



# NORTH MASON REGIONAL FIRE AUTHORITY

## STRATEGIC PLAN 2015-2020



*We safeguard North Mason  
communities.*



## STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

- Chief Beau Bakken
- Assistant Chief Scott Cooper
- Captain Ryan Cleveland
- Executive Assistant Katie Patti
- Commissioner Kelley McIntosh, Board Chair
- Commissioner Dan Kewish
- Former Commissioner Shelby Blackwell

## BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS

- Kelley McIntosh – Board Chair
- Brooke Quigley
- Dan Kewish
