - Special District Formations – formalize volunteer fire company response areas; and/or
  - County Service Area Formation(s) – Establish CSAs in specific areas and/or countywide and contract for service.

# Revenue Toolbox

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Increase funding to support sustainable service and to equitably share costs. Consider use of:

- Special tax;
- Benefit assessment;
- Property tax exchange negotiations;
- Measure Z (interim support of planning and services);
- Prop 172 (increase or strategic redistribution);
- Development impact fees; and/or
- Fees for service (development plan review, inspections, ...)

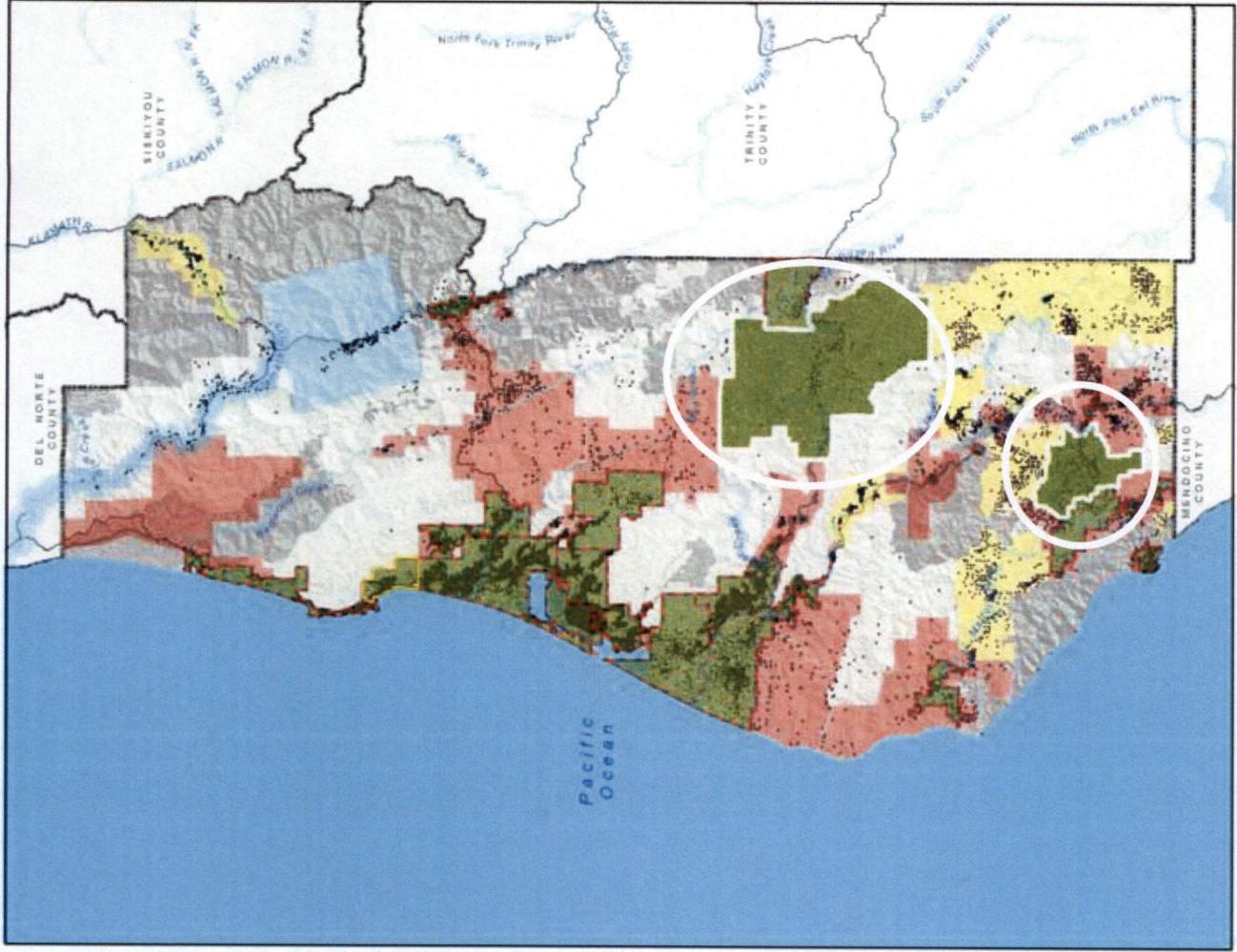
## Progress to Date

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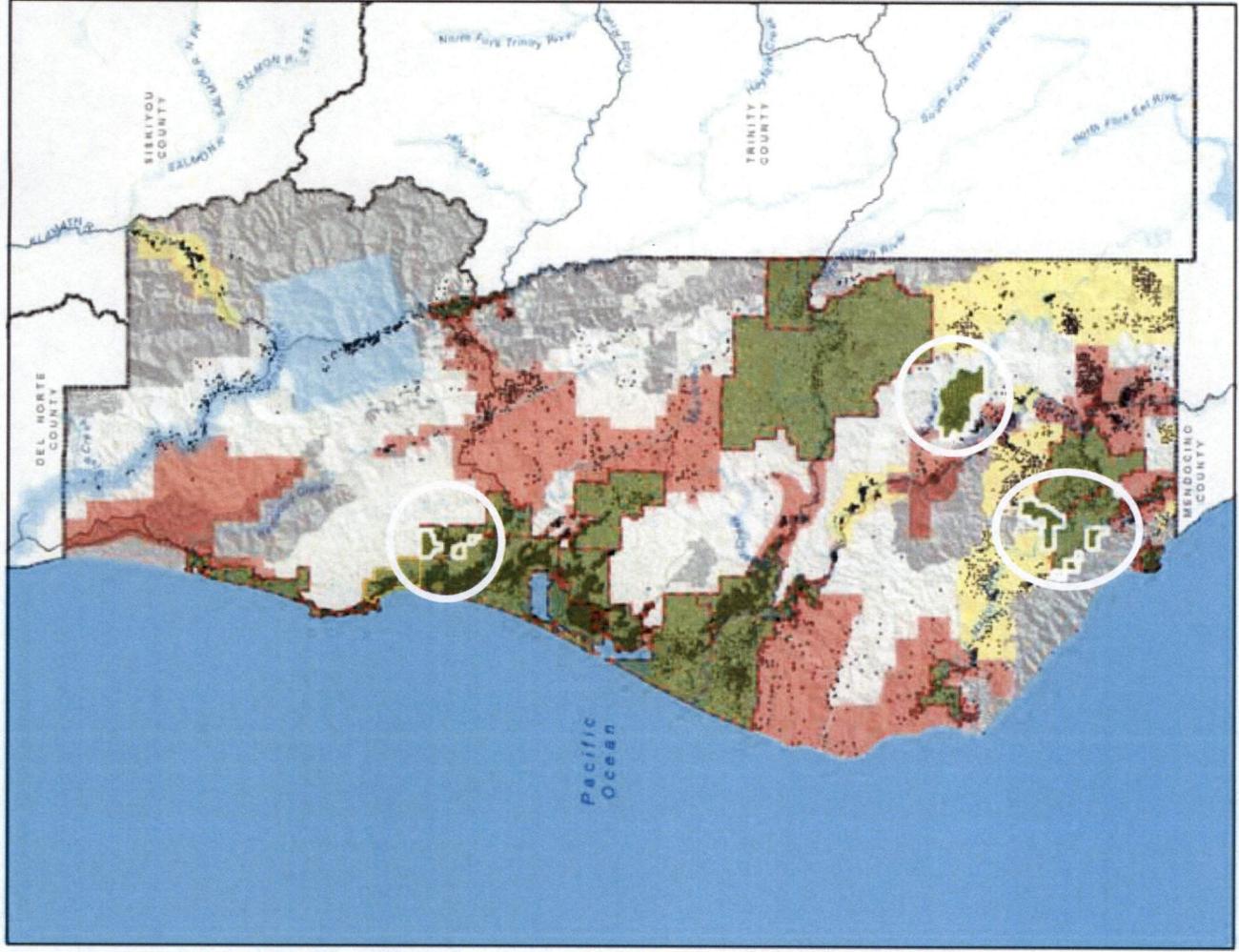
- Increased understanding of fire department service areas and challenges – significant mapping completed.
- Two new districts formed in 2012– *Briceland* and *Bridgeville*.
- One new district formed in 2015 – *Fruitland Ridge*.
- Two district annexations approved – *Fieldbrook* and *Telegraph Ridge*.
- Several tax increases approved by voters.

