CONSOLIDATION UPDATE:

**We are pleased to announce** that on Wednesday, March 4, the Sonoma County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) unanimously approved the annexation of the Bodega Bay Fire Protection District and the Russian River Fire Protection District into the Sonoma County Fire District.

The consolidation will create a dynamic, unified district that will be positioned to better serve the needs of all who live within or visit the area it will serve.

The consolidation creates an agency that is poised to take a leadership position in providing the essential Advanced Life Support ambulance response/transport service the area and Sonoma County demand.

The consolidation is the culmination of several years of discussions and planning aimed at creating an agency that is both responsive to local needs and positioned to play a larger role in the County and State.

**So, why is this good for the people of Bodega Bay?** Here is a quick summary of why we support this consolidation:

First, and foremost, it will provide us with the resources we need to strengthen the Coastal Safety Net. Just last year, we had but 3 full time staff members on duty on each shift. With the help of the County, and as a step toward consolidation, we added a 4th member — another paramedic — to each shift. This allows us to leave a two person crew, at least one of whom is a paramedic, behind when the ambulance is transporting or tied up. Now, on our “second calls” we can offer Paramedic/ALS service.

If all goes well, with consolidation, we will solidify our current work force and ADD one more Paramedic to our staff. In conjunction with similar staffing with our West County partner Russian River, we may be able to add a much needed ALS response/transport ambulance to West County. That will be a significant strengthening of the safety net.

Second, we will make our service more stable and sustainable. Some economies of scale — savings from combining purchasing and administration — will serve us well. In addition, we are working on a business plan that will allow us to generate more revenue to be reinvested into the consolidated district. Although we cannot promise, it is possible that the current minimum parcel tax all Bodega Bay property owners pay, $524/year, will be substantially reduced — possibly down to $185.

Finally, the consolidation gives us an inland command structure that will activate and serve us in times of coastal emergencies. All of us who live here recognize the risk inherent in living in an area that, if there is an earthquake or local disaster, will be cut off from the services and leadership we might need. We are picking up the depth and experience of a much larger agency — one that mobilized and led the fight against the Kincade fire.
Will this be a radical change for us? No.

We have been working with our West County brothers and sisters at Russian River since we came into being. We know each other well. We share service boundaries and have had each others’ backs for many years. With our counterparts in the Sonoma County Fire District, we are sharing a leadership role while working for a system that provides better 24/7 All Risk coverage, with Rapid Response Times, and Redundant Resources. We have all been strong partners and look forward to formalizing the relationship.

What happens to our current BBFPD workforce and how do our people feel about this?

We know you care about us and we deeply appreciate your support. For years, we have all been working toward this end. We all strongly support the move. And, lest you worry, none of us will be left behind. Be it the Chiefs, the staff, the administrator, the volunteers, we will all be serving our community in meaningful ways. We look forward to the new relationship — the enhanced resources, the new opportunities to serve, and the stability the consolidation will give us.

So, what’s next?

LAFCO placed some conditions on our consolidation. One is that we get sufficient support from the County to put us on the path toward implementing our growth/business plan. We are working hard to satisfy that condition. Should we need your help, we will let you know.

Soon, the property owners and voters in our district will receive a communication from LAFCO. It will be a request for public input. Unfortunately, it is call a “protest” notice. If you support the consolidation, you can trash it and do nothing more. Of course, dropping us a comment or note of support will be deeply appreciated.

So, there you are. Consolidation — a long time goal — is potentially around the corner. We hope that you are as excited about the possibilities as we are. If you have any questions, let us know. We are also looking to set up some town hall meetings, soon, to discuss this exciting development.