

**MEMORANDUM  
LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION**

**TO:** Local Agency Formation Commission

**FROM:** Stephen Lucas, Executive Officer

**SUBJECT:** **Agenda Item 4.4** - 2013 CALAFCO Report to the Membership and General Activity Update

**DATE:** September 4, 2013 for the meeting of September 11, 2013

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CALAFCO Sphere

The August Edition of the Journal of the California Association of Local Agency Formation Commissions "The Sphere" (Attached) has a variety of informative articles.

CALAFCO Annual Conference

The CALAFCO Annual Conference was held August 28-30 at Squaw Creek. The theme of the Conference was *Clarity of Vision: The Golden Age of LAFCO*, and celebrated the 50th year anniversary of LAFCOs which were created by the legislature in 1963. The Conference is an opportunity for commissioners and staff to gather and learn about what issues LAFCOs are facing and hear about challenges facing individual LAFCOs from around the state. As expressed in the attached letter (Attachment 1) from the CALAFCO Executive Director, the volunteer participation of LAFCOs around the state is the key to the success of the organization and provides the core value to the many programs offered. Some highlights of the Conference include:

- The election of Commissioner Duncan to serve a third term representing Special Districts in the Northern Region.
- The appointment of the Executive Officer to serve a second term as the CALAFCO Deputy Executive Officer - Northern Region.
- The CALAFCO Lifetime Achievement Award being awarded to Chair Leverenz in honor of his 40 years of service to Butte LAFCO.
- A common theme of many presentations was the observation that the legislature has, and will, place greater responsibilities on LAFCOs to address regional planning and governance issues. This is most evident in the number of factors (15) that LAFCOs must consider when evaluating proposals, such as water availability, regional housing needs, and environmental justice/disadvantaged unincorporated communities. There is also an increasing trend of asking LAFCOs to prepare enhanced municipal service reviews focusing on the fiscal health of agencies and consolidations of local agencies where appropriate.

- Peter Detwiler, the recently retired long time Chief Consultant to the Senate Governance and Finance Committee and widely acclaimed LAFCO expert, provided an excellent historical overview of the role of LAFCOs and a chronological history of boundary laws. This presentation entitled "California Within Limits: Research Notes for a History of California's Local Boundary Laws" is attached to this report for Commission review. Mr. Detwiler has a history of advocating for LAFCOs and encouraging them to exercise the powers vested in them by the state legislature.
- There was a great deal of discussion of water issues with a focus on the Delta and its critical role in California's overall water supply; alternative water supplies; water management issues; and the challenges facing today's water providers. The clear take away from this session was the dramatic differences between regions with those from the areas of water origin seeing water supplies far differently from those in areas with a water deficit. To sum up the sentiment, north of the Delta water is viewed as a local resource to support agriculture, development and the local environment, south of the Delta water is viewed as a statewide resource to be shared by all. One question LAFCOs may face in the future is whether or not water transfers should be subject to local control on an agency by agency basis?
- Agricultural land conversion and preservation was as always, a significant topic. LAFCOs have a powerful role to play in this discussion as they have the authority to adopt their own independent policies concerning mitigations for agricultural and open space lands conversions. The session highlighted the efforts of several LAFCOs (Stanislaus, Yolo, Santa Clara) to adopt strong policies for mitigating agriculture land conversions rather than relying on their cities or counties to adopt such policies. Often it is only LAFCOs who are neutral in such debates as they have no particular interest or gain from new development pressures on agricultural and open space lands. The strong sentiment of the session participants was that agricultural lands are being lost in large numbers and this may only be mitigated if LAFCOs choose to take a leading role in the protection of this irreplaceable resource.
- A hot topic continues to be the consolidations and dissolutions of special districts that may not be efficiently providing services or in some cases, not providing services at all. This session highlighted efforts in Marin County to consolidate nine (9) adjacent sewer districts and the many difficulties faced by LAFCO in doing so. Ultimately, the effort failed at the ballot box as Marin LAFCO could not effectively engage in the political debate against nine individual agencies who did not support the effort. In contrast, there was a successful effort to dissolve a small water agency in Los Angeles County that collected taxes for water services, but provided no service themselves opting to contract for water services from a neighboring provider. The effort was successful due in large part to an extensive outreach and lobbying effort by LA LAFCO.
- The Conference also included break-out sessions by region. The 18 county Northern Region discussed many topics including water supplies/protection, agricultural resource protection, and fiscal struggles of rural agencies. One strong sentiment echoed from the around the region was a desire to create a forum of Northern Region LAFCOs to meet and discuss common issues on a periodic basis. As the Northern Region CALAFCO DEO, the Butte Executive Officer was asked to gauge interest and possibly

coordinate such an effort. If the Commission supports such an effort the attempt can be further explored?

Attachments:

1. The Sphere - August Edition - Journal of the CALAFCO
2. September 3, 2013 letter from CALAFCO
3. California Within Limits: Research Notes for a History of California Boundary Laws. Peter Detwiler. August 2013