

**Del Norte
Resource Conservation District**

Municipal Service Review &
Sphere of Influence Update

**Del Norte
Local Agency Formation Commission**

Adopted February 23, 2015

Del Norte Local Agency Formation Commission

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INTRODUCTION

This report is prepared pursuant to legislation enacted in 2000 that requires Local Agency Formation Commissions (LAFCo) to conduct a comprehensive review of municipal services and update the spheres of influence of all agencies under LAFCo's jurisdiction. This service review focuses on the Del Norte Resource Conservation District (DNRCD).

Service Review Determinations

The Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000 (California Government Code Section 56000 et seq.) requires LAFCo to review and update spheres of influence not less than once every five years and to review municipal services prior to or in conjunction with sphere updates. The requirement for service reviews arises from the identified need for a more coordinated and efficient public service structure to support California's anticipated growth.

Effective January 1, 2008, Government Code Section 56430 requires LAFCo to conduct a review of municipal services provided in the county by region, sub-region or other designated geographic area, as appropriate, for the service or services to be reviewed, and prepare a written statement of determination with respect to each of the following topics:

- Growth and population projections for the affected area;
- The location and characteristics of any disadvantaged unincorporated communities within or contiguous to the sphere of influence (effective July 1, 2012);
- Present and planned capacity of public facilities, adequacy of public services, and infrastructure needs or deficiencies (including needs or deficiencies related to sewers, municipal and industrial water, and structural fire protection in any disadvantaged, unincorporated communities within or contiguous to the sphere of influence);
- Financial ability of the agency to provide services;
- Status of, and opportunities for, shared facilities;
- Accountability for community service needs, including governmental structure and operational efficiencies; and
- Any other matter affecting or related to effective or efficient service delivery, as required by Commission policy.

Uses of This Report

The service review process provides LAFCo with a tool to study current and future public service conditions and to evaluate organizational options for fostering orderly growth and development, promoting the efficient delivery of services, and encouraging the preservation of open space and agricultural lands. The potential uses of this report are described below.

Update Spheres of Influence

LAFCo will use this report as a basis to update the spheres of influence of the District. Markedly, spheres of influence designate the territory that LAFCo believes represents the affected agencies' appropriate future jurisdictions and service areas. All boundary changes, such as annexations, must be consistent with the affected agencies' spheres of influence with limited exceptions.

Consider Jurisdictional Boundary Changes

LAFCo is not required to initiate any boundary changes based on service reviews. However, LAFCo, local agencies, or the public may subsequently use this report together with additional research and analysis, where necessary, to pursue changes in jurisdictional boundaries.

Resource for Further Studies

Other entities and the public may use this report for further studies and analysis of issues relating to resource conservation services in Del Norte County.

Review Methods

The agency reviewed as part of this service review process demonstrated full accountability in disclosure of information and cooperation with LAFCo. The following information was considered in the service review:

- Agency-specific data: responses to LAFCo Requests for Information, budgets, maps, and district plans.
- Demographic data: U.S. Census Bureau; Department of Finance.

Information gathered was analyzed and applied to make the required determinations for each agency. All information gathered for this report is filed by LAFCo for future reference.

DEL NORTE RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Formation

The Del Norte Resource Conservation District (DNRCD) was formed as an independent special district in August of 2005 by the Del Norte County Board of Supervisors. The purpose of the district is to provide local leadership to help people within the district conserve, improve, and sustain their natural resources and environment and the area's economic viability. The District provides procurement and coordination of grant funds for resource conservation uses.

"The mission of the DNRCD is to protect, enhance, nurture and conserve the natural resources of land owners (public and private) by providing technical & planning advice, education, financial aid, and assistance for projects to benefit and meet the needs of the land, water and life in Del Norte County."

Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs) have their origins in the Federal "Standard State Conservation District Law"; commonly known as the "Standard Act" of 1937 and a modified version adopted by the State of California in 1938. RCDs are legal, non-regulatory, political subdivisions of state government. Division 9 of the California Public Resources Code authorizes the formation of RCDs, defines the State of California's framework for conducting the business of resource conservation within the State, and details the general powers and operations of RCDs.

RCDs across the nation focus attention on local land, water and related resource issues, then work to develop programs to address those issues. RCDs enlist and coordinate help from all public and private sources that can contribute to accomplishing the District's goals. RCDs also work to further conservation education in the local community.

Table 1: Del Norte RCD Agency Profile

Formation	
Agency Name	Del Norte Resource Conservation District
Date of Formation	August 2005
Enabling Legislation	Federal Standard State Conservation District Law of 1937 and Division 9 of the California Public Resources Code
Contact	
Contact	Brian Ferguson, Board Chair
Alternate Contact	Robert Tedsen, Board Vice-Chair
E-mail	delnorteRCD@yahoo.com
Website	http://carcd.org/noth_coast_region0.aspx
District Office	241 1st Street, Unit B Smith River, CA 95567
Phone	(707) 487-7630 Fax: same
Governance	
Governing Body	seven-member Board of Directors
Board Meetings	Third Wednesday of every month at 10:00 AM
Services and Facilities	
Services Provided	Assistance for projects to benefit the land, water, and life of Del Norte County
Areas Served	Lower Smith River and Lake Earl
Acres (District)	Approximately 18,093 acres (28 square miles)

Boundary and Sphere of Influence

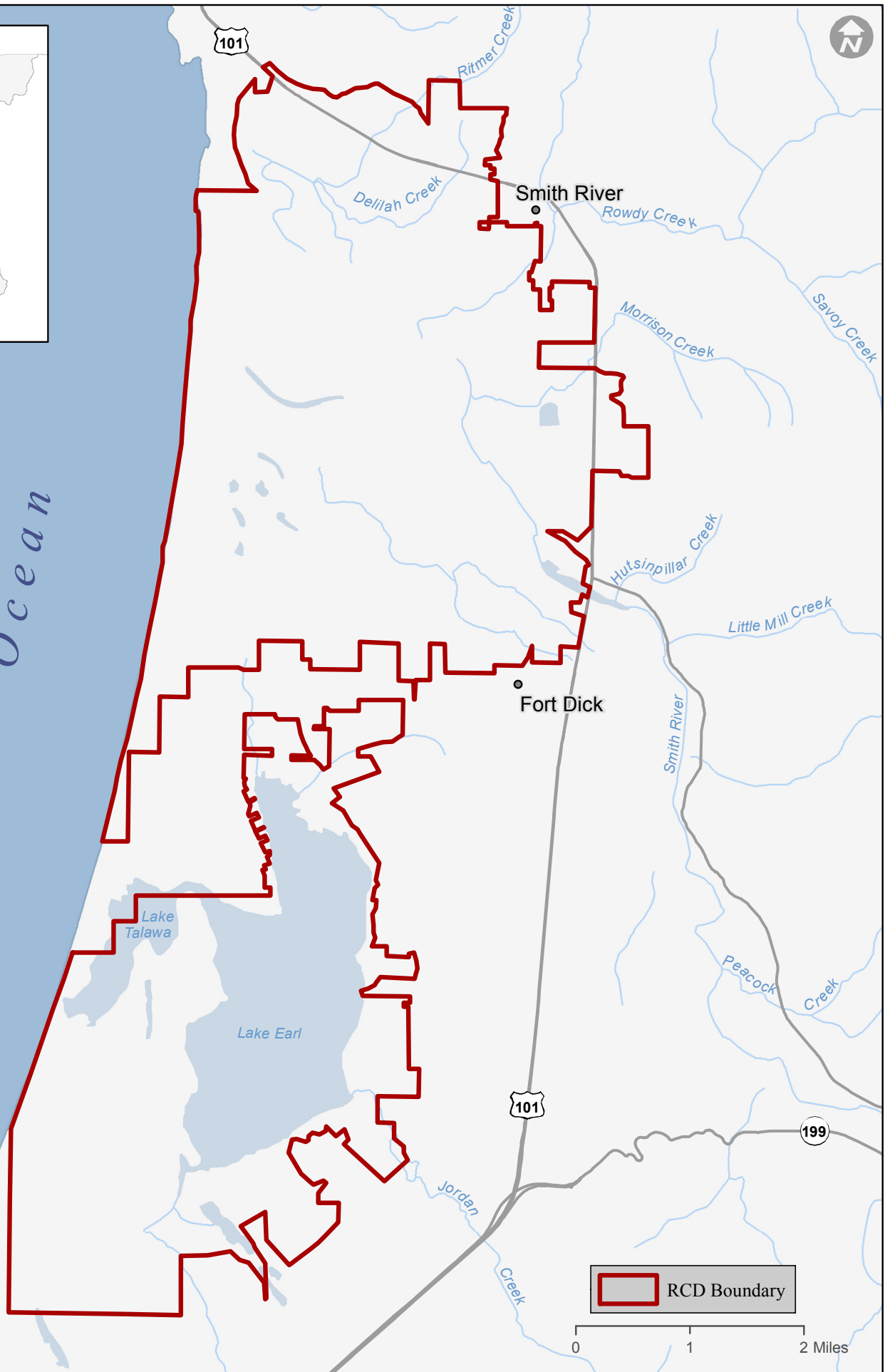
The DNRCD is located between the communities of Crescent City and Smith River, west of Highway 101 in Del Norte County in the northwest corner of the State of California. The District covers approximately two percent of Del Norte County’s land area, and lies in the alluvial plains of Smith River and Elk Creek. The district’s boundary includes two main areas; Area One surrounds the lower Smith River and Area Two surrounds Lake Earl. The district covers approximately 18,093 acres (28 square miles). Figure 1 shows the DNRCD boundary.

