

**BOLINAS AREA  
SERVICE REVIEW AND  
SPHERE OF INFLUENCE UPDATE**

**Marin Local Agency Formation Commission**

August 2007

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

The staff of Marin LAFCO gratefully acknowledges the time and effort of the County of Marin, the Bolinas Fire Protection District, and Bolinas Community Public Utility District who provided information and insight during the preparation of this report.

## I. INTRODUCTION

This report is presented as part of a process mandated by Section 56425 of the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000. As stated in that section, "In order to carry out its purposes and responsibilities for planning and shaping the logical and orderly development and coordination of local government agencies so as to advantageously provide for the present and future needs of the county and its communities, the Local Agency Formation Commission shall develop and determine the sphere of influence of each local governmental agency within the county." As used in this section, "*sphere of influence*" means a plan for the probable physical boundaries and service area of a local government agency.

In determining a sphere of influence, the Commission is required to consider and make written findings with respect to the following factors:

- ❑ The present and planned land uses in the area, including agricultural and open space lands.
- ❑ The present and probable need for public facilities and services in the area.
- ❑ The present capacity of public facilities and adequacy of public services which the agency provides or is authorized to provide.
- ❑ The existence of any social or economic communities of interest in the area if the commission determines they are relevant to the agency.

Changes to State law effective on January 1, 2001 require LAFCOs to study the service relationships between agencies providing municipal services within different sub-regions in each county prior to the periodic review of adopted spheres of influence. In this report, discussion of service review determinations precedes recommendations for the spheres of influence of the two public agencies under study, the Bolinas Community Public Utility District and the Bolinas Fire Protection District.

The actual effect of these or any other adopted spheres of influence will be to provide LAFCO and local communities with policy guidance on matters relating to the boundaries and organization of local government agencies. In short, the purpose of the Commission's sphere determinations is to answer the question, "What local agencies should provide which services to what geographical area as communities change?" More information on LAFCO and on all of Marin County's local governments, services and boundaries may be found on the Commission's website at [www.lafco.marin.org](http://www.lafco.marin.org).

## II. MUNICIPAL SERVICE REVIEW

### Description of Community

The unincorporated community of Bolinas is located in the western part of Marin County, spanning coastal Marin from Volunteer Canyon to Dogtown. This primarily residential area lies on Marin's Pacific shore with Bolinas Lagoon roughly forming its eastern border, and Point Reyes National Seashore lands to the north.

