

Fellow Members of the Humboldt County Fire Safe Council,

As much as I have enjoyed my time on this Council, recent events have led me to determine that it is time to resign my seat.

After 8 years working alongside this amazing group of mission-driven and task-saturated over-achievers, I know that all of you inherently recognize that time is a finite resource. When it comes to time management, emergency responders and community planners alike are operating at a deficit. The time for a new project must come from somewhere, and once the mornings, nights, and weekends have been committed, it must be robbed from other projects.

Over the past decade, the increasing cohesion of the Humboldt County fire service has allowed me to withdraw some of the time I was spending on the day-to-day financial and logistical struggles of my primary organizations, and invest it into larger regional strategizing. Much of this effort has been focused on securing durable funding and developing robust mutual aid structures to support the survival of rural fire agencies. But there have been other developments as well, that are even more promising.

As a firefighter, it has been indescribably rewarding to play a part in the return of beneficial fire to our beloved north coast ecosystem, and to transition from focusing solely on response tactics to actually helping prevent catastrophic wildfires. Maybe even more exciting has been the pivotal role that tribal and local community members are playing in this process. The Humboldt County Fire Safe Council has seized every opportunity to advance this essential work, and I would like nothing more than to continue supporting the high-level regional planning and collaboration that this group engages in.

Unfortunately, as many of you are aware, a major economic blow was recently dealt to local fire and rescue organizations, in the form of a massive decrease in our portion of the Measure Z tax allotment. As the Chief of the Southern Humboldt County Technical Rescue Team, this is the funding that allowed us to safely continue our operations. This is what puts helmets on the heads of my crewmembers, before I send them over a cliff or out into a rain-swollen river to rescue a community member in need. This is what replaces the ropes when they start to wear out, and ensures that the tires and brakes on our Rescue Vehicle are adequate to safely return my crew from the incident. The result of this for me personally, is the recognition that I need to pull back in and redirect my time towards securing reliable funding for my home agencies. I had been confident that our funding was in good hands, and that the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors would ensure that the tax revenues dedicated towards Public Safety include adequate support for local fire response. Obviously this confidence was misplaced, and as an active member of the Southern Humboldt Fire Service leadership, I can't help but feel like this was allowed to happen on our watch.

I have come to this decision with some regret and no small measure of FOMO. It has been an honor and a privilege to collaborate with this indomitable group of like-minded folks from diverse backgrounds. It's been especially rewarding to help define a regional vision, and then watch in awe as Cybelle and Julia gather their team and turn that vision into actionable projects with secured funding. I am proud of the work we have accomplished together, and I look forward to collaborating with all of you in future endeavors.

Sincerely,



Kai Ostrow

Rescue Chief, Southern Humboldt County Technical Rescue Team  
Fire Management Specialist, Briceland Volunteer Fire Department