The sphere of influence (SOI) for the District is assumed to be coterminous with its boundaries, based on limited records.



Del Norte

Pacific Ocean



 RCD Boundary

0 1 2 Miles

Del Norte Resource Conservation District

Prepared for Del Norte LAFCo by: **PLANWEST PARTNERS, INC.** 

Accountability and Governance

The DNRCD is governed by a seven-member Board of Directors appointed by the Del Norte County Board of Supervisors to serve four-year terms. Meetings are held on the third Wednesday of every month at 10:00 AM and are noticed by posting notice and e-mail.

The District office is open Monday through Friday 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM and staffed through a partnership with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services. The District is available by e-mail and phone.

Table 2: Del Norte RCD Board of Directors

Board Member	Title
Brian Ferguson	Chair
Robert Tedsen	Vice-Chair
Matt Westbrook	Director
Joyce Crockett	Director
Rich Wetherell	Director
Blake Alexander	Director
Steven Westbrook	Director

DNRCD demonstrated full accountability and transparency in its disclosure of information and cooperation with Del Norte LAFCo during the MSR process. The District responded to the questionnaires and cooperated with the document requests.

Population and Land Use

Land Use

The DNRCD serves the unincorporated area of Del Norte County west of Highway 101 between Crescent City and Smith River, which is primarily designated Resource Conservation Area, Prime Agriculture, General Agriculture and Timberland. The Del Norte County General Plan (2003) and Zoning Code guides land use decisions within the DNRCD.

County Population and Growth

According to the Census, the total population in Del Norte County was 27,507 in 2000 and 28,610 in 2010. The Del Norte County population grew at a rate of 4.0 percent between the 2000 and 2010 census, or at an annual growth rate of 0.4 percent.

District Population and Growth

To approximate the population within the DNRCD boundary, a centroid method was applied to U.S. Census Bureau 2010 blocks within the district boundary. Since the District boundary is not coincident to the census blocks, a single census block may overlap multiple district boundaries.

