



COUNTY OF LAKE

Courthouse - 255 North Forbes Street
Lakeport, California 95453
Telephone: (707) 263-2580
Fax: (707) 263-1012
E-mail: Carol.Huchingson@lakecountyca.gov

Spring 2020

COUNTY OF LAKE

10 Disasters Overlaying Long-Term Economic Hardship

Imagine 17,500 Washington, D.C., housing units were consumed during a period of dire regional and governmental fiscal crisis. What if nearly 40,000 District residents experienced long-term displacement over a period of only four years, and local government was understaffed by greater than 20%, with precious few opportunities to raise revenue?

As local non-profits became overwhelmed, and tens of thousands of residents were discussing with their families whether it was still viable to live in D.C., national newspapers would lament the humanitarian crisis enveloping neighborhoods and tearing away at every fiber of social fabric.

What if all of this occurred against a backdrop of fire scarred landscapes, and important local landmarks were just gone, and no one was sure whether they were ever coming back?

Lake County has suffered an unparalleled 10 natural disasters since 2015, including repeated highly destructive wildfires and atmospheric river storms. Effects on our communities and local economy have been devastating and pervasive.

Lake County needs strong Federal and State partnership to end the many disasters brought by fire and flood; with a poverty rate nearly double the national average, our residents cannot reasonably be expected to fully bear the cost of recovery. Four years since 2015's crushing Valley Fire, a fraction of our nearly 2,000 homes lost have been rebuilt.

Unfortunately, our local housing and human displacement crises have been exacerbated by HUD's Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) allocation methodology. Rents exceed HCV rates by up to 14%, and our total voucher allocations (224) have remained fixed for more than two decades, despite compounding concerns in the interim, from poor health outcomes, driven in part by lack of available funding for infrastructure, the Great Recession and our repeated and devastating disasters. An additional 176 vouchers are needed just to make our program solvent.

We must solve Lake County's housing crisis and facilitate the business expansion necessary to support vibrant communities. Macroeconomic factors well beyond local control, and unprecedented wildfires informed by human decisions made continents away, should not leave rural communities so desperately behind and without hope in these United States.

We envision a stronger Lake County, with a comprehensive Public Sewer System, and water and transportation infrastructure necessary to enable thoughtful growth, and sustainable development. With our communities so ravaged by fire, we have a need to think differently, build responsibly.

Our great hope is you will share our Vision, and make disaster resiliency of rural communities like Lake County a matter of federal priority. In an era where economics, climate and so many environmental factors are globally informed, we need policies that reinforce, rather than isolate, rural communities.

Sincerely,

Carol J. Huchingson
Lake County Administrative Officer

Moke Simon, Chair
Lake County Board of Supervisors



Cumulative Impact of Lake County's Disasters

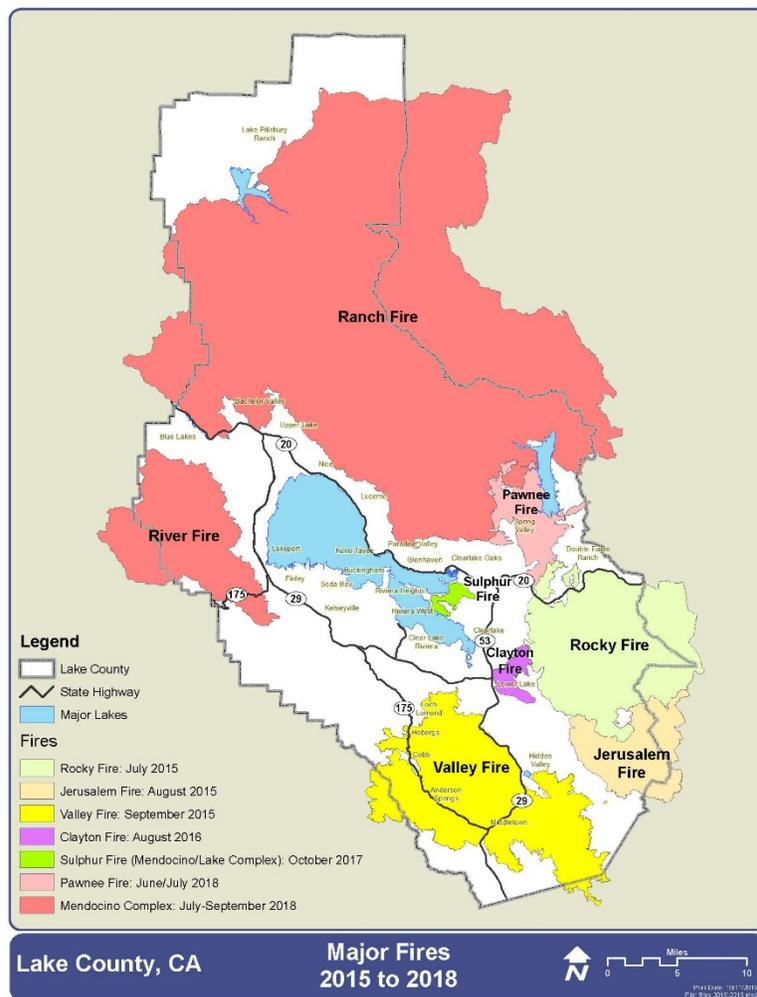
An unparalleled confluence of longstanding economic hardship and disaster...

To say Lake County has been severely affected by our 10 disasters since 2015 is a considerable understatement.

- After four devastating fire seasons, **60% of our land mass has burned.**
- **1,950 housing units, including 1,825 homes, were lost to fire since 2015, 5.5% of our housing stock.** For context, imagine nearly **11,000 City of Sacramento homes were consumed during a time of dire fiscal crisis.**
- Our County Roads Commissioner has identified **\$50 million in critically needed road network repairs.**
- **\$80 million in water and sewer infrastructure development** is needed to facilitate full recovery.
- Resource limitations have rendered our rebuild effort slow going. **A Disaster Recovery Local Sales Tax Measure was proposed in June 2018, and defeated 60% to 40%.**

No other California county is dealing with such compounding effects of disaster. Throughout our disaster response, we have operated at 80% staffing levels. December 4, 2018, the Lake County Board of Supervisors adopted a plan to implement draconian cuts required to weather the devastating effects upon our communities and County finances.

Lake County residents need well founded hope and a way forward – outside funding is essential to our future.



Carol J. Huchingson, County Administrative Officer
Carol.Huchingson@lakecountyca.gov