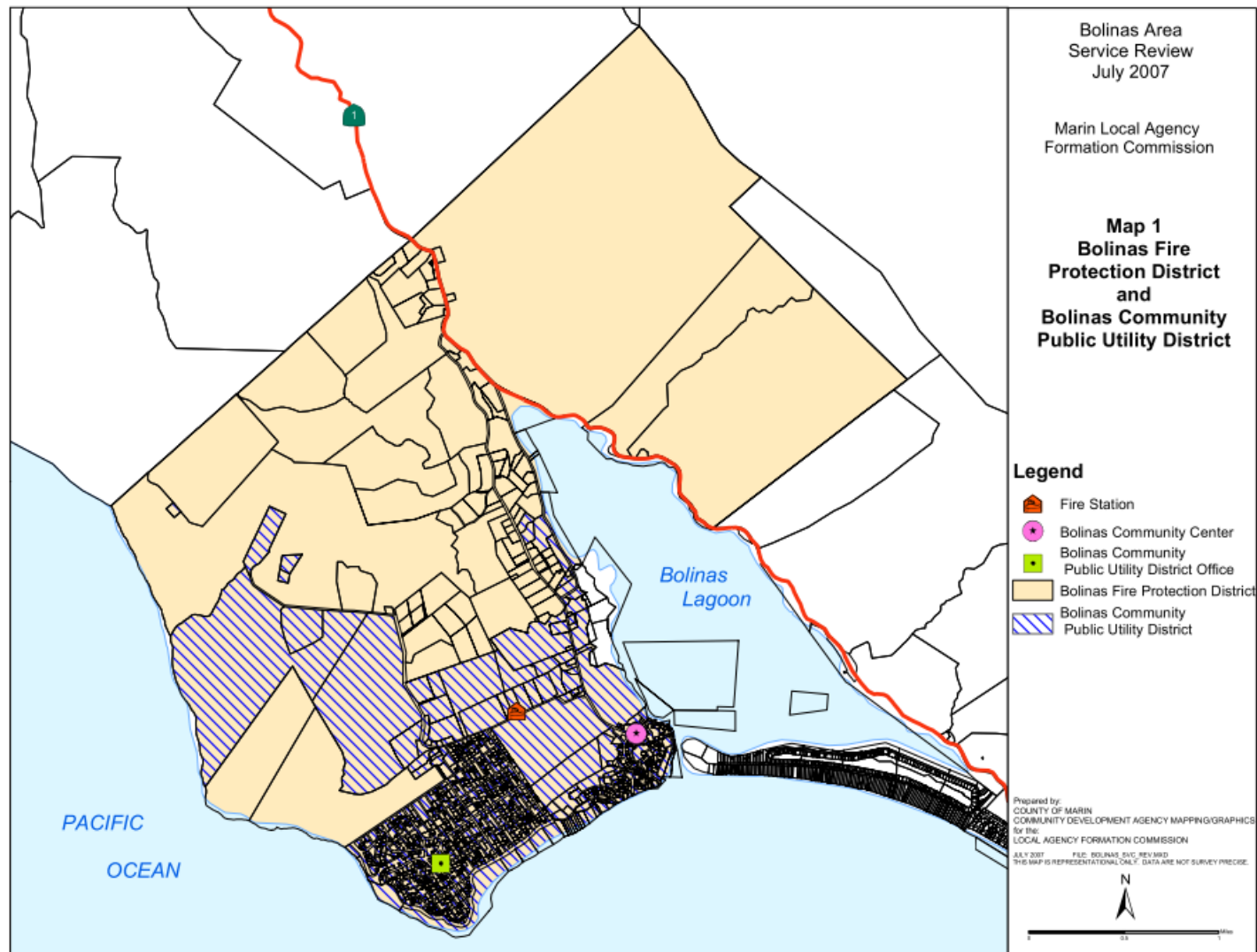
There are two special districts that provide service to the Bolinas community – the Bolinas Community Public Utility District and the Bolinas Fire Protection District. The jurisdictional areas of the two districts are very different, as shown on Map 1.

### Bolinas Community Public Utility District Services

The Bolinas Community Public Utility District (BPUD) is responsible for domestic water, solid waste disposal, and sewage collection and treatment. The District also operates one small park with playground facilities. BPUD was formed in 1967 under Section 15501 et seq. of the California Public Utilities Code when an election was held to confirm a resolution of the Marin County Board of Supervisors approving the consolidation of the Bolinas Public Utility District and the Bolinas Beach Public Utility District. As described in more detail on pages 5 and 6, due to the District's objectives to promote a non-toxic environment, both the water and sewer systems use little or no chemicals for treatment.

BPUD staff includes four maintenance/operations employees, two resource recovery employees and two administrative employees including a full-time General Manager. A five-member Board of Directors, elected at-large, governs the BPUD.

BPUD's jurisdiction encompasses approximately five square miles including the community's commercial center and mesa areas shown on Map 1 in diagonal stripe pattern. The mesa area served by BPUD includes some agricultural and publicly owned lands. Unlike the area served by BFPD, BPUD's service area does not include residential properties north of Gasper's Lane and Mesa Road and on Horseshoe Hill Road which presumably rely on individual wells and septic systems. Stinson Beach County Water District is adjacent and to the east of BPUD.



*Bolinas Fire Protection District Services*

The Bolinas Fire Protection District (BFPD) provides fire protection, emergency medical aid, disaster planning and response, fire prevention, and fire prevention education to the residents and visitors of the unincorporated town of Bolinas. BFPD also provides critical first responder services to the visitors of the adjacent Point Reyes National Seashore and Golden Gate National Recreation Area. The Bolinas Volunteer Fire Department was founded in 1946 and became the Bolinas Fire Protection District in 1954.

The district's jurisdiction includes the entire Bolinas area and reaches Ridgecrest Boulevard (on top of Bolinas Ridge) to the north as shown on Map 1. The area includes agricultural lands, privately owned parklands (Audubon Canyon Ranch) and publicly owned parklands (portions of Golden Gate National Recreation Area and Point Reyes National Seashore). BFPD's boundaries and sphere of influence are coterminous.