**Fire  
Related  
Districts –**

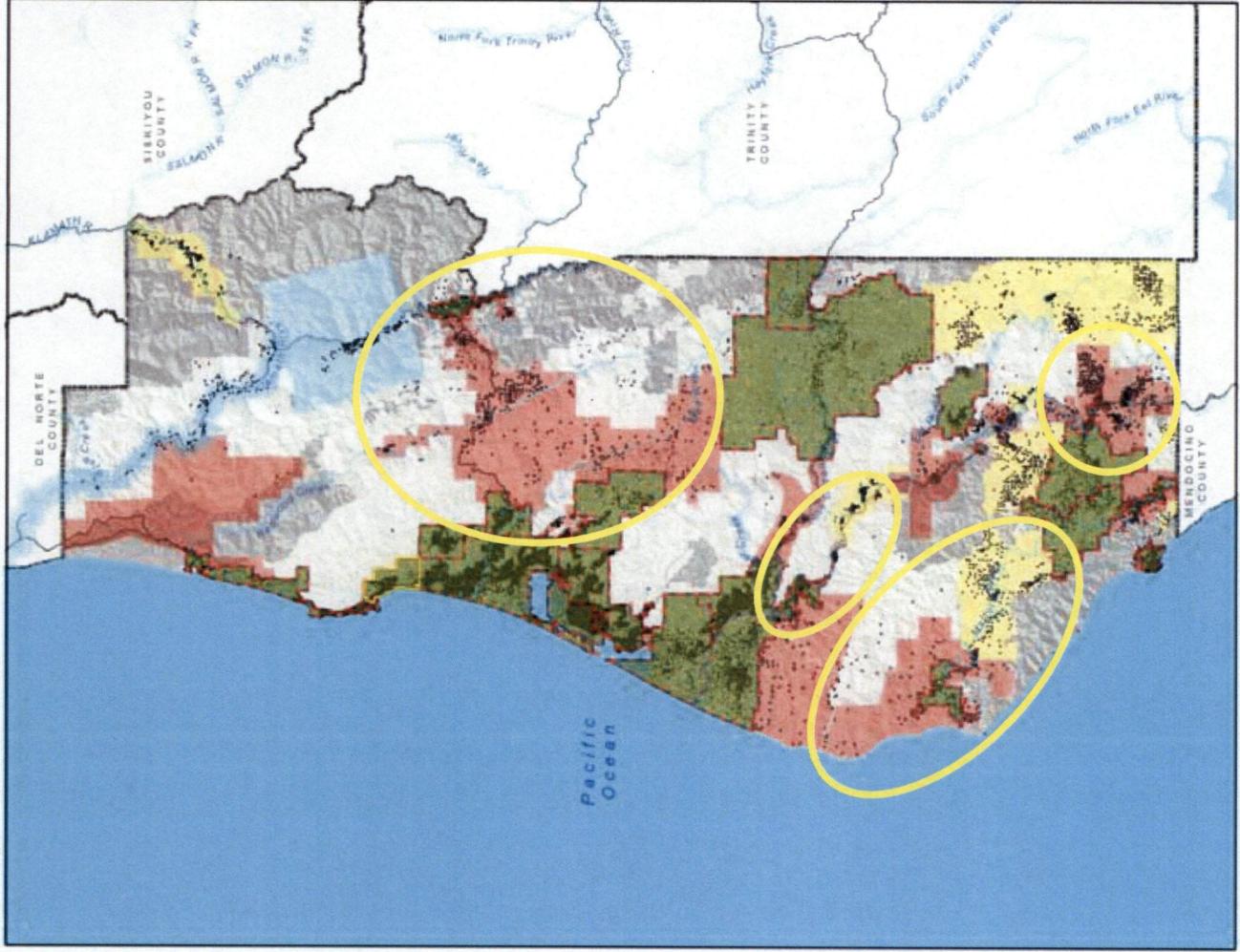
**Two New  
Fire  
Related  
Districts  
Formed  
in 2012**



