

# Aptos-La Selva Beach fire merger proposed

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LA SELVA BEACH — Fire district directors will meet here Tuesday to discuss consolidation with the Aptos Fire District.

Aptos directors voted last Tuesday to pursue consolidation, initially through an agreement setting up a special agency to jointly administer the two fire departments.

"Ultimately the intent (of Aptos) is to consolidate. Forming a joint agency would give us a chance to try it and see if it works or doesn't," says Chief Al Forbes. The agency would be formed around a five-member board of directors from the two existing districts.

Soquel and Live Oak fire districts formed a joint agency in 1982, which led to full consolidation last summer.

Forbes and La Selva Chief Al Kinslow last month prepared a report which concluded that consolidation would be feasible.

As with the Soquel and Live Oak merger, the Aptos-La Selva Beach study concludes that consolidation would result more in service improvements than in financial savings.

"While it is difficult to find factual data to support the contention that consolidation provides less costly fire and medical aid services, there is little doubt that it does provide more cost-effective protection," Forbes and Kinslow report.

Aptos Fire District currently serves an 8.3-square mile area with a population of 14,318. It operates two stations, one on Soquel Drive between Cabrillo College and Rancho Del Mar shopping center, and the other on Bonita Drive in Rio del Mar. In 1983, Aptos Fire responded to 1,117 calls.

Aptos is a fully-paid department with 23 uniformed firefighters.

La Selva Beach Fire District serves a 7.3-square mile area with a population of 2,385. In 1983, firefighters responded to 191 calls. The department is composed of two paid firemen and 24 volunteers. About half

of the volunteers are members of a surf rescue team.

The proposal for joint administration calls for La Selva Beach to shed 5.5-square miles of its territory. The county contracts with the fire department to serve that sparsely-populated area around Larkin Valley and San Andreas Road. The county pays \$6,000 for the service.

Presumably the county would re-contract with the Department of Forestry as it does in other rural areas.

Shedding the county contract area would open up a small gap between La Selva Beach and Seascape, which, the report concludes, that would have to be annexed to one or the other district.

The plan calls for joint agency to continue to operate the two stations in Aptos and the one in La Selva Beach. The La Selva Beach station would be staffed round-the-clock with at least a captain and one firefighter.

Volunteers would be released, except for those who serve on the surf rescue team, which the report recommends be retained.

Response areas for the two Aptos stations would remain unchanged. The La Selva Beach station would be designated "first-in" station to that community, the territory needed to be annexed and to Aptos Seascape.

The Rio del Mar station would serve as base for paramedic service to all areas. The report suggests that as an improved level of medical care for La Selva residents.

That community was scheduled for paramedic service under a county-wide plan sometime later this year, but the service would be provided by A-1 Ambulance of Watsonville. Response projection for that service is a minimum of 10 minutes. Paramedic service from the Rio del Mar fire station would be faster.

La Selva Beach Fire directors will consider the proposal when they meet at 7 p.m. Tuesday at the community clubhouse.