The District employs a full-time fire chief and captain, and a part-time District Secretary, three part-time Duty Officers and eighteen volunteer firefighters, most being certified Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs). The District's rescue/command vehicle is staffed twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week by either a paid firefighter or a qualified volunteer Duty Officer.

District volunteers currently respond to more than 250 emergency calls per year. More than half the calls are reports of medical emergencies, with the minority for fires, cliff rescues, downed tree lines, gas leaks, etc. Given the town's maturing population, the percentage of medical calls is expected to increase in coming years. Most volunteer firefighters are certified as EMTs, which requires an additional 24 hours of training every two years beyond the 100 hours of training the district offers to firefighters annually. A third of the volunteers also receive intensive state-sponsored training in fighting wildland fires, a crucial skill in a community geographically separated from other fire protection resources.

BFPD also organizes the town's disaster-preparedness programs, trains an average of almost 70 individuals per year in CPR, conducts safety programs at Bolinas-Stinson School, and home-safety training for the entire community.

According to BFPD's Fire Chief, Bolinas is a State Responsibility Area (SRA) for wildland fire protection under the authority of the California Department of Forestry (CDF). SRA lands are defined based on land ownership, population density, land use and jurisdiction of other fire protection agencies. CDF contracts with Marin County Fire for its protection responsibilities in Marin County.

## **Municipal Service Review Determinations for Bolinas Community Public Utility District and Bolinas Fire Protection District**

This report addresses the Municipal Service Review factors specified in LAFCO's governing statute.

### **1. Government and Operations Structure**

The possible alternative governmental structure options as stated in the 1984 Special District Sphere of Influence Study are as follows:

- BFPD could be consolidated with Stinson Beach Fire Protection District into a newly developed area wide fire authority.
- The BFPD and BPUD could merge into a newly formed district.

The first alternative has not received serious consideration because the communities of Stinson Beach and Bolinas are geographically separate and distinct. The second alternative would combine both independent special districts that serve only the Bolinas community. The following table identifies advantages and disadvantages of reorganizing BPUD and BFPD.

Alternative: Reorganize BPUD and BFPD as a single community services district under Government Code Section 61000 et seq.

	Advantages/Incentives	Disadvantages/Obstacles
<b>Service Level, Operations, or Efficiency</b>	Possible future extension of on-site wastewater monitoring service with enhancement of environmental protection. Enhanced coordination of locally provided services and facilities (e.g. water/fireflow or cross-training of fire & utility personnel)	On-site wastewater management not currently required. No revenue for new service identified.  Water supply insufficient to provide service to expanded jurisdictional area. Different service areas for fire, water and sewer within new district jurisdiction.
<b>Cost Savings</b>	Possible cost reductions in overlapping management, administrative/office functions	Cost savings probably insufficient to provide incentive for changing established organizational structure. Change of organization would not result in new revenues.
<b>Political Accountability</b>	Broader responsibilities and higher profile for fewer elected board members. Other, additional service functions possible under CSD enabling statute.	

## 2. Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies

### *Fire Protection*

Bolinas firefighters have worked out of a small, utilitarian firehouse on Mesa Road built in 1970. In 1998, engineers determined the structure did not meet state building codes and would collapse in a magnitude 6.5 earthquake.

Currently, the nearest paramedic ambulance service is in Point Reyes Station, with a response time of 20-25 minutes. The town's aging population and increased day use (primarily by surfers) compounded by their geographic isolation, determined the need for better facilities. While Marin County has expressed interest in funding paramedic ambulance to serve the area, the current Bolinas firehouse lacks sleeping quarters and other facilities required for ambulance service.



The BFPD, in conjunction with the Coastal Health Alliance and Bolinas Family Practice, recently completed construction of a new fire station and medical clinic on the site of the existing fire station property at 100 Mesa Road.

The new firehouse includes:

- 7,800 square foot, earthquake safe facility;
- Additional disaster supply and equipment storage;
- Three fire truck engine bays;
- One paramedic ambulance bay;
- Firefighter dorms; and
- Community Meeting Room for disaster planning, CPR/ first aid classes and other town meetings.