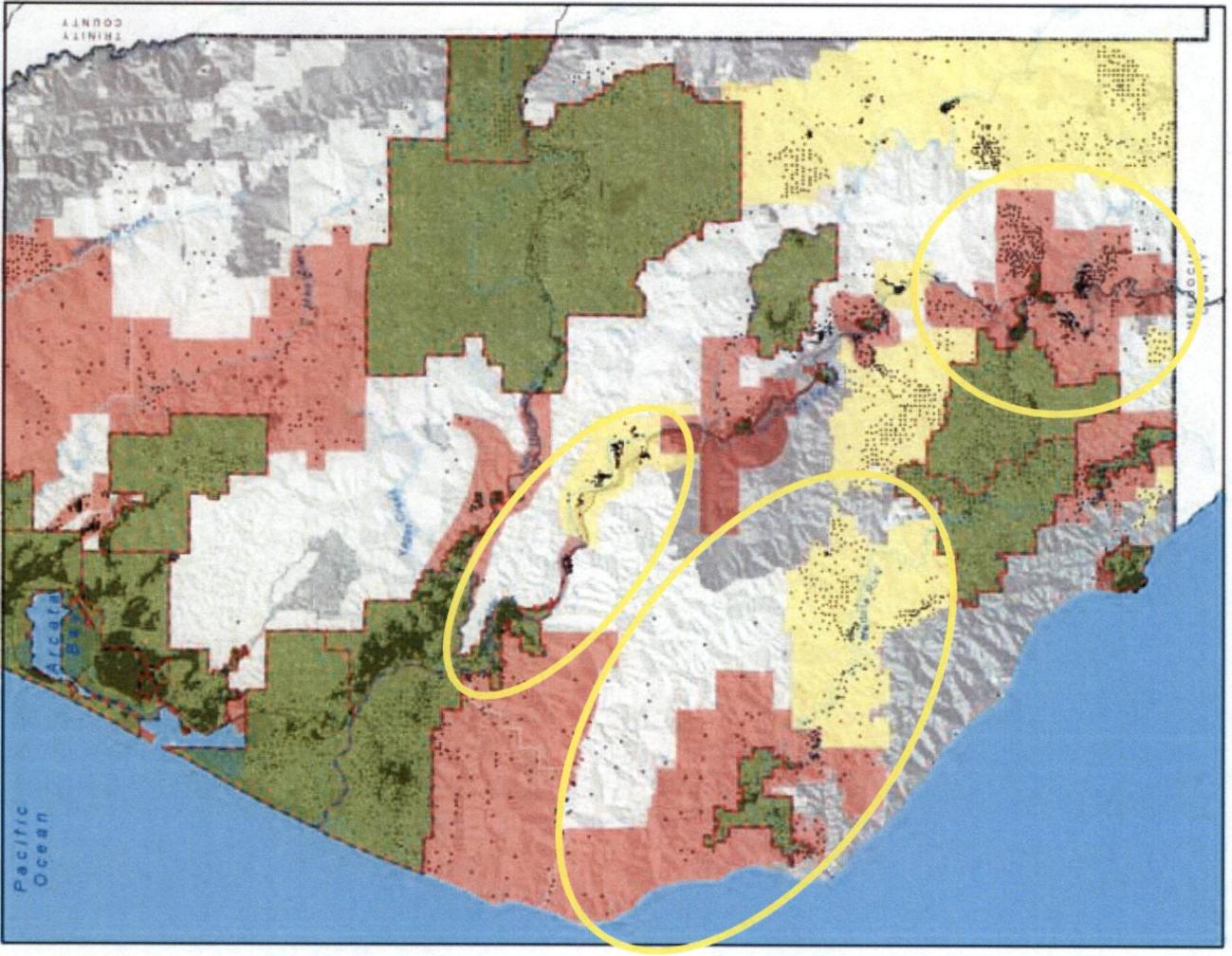
**Fire  
Related  
Districts –  
One New  
District and  
Two  
Annexations  
in 2015**



