



Nevada County Board of Supervisors
c/o Nevada County Executive Officer
950 Maidu Avenue
Nevada City, CA 95959

May 21, 2026

Re: Request to Revisit and Strengthen County Funding Support for Local Fire Protection and Emergency Response

Chair and Members of the Board:

On behalf of the Nevada County Fire Chiefs Association and the Nevada County Fire Districts, we respectfully request that Nevada County (County) revisit and increase ongoing funding support for local fire service agencies. The communities we serve are experiencing increasing wildfire risk and emergency response demand, while the revenue structures available to local districts remain constrained and do not keep pace with current service expectations.

Local fire districts are facing growing financial and operational pressures that include increasing staffing demands to maintain safe and effective response, rising operational and maintenance costs, expanded training and compliance requirements, and year-round wildfire preparedness needs. At the same time, emergency service expectations, including medical response, structure protection, evacuation support, and coordination with state and federal partners, continue to expand beyond what our current revenue frameworks can sustainably support.

By way of example, Nevada County Consolidated Fire District (NCCFD) is the only district in western Nevada County and the only local agency providing emergency rescue services for the South Yuba River State Park area and has responded to more than 50 river rescues in recent years. It is the sole provider of swift water rescue services in western Nevada County and is certified by the California Office of Emergency Services as a Type III Swift Water Rescue Team, and its personnel are certified by the California Highway Patrol to participate on helicopter rescue teams.

Maintaining these specialized, high-risk capabilities requires ongoing training, continuing education, firefighter certification, and periodic equipment updates. A single river rescue response typically commits personnel and apparatus from two fire stations, along with a Battalion Chief, often creating a coverage gap in NCCFD's northern service area for fire and EMS until off-duty personnel can be recalled, and that it is not uncommon for a rescue incident to occupy resources for four to five hours.

The Countywide Fire and Emergency Response Services Municipal Service Review (MSR) prepared for the Nevada Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) underscores these structural challenges and identifies the need to modernize funding mechanisms to support long-term

sustainability and adequate staffing for fire protection and emergency response services throughout Nevada County.

We urge the County to use the MSR's findings and recommendations as a roadmap to evaluate funding options that can provide reliable, equitable support to the local agencies tasked with protecting lives, property, and critical infrastructure.

Specifically, we request that the County explore and prioritize funding opportunities associated with the following sources and mechanisms:

- PILT (Payments in Lieu of Taxes) funding: evaluate how PILT revenues received by Nevada County can be prioritized to strengthen local fire protection and emergency response capacity, particularly in areas with significant federal land ownership. In doing so, we request transparency regarding current PILT allocations and a framework for equitable distribution that reflects documented fire and life-safety services provided on and to federal lands where neither the County nor special districts can levy property taxes or collect assessments.
- Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) revenue: explore whether TOT revenues collected in the unincorporated areas can be strategically invested to mitigate visitor- and tourism-related public safety impacts, including wildfire preparedness and emergency response readiness.
- Modification of existing property tax allocation agreements: revisit outdated property tax allocation structures and agreements, consistent with the MSR's recommendation to modernize funding mechanisms for fire and emergency response services.

As one example of the importance and relevance of federal land-related revenues, the U.S. Department of the Interior's PILT county payment tables show Nevada County receiving \$536,373 for fiscal year 2024.¹ The County received \$566,875 in PILT funds in 2025, with distributions made by the Board of Supervisors to the Office of Emergency Services and the Sheriff's Department.

In light of the continuous fire and emergency services that fire districts provide within, and to, federal lands (including responses to vehicle accidents, technical rescues, hazardous materials incidents, downed power lines, bicycle and off-road vehicle accidents, swift water rescues, winter storm hazards, and wildland and structure fires), we request:

- (1) a detailed, line-item accounting of PILT distributions and the services supporting those allocations; and
- (2) a collaborative process to establish an equitable, ongoing PILT allocation to fire service agencies that routinely provide fire and life-safety services on federal lands and in federal response areas.

Our intent is not only to address immediate operational shortfalls, but also to establish a durable financial framework that supports adequate minimum staffing, retention and recruitment, training, apparatus and facility readiness, and fuels/wildfire preparedness activities. In practical terms, reliable funding is essential to sustain safe response times, maintain multi-unit capability during periods of peak demand, and meet increasing regulatory, reporting, and interoperability requirements.

Accordingly, we respectfully request that the Board of Supervisors direct County staff to:

- (1) identify the County's discretion and constraints for each of the funding sources noted above;
- (2) evaluate potential allocation scenarios and their public safety impacts; and
- (3) engage with fire district leadership to develop a recommended path forward for consideration in the County's budget process.

¹ See, https://pilt.doi.gov/counties.cfm?term=agency&state_code=CA&fiscal_yr=2024&Search.x=39&Search.y=7

We welcome the opportunity to meet with the Board, the County Executive Officer, and the Auditor-Controller to discuss the MSR findings, local district conditions, and actionable options for strengthening service sustainability.

Thank you for your continued partnership and for your commitment to protecting Nevada County residents, visitors, and the firefighters and first responders who serve them. We look forward to working collaboratively to modernize and stabilize fire service funding in a manner that reflects the realities identified in the Countywide Fire and Emergency Response Services MSR and the service demands faced across our communities.

Respectfully submitted,

Jason Robitaille, Fire Chief
Nevada County Consolidated Fire District

Keith Grueneberg, Board President
Nevada County Consolidated Fire District

Robb Rothenberger, Fire Chief
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cc:
[County Executive Officer]
[Auditor-Controller]
[Nevada LAFCo Executive Officer]
[Fire District Boards]