The old building was demolished in February 2006 to make way for the new firehouse. The Bolinas Community Firehouse and Clinic was completed and opened in July 2007.

BFPD operates two type 1 structure fire engines, one type 3 wildland fire engine and a command/rescue vehicle. Engines are replaced on a 20-year duty cycle. Infrastructure needs for the Fire District are determined through annual discussions among fire district officers and board members.

### *Water System*

The BPUD water system receives its water supply from two reservoirs on Arroyo Honda Creek with a capacity of 56 acre feet. The District maintains two storage tanks with total storage capacity of 883,776 gallons. There is one pump station and one water treatment plant treating an average of approximately 170,000 gallons per day with a maximum treatment capacity of treating 230,400 gallons per day. The District's water distribution system has approximately 20,000 linear feet of pipeline. The District's water system provides service to 562 residential, 20 commercial, and 5 agricultural irrigation service connections.

In August 1996, BPUD began full-time operation of a new water treatment plant with microfiltration technology. Use of this technology significantly reduces the need for chemical treatment. In August 2007, BPUD plans to replace filters as part of a retrofit of its water treatment plant. The entire system will be converted from a high-pressure filter process to a low-pressure system to reduce operating cost. During replacement and retrofitting, water production will be reduced by 50 percent production capacity. Water use restrictions will also respond to the District's current water shortage due to a dry winter season.

Infrastructure needs are reviewed and determined by staff on an ongoing basis via a repair and replacement analysis. No service needs are forecast beyond existing customer base due to the moratorium on any new water service connections in place since 1971, based on the District's analysis of available water supply.

### *Sewer System*

BPUD is the successor agency to Marin County Sanitary District #3, organized in 1908. The existing collection system, serving 141 residential, 20 commercial and 2 institutional properties, primarily in the historic downtown village of Bolinas, was originally constructed in two phases, just prior to and immediately after World War I.

In 1975, responding to an order from the State of California to cease and desist disposing of the system's effluent in the channel of Bolinas Lagoon, BPUD constructed a pump station, a force main and a treatment facility. The facility is an integrated pond system which uses no chemicals in the treatment process, relying instead on a biological process of methane fermentation, with aeration and recirculation for odor control. Following primary and secondary treatment, the effluent is spray irrigated onto a 90-acre disposal site adjacent to Mesa Road.

In 1990, BPUD completed an infiltration/inflow correction project to eliminate unwanted stormwater runoff and seawater intrusion. While the project reduced infiltration/inflow by 70%, the District still experiences capacity problems in years of above average rainfall and, accordingly, has continued the moratorium on new service connections enacted in 1990 as a requirement for Clean Water Grant Program funding. The difference between the system's average dry weather flow (0.065 MGD) and average wet weather flow (0.090 MGD) is less than 40% and within the District's peak permitted wet weather flow of 0.20 MGD.

BPUD has received a grant from the State Department of Parks and Recreation to construct a tertiary treatment wastewater recycling plant to provide irrigation water for local athletic fields. Approval for construction has been granted by the Regional Water Quality Control Board, but construction has not yet begun.

Infrastructure needs are reviewed and determined by staff on an on-going basis via a repair and replacement analysis. No service needs are forecast beyond the existing customer base due to the moratorium.

### **3. Growth and Population Projections**

Based on the 2000 U.S. Census information, the Bolinas CDP (Census Designated Place) planning area had a population of approximately 1,246. According to the Marin County Community Development Agency, there were 665 existing units in 2005. The second unit projection is 68 units and the 2030 buildout projection is 975 units. The estimated maximum population projection (2030) is 2,362, an increase of 89.6% with no accounting for constraints on water and sewer capacity now in place.

### **4. Financing Constraints and Opportunities**

#### *Bolinas FPD*

In addition to a 12% share of property tax revenues, BFPD receives a special tax for operations from property owners and a new parcel tax to cover the cost of the District's new fire station facility. Total annual revenues received for FY 2005/06 were \$414,188, including revenues from property taxes, special assessments, and rental income. The district's reserve account balance as of June 30, 2006 was \$411,839. As is the case with other fire service agencies, the nature of emergency services does not lend itself to the use of service charges or other sources of revenue could otherwise be within the discretion of the District's governing board.