**Fire  
Related  
Districts –  
Current  
Efforts –  
2015-2016  
Study Areas**

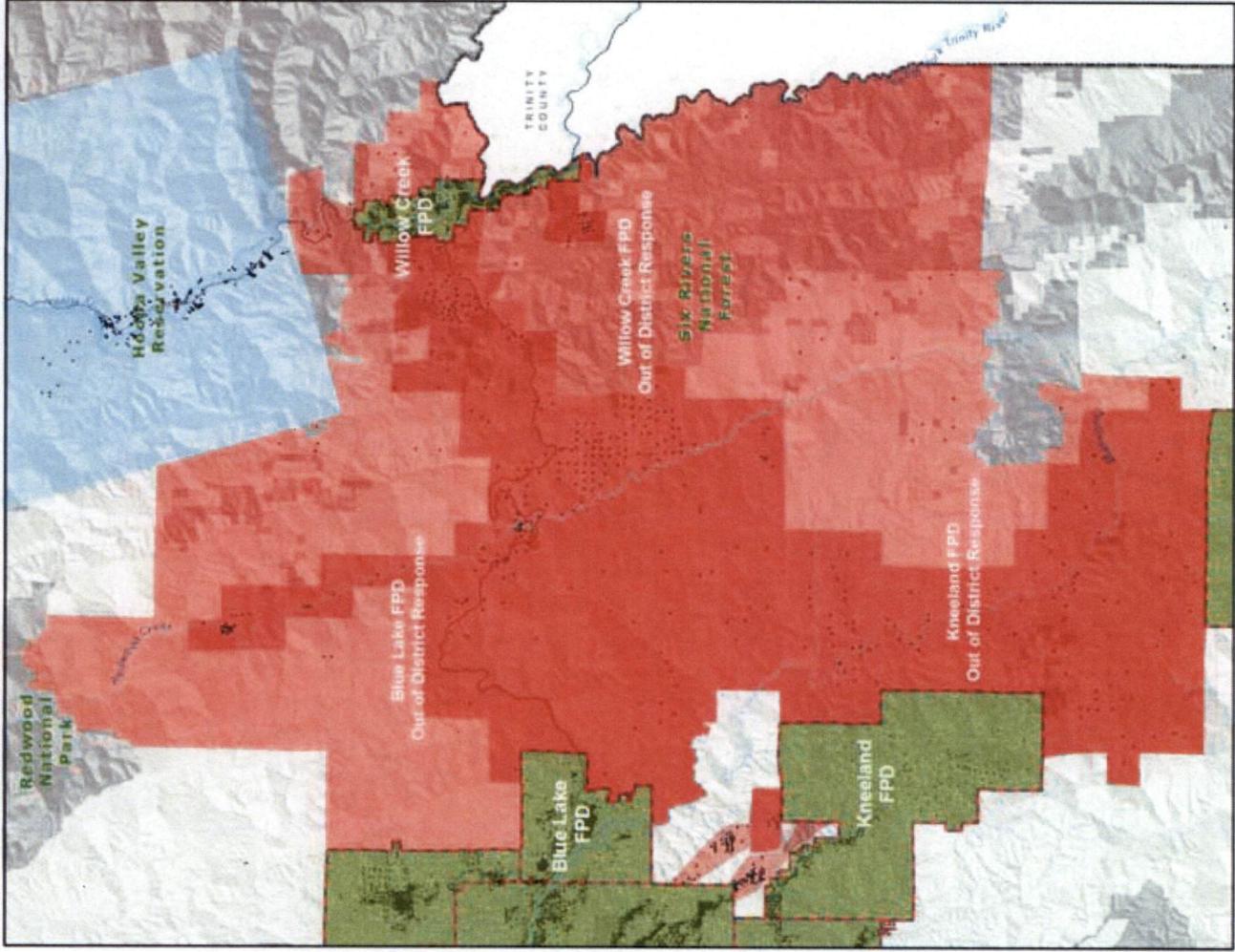


**South View**  
**2015-2016**  
**Study Areas**



**Mad River/  
Redwood Creek  
Study Area**

**Out-of-district  
response/goodwill  
service provided by  
Blue Lake, Kneeland  
and Willow Creek  
Fire Protection  
Districts**



## RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Receive Presentation;
- Provide direction to research solutions, including the formation of a county service area (CSA) for the Mad River/Redwood Creek Study Area;
- Provide direction re expanding CSA research to include other out-of-district areas and how the fire services subcommittee should be involved; and
- Provide direction to develop a proposal to provide interim financial support to sustain currently jeopardized levels of service.