To prevent double-counting of census information within multiple districts, the census block polygons were converted to centroid points, and then assigned to the district in which the centroid resided. The population was then summarized for the district based on which centroids for each census block resided within the boundary. According to the above centroid method, the DNRCD had an approximate 2010 population of 900.

The DNRCD growth is concentrated primarily in lower Smith River. The district largely contains resource conservation area and prime agricultural lands, and will likely continue to develop at or less than the current county-wide rates of 0.4 percent per year, putting the DNRCD population at approximately 936 in 2020.

Disadvantaged Unincorporated Communities

LAFCo is required to evaluate water service, sewer service, and structural fire protection within disadvantaged unincorporated communities as part of this service review, including the location and characteristics of any such communities. A disadvantaged unincorporated community (DUC) is defined as any area with 12 or more registered voters where the annual median household income is less than 80 percent of the statewide annual median household income (pursuant to Government Code Section 56033.5 and Water Code Section 79505.5).

According to the 2008-2012 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, the California median household income (MHI) is \$61,400. The Del Norte countywide MHI is \$39,626, which places it at 65% of the California MHI. With only one incorporated city, Crescent City, most of the County's population exists in unincorporated communities that qualify as "disadvantaged".

The California Department of Water Resources has mapped communities that are at or below 80 percent of the annual median household income by using census data for each county. According to this data, the communities of Smith River, Hiouchi, Gasquet, Klamath, and parts of the incorporated City of Crescent City are classified as disadvantaged within Del Norte County.

The DNRCD does not provide any of the three basic services- water, sewer, or structural fire protection. Fire protection services are provided by the Smith River Fire Protection District (FPD), Fort Dick FPD and Crescent FPD. Water services are provided by Crescent City and Smith River CSD; many areas within the district boundaries are removed from water systems and rely on private water supply. There are no sewer services provided in the DNRCD boundary.

Services

DNRCD provides resource management services to in-district public and private landowners including:

- Promoting voluntary action to resolve natural resource issues;
- Focusing attention on local resource problems and opportunities;
- Developing and implementing educational programs for landowner benefit;

- o Providing input for the development and implementation of government programs; and
- o Coordinating with federal, state, and local agencies as needed for technical assistance.

The DNRCD has identified five priority natural resource issues to focus their resource management services:

Aleutian Geese Depredation: Working with state and federal agencies, the district is developing an overall plan for goose management through a comprehensive, region-wide hazing program with neighboring counties. This program will alleviate the Aleutian Geese' impact on private lands by opening up 500 acres of short grass habitat for the geese to move to.

Water Quality (Erosion and Runoff): This district aims to achieve erosion control on 50% of lily bulb fields in the district. The program includes development and implementation of nutrient management plans for dairies including soil sampling and manure sampling as part of a non-point source pollution prevention program.

Noxious Weeds: The district is developing a County-wide Weed Management Program that includes a redemption program for tansy ragwort, reed canary grass, and scotch broom.

Stream Enhancement: The district will complete 20 miles of stream bank and riparian enhancements. This includes fencing of livestock, implementing demonstration projects, resolving gravel issues, improving channels, and monitoring fish populations on the lower Smith River and its tributaries.

Gravel Extraction: The district provides technical and environmental assistance to rural gravel operators, including geomorphic and watershed studies.

The DNRCD is currently involved in four programs furthering the resource management goals described above.

Short Grass Habitat Improvement: The DNRCD will manage leases on California Department of Fish and Game land in a joint effort to increase the quality of short grass habitat through prescribed grazing.

Del Norte Agricultural Enhancement Program: To compliment the management practices already being installed through voluntary efforts, DNRCD is seeking financial assistance through agencies such as the State Water Quality Control Board to support the Del Norte Agricultural Enhancement Program. The goal of the program is to implement best management practices and reduce farming impacts of water resources and ecosystems.