Due to a low level of community development, there is only modest growth in property tax revenue to mitigate cost inflation. The Fire District will need to address the increasing cost of service versus limited ability to increase taxes. The District intends to complete a business plan to address long-term financial issues.

#### *Bolinas Community PUD*

BPUD receives revenues for both water and sewer services. Annual total water service revenues for FY 2005/06 were \$750,000; annual service fees were \$400,000; income from property taxes were \$220,000; and income from water sales were \$100,000. Annual total sewer revenues were \$115,000; sewer fees were \$100,000; and other fees were \$15,000 (all amounts are approximate). The district-wide reserve account balance as of June 30, 2006 was approximately \$850,000.

### **5. Cost-Avoidance Opportunities**

Modest management and administrative costs of both districts could be saved through consolidation of BPUD and BFPD as discussed in section 1 above.

## **6. Opportunities for Rate Restructuring**

BFPD's revenues are derived from property and parcel taxes. Emergency services generally do not derive significant revenues from fees or service charges. No fees are charged by BPUD.

Annual water user charges to customers are determined every year by the BPUD Board, subject to the procedural requirements of Proposition 218. Current charges are \$692 for meters one inch and smaller and \$1,038 for meters over one inch. In addition, the district imposed a quarterly metered water delivery charge based on consumption, also subject to the Proposition 218 process.

In March 2007, the BPUD Board of Directors held a public hearing on a proposal to increase its quarterly metered water delivery charges. The proposal was based on an extensive analysis by the Board and staff of the district's water rates compared to other districts in Marin. This analysis demonstrated that the district's rates for the highest water users are substantially lower than the rates charged for such usage by the other districts in Marin. As a result, BPUD customers who use the least amount of water are effectively subsidizing the heaviest water users. At the March meeting, the Board determined that it was appropriate to add additional "tiers" of rates at the highest consumption levels in order to fairly charge customers for their actual water use and to encourage conservation. The new water rates were implemented in May 2007.

## **7. Opportunities for Shared Facilities**

BFPD dispatching is handled by Marin County Fire Department from their headquarters in Woodacre. Paramedic ambulance service is provided by Marin County Fire Department from Point Reyes Station, approximately twenty minutes away. During the summer months, Marin County Fire Department staffs a second paramedic ambulance which is quartered in Stinson Beach and serves the Bolinas and Stinson Beach communities by agreement with the Stinson Beach Fire Protection District, the BFPD, and the County of Marin, reducing the response time for Advanced Life Support services to about ten minutes.

The district is a member of the joint powers agreement with the Marin Emergency Radio Authority (MERA). MERA is a countywide public agency consisting of the County, all cities and towns, fire districts, and other special districts that joined together to replace the aging and obsolete public safety communications system. This system unifies public safety response, making it possible for members to communicate more effectively and efficiently with each other and within individual departments.

The construction of the new firehouse and medical clinic has been completed. The co-location of the firehouse, clinic, and helicopter site will save 20 to 40 minutes in the time it takes to transport a patient to a hospital – a critical savings in cases of severe injury or cardiac arrest. Adding an ambulance bay to the new firehouse is the critical first step in obtaining County-funded ambulance service for southern West Marin. The new firehouse, with its 30-person meeting room, and the health-education space planned for the new clinic, will provide improved community access to disaster-preparedness workshops, homeowner and community safety classes, life-saving and first-aid courses, and health-education lectures and discussions.

## **8. Management Efficiencies**

Budget and other documents published by BPUD and BFPD are generally informative on the nature of services, allocation of resources to those services, performance measures, and projections. The documents are written in plain language for a general audience with an affirmative effort to keep the Bolinas community informed.

## **9. Local Accountability and Governance**

Both BPUD and BFPD have elected governing boards conducting public business in general compliance with applicable State laws. Each of the district governing boards meets monthly. BPUD board members receive a \$250 per month stipend; BFPD board members receive no stipend for their service. The districts also maintain websites with updated information, and distribute periodic written reports or newsletters to their customers.