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**Statements from:**

**–Ray Stonebarger for Fire Chiefs**

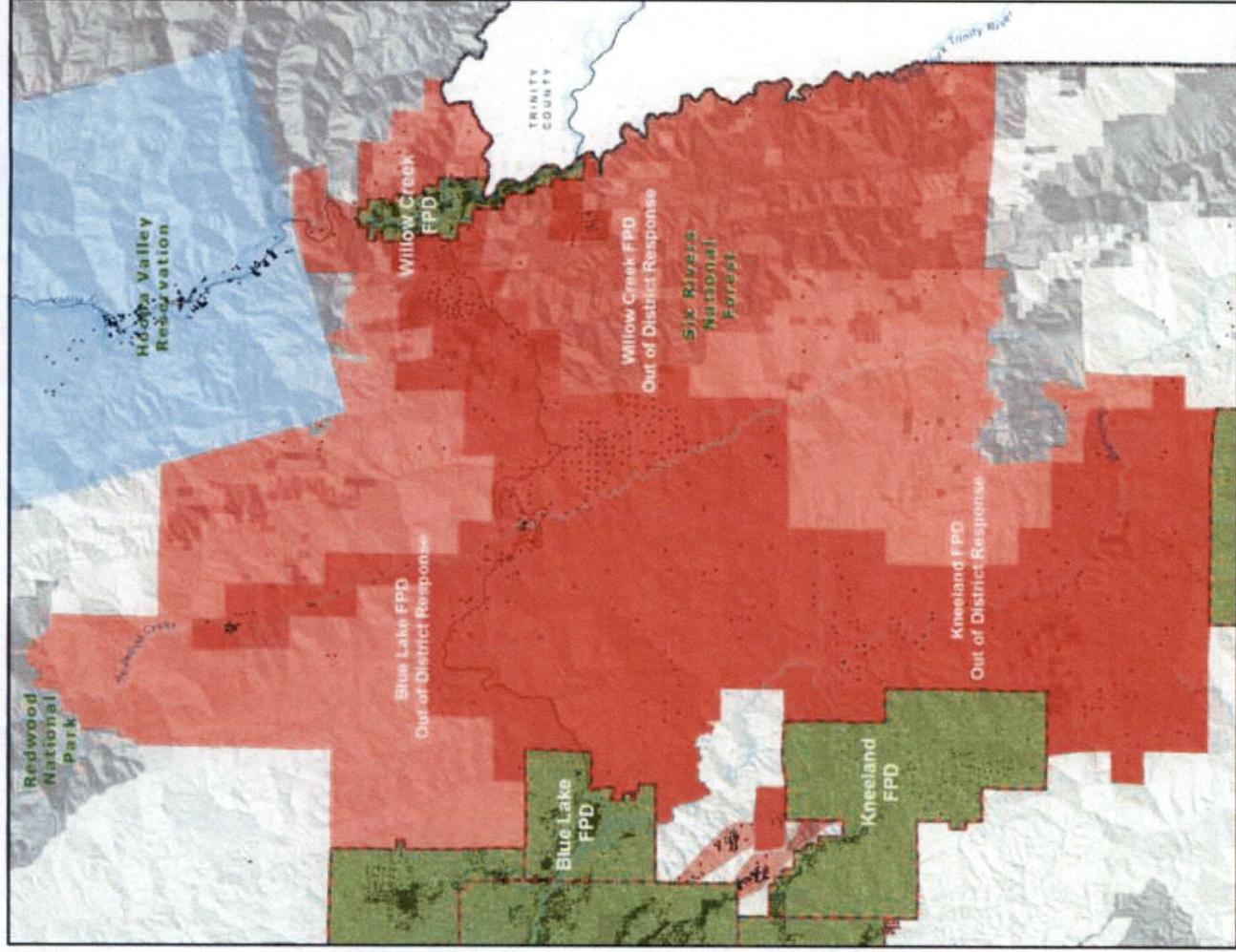
**–Colette Metz for LAFCo**

**–Chief Charles Hanes for CAL**

**FIRE**

**Mad River/  
Redwood Creek  
Study Area**

**Out-of-district  
response/ goodwill  
service provided by  
Blue Lake, Kneeland  
and Willow Creek  
Fire Protection  
Districts**



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# Questions or Comments

**Discussion Map**  
*2015 district boundaries and  
 service areas*

**Tribal Lands** 

**Fire  
 Related  
 Districts -  
 Pre-2012** 

**Out of  
 District  
 Response** 

**(Goodwill  
 Service)**

**Non-District  
 Fire  
 Companies** 