Smith River Estuary Project: DNRCD administers this project in partnership with the Smith River Watershed Coordinator. The project will set the groundwork for future estuary projects in the area and includes planting riparian buffers and restoring juvenile salmonid habitat.

Resource Conservation and Development Council (RC&D): the DNRCD is a voting member of the RC&D Council. The RC&D program was initiated by the USDA in 1962 to help people care for and protect their natural resources and improve their areas' economy, environment, and living standards.

The DNRCD has not changed its services since its last MSR (2009) and does not foresee expanding its current services or functions in the near future. The District has not considered any annexations or consolidations in the past 5 years.

Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies

The District does not own or maintain equipment, vehicles, or buildings at this time.

Shared Services

The DNRCD works in partnership with various government agencies including the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Department of Fish and Game, and the State Water Resources Control Board. The District is a member of the North Coast Resource Partnership and participates in regional planning activities. The District maintains Memorandums of Understanding with the Del Norte Weed Management Area (WMA) and North Coast Integrated Water Management Plan (NCIWMP).

According to the District, there are potential opportunities for shared services with the Humboldt RCD, which manages California Department of Fish and Wildlife contracts that could service the DNRCD.

Budget

The DNRCD's primary revenue sources are state and federal grants with reimbursable administrative and indirect costs. The District has been particularly successful at procuring grant funding for its programs. For 2015, the District received over \$240,000 for NCIWMP projects. The District receives no property taxes, special assessments, or other local funding. Grant funding can be cyclical in nature, meaning that the availability of funding is greatly dependent on economic conditions at the time. As a result, many RCDs in the State have faced challenges in ensuring sufficient funding to maintain staff and minimum service levels.

The District does not have any outstanding debt. Budget decisions are made at annual operational meetings.

Table 3. Del Norte RCD Revenues & Expenditures

Revenues	Budget 2014	Budget 2015
cash	\$4,948	\$14,239
CDFG Leases	\$7,418	-
Weed Management Area	-	-
RAC Project	\$2,967	\$13,315
Middle Fork	\$6,614	\$31,556
Watershed projects	-	-
NCIRWMP (minus 5% withholding)	\$12,645	\$228,143
Total Revenues	\$34,592	\$287,252
Expenses	Budget 2014	Budget 2015
<i>Project/Program Expenses</i>		
CDFG Leases 65% to CDFG	\$4,822	-
WMA implementation	-	-
RAC Partners	\$2,748	\$12,105
Middle Fork Partners	\$6,013	\$28,687
Watershed projects	-	-
NCIRWMP Projects	\$13,138	\$191,862
NCIRWMP Program Management	\$1,662	\$10,838
NCIRWMP Design and Engineering	\$50	\$12,450
NCIRWMP Permits/documentation	-	\$25,000
<i>Subtotal</i>	\$28,432	\$280,942
<i>RCD Expenses</i>		
Rent \$350 per month at 12 months	\$4,200	\$4,200
District Manager/Bookkeeping/other	-	-
Printing Supplies	-	-
Office Supplies/postage	-	-
Equipment Purchase	-	-
Dues CARCD	-	\$150
Professional Fees Accounting/Audit	-	-
Insurance - Liability	\$1,300	\$1,300
Travel - Directors/Conference	-	-
Internet	\$660	\$660
Education/Public Outreach	-	-
<i>Subtotal</i>	\$6,160	\$6,310
Total Expenses	\$34,592	\$287,252
Total	\$0	\$0

MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW DETERMINATIONS

This chapter addresses the requirements of the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000 (California Government Code Section 56430). As part of the municipal service review process, LAFCo is required to make written statements of determinations in each of the categories listed below.

Growth and population projections

The DNRCD has an approximate population of 900, based on 2010 Census Block data.

The district largely contains resource conservation area and prime agricultural lands, and will likely continue to develop at or less than the current county-wide rates of 0.4 percent per year, putting the DNRCD population at approximately 936 people in 2020.