### III. SPHERE OF INFLUENCE REVIEW AND UPDATE

#### Description of Current Sphere of Influence

As described earlier in this report, the jurisdiction of Bolinas Community Public Utilities District (BPUD) shown on Map 1 includes 1,621 acres (2.5 square miles) including the town center core, properties on the Gridded Mesa, agricultural lands, and publicly owned lands.

The Bolinas Fire Protection District's (BFPD) jurisdiction is significantly larger at 6,009 acres (9.4 square miles) including all of the area in BPUD plus the area up to Ridgcrest Boulevard on top of Bolinas Ridge as shown on Map 1. The area includes additional agricultural and open space such as Audubon Canyon Ranch and portions of Golden Gate National Recreation Area and Point Reyes National seashore. These boundaries have been in effect since the establishment of BFPD in 1954.

The boundaries and spheres of influence are coterminous for each of the two districts.

#### Service Relationships

Table 1 summarizes the sources of municipal services for the Bolinas area.

**Table 1. Sources of Municipal Service: Bolinas Area**

Police	Fire/Emergency. Medical	Water	Wastewater Disposal	Solid Waste	Comm. Development	Street Maintenance	Parks & Recreation	Library
County Sheriff	BFPD/CSA#31/ CSA #28	BPUD	BPUD & on- site systems	BPUD/Waste Management	County	County	BPUD, County	County - local branch

The Bolinas area receives fire services from BFPD with a few parcels around the Bolinas Lagoon receiving service from Marin County Fire through CSA #31. Ambulance and paramedic services are provided by the County through CSA #28. BPUD provides water and wastewater disposal and one park for its service area. Library services are available through the County, with the nearest branch library located in Bolinas on Wharf Road. Bolinas has a wide range of recreational opportunities available to residents from Federal, State, County, and local park facilities, as well as school facilities that are also used for recreational purposes.

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Need/Demand for Services

Existing and potential housing units and population for the Bolinas area are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. Estimated Population and Development Potential - Bolinas Area**

	Land Area (acres)	2000 Population	2005 Existing Housing Units	2030 Buildout Housing Units	Estimated Maximum Population	% Potential Area Population Increase
Bolinas	3,687	1,246	665	975	2,362	89.5%

Note: Bolinas Area 2030 Buildout based on Countywide Plan scenario most likely to be adopted. Second unit projection is based on State and local policy.

The 2000 population of the greater Bolinas community planning area was approximately 1,246 within a land area of 3,687 acres. According to the Marin County Community Development Agency, there are currently 665 housing units with a future development potential of 310 additional units (which includes 68 second units), with maximum population of 2,362 under current zoning designations.

Ability to Extend Services

In November, 1971, the BPUD Board of Directors declared a water shortage emergency condition, pursuant to the California Water Code, and enacted a moratorium on new connections to the District's water system. That moratorium is still in effect and is governed by Resolution 173, adopted in 1977.

BPUD's sewer system provides services to a very small, geographically isolated area (fewer than 200 connections) within the District's boundary and has no capacity for expansion (additional service connections) under the terms of the District's permit issued by the Regional Water Control Board.

City and County General Plans

The Bolinas Community Plan was prepared pursuant to the requirements of the California Coastal Act and the Marin County Local Coastal Program. The Bolinas Planning Group, consisting of community residents, completed work on the Plan in 1975. It was adopted by the Marin County Board of Supervisors in December 1975, and subsequently amended in 1983 and 1997.

An amendment to the plan, The Bolinas Gridded Mesa Plan, was completed in 1984, and subsequently approved by the Marin County Planning Commission in September 1984, the Marin County Board of Supervisors in November 1984, and the California Coastal Commission in March 1985.

The policies of the Local Coastal Program and the Marin Countywide Plan are aimed at preserving the physical integrity of the coastal villages, keeping them from expanding into the agricultural lands and other open spaces designated for preservation. These plans also emphasize in-fill development of existing village areas. As long as the BPUD water connection moratorium is in place, the provisions of the adopted community plan are rarely applied.

### **Recommendation**

Staff recommends that the Commission affirm the current coterminous sphere of influence designations of the Bolinas Community Public Utility District and the Bolinas Fire Protection District based on a lack of advantage of organizational alternatives, the public ownership of surrounding territory and lack of water supply to support extension of service beyond existing district boundaries.