The location and characteristics of any disadvantaged unincorporated communities within or contiguous to the Sphere of Influence

The community of Smith River is adjacent to District boundaries and has been identified as a disadvantaged unincorporated community.

Because the DNRCD does not provide water, sewer or structural fire protection services, the District is not responsible for assuring that these services are adequately provided to communities that meet the DUC thresholds.

Present and planned capacity of public facilities and adequacy of public services, including infrastructure needs or deficiencies

The District provides valuable resource conservation services to landowners and collaborates with several other agencies. Countywide growth may increase pressure to convert resource lands; therefore, demand for services may increase due to this and other regulatory requirements.

The District currently does not own or maintain any facilities and consequently does not have any infrastructure needs or deficiencies associated with district-owned infrastructure.

Financial ability of agencies to provide services

The District relies on grant funding for its programs and does not receive a constant, reliable funding source. DNRCD has been successful at procuring grant funding as shown by the eight-fold increase in revenue from 2014 to 2015.

Status of, and opportunities for, shared facilities

According to the District, there are potential opportunities for shared services with the Humboldt RCD, which manages California Department of Fish and Wildlife contracts that could service the DNRCD.

Accountability for community service needs, including governmental structure and operational efficiencies

The DNRCD is governed by a seven-member Board of Directors appointed by the County Board of Supervisors. The district holds public meetings in accordance with the Brown Act. District staff can be reached by phone, email, or at the district office during normal business hours.

Any other matter related to effective or efficient service delivery, as required by commission policy

Other RCDs in California cover larger portions of the Counties that they serve; for instance, the Humboldt County RCD boundary includes the entire land area of the County. The DNRCD may want to consider expanding their service area in the future to include more of Del Norte County's agricultural lands.

SPHERE OF INFLUENCE DETERMINATIONS

Sphere of Influence Status

The current DNRCD SOI is coterminous with District boundaries and is sufficient to accommodate projected growth within the District over the next 5-10 years. The District currently has no expansion plans. Based on the results of this MSR, no expansion or reduction to the DNRCD's SOI are necessary at this time. However, the district may want to consider expanding their SOI to include other agricultural areas in the County in the future.

In determining the SOI of each local agency, the commission shall consider and prepare a written statement of its determinations with respect to each of the categories listed below.

Present and planned land uses in the area, including agricultural and open-space lands.

The district largely contains resource conservation areas and prime agricultural lands. Little change in actual or designated land uses within the District is anticipated over the next 20 years.

Present and probable need for public facilities and services in the area.

While not easily quantifiable, the District appears to have experienced an increase in demand for its services over the last few years, as indicated by the increase in grant funding for specific projects. Countywide growth may increase pressure to convert resource lands; therefore, demand for services may increase due to this and other regulatory requirements.

Present capacity of public facilities and adequacy of public services that the agency provides or is authorized to provide.

The District provides valuable resource conservation services to landowners and collaborates with several other agencies. RCD's generally are constrained by available funding sources; DNRCD has been successful in receiving grant funds to continue providing services.

Existence of any social or economic communities of interest in the area if the commission determines that they are relevant to the agency.

The District includes resource and agricultural lands; there is no community center or other communities of interest relevant to the District activities. The communities of Smith River and Fort Dick are adjacent to District boundaries.

For an update of a sphere of influence of a city or special district that provides public facilities or services related to sewers, municipal and industrial water, or structural fire protection, the present and probable need for those public facilities and services of any disadvantaged unincorporated communities within the existing sphere.

The District provides resource conservation and management services. The community of Smith River is adjacent to District boundaries and has been identified as a disadvantaged unincorporated community. Smith River is provided water, sewer and fire services by other service providers.

REFERENCES

Del Norte Resource Conservation District Municipal Service Review, January 2009. Del Norte Local Agency Formation Commission.

Del Norte Resource Conservation District Municipal Service Review Questionnaire. Completed by Andrea Souther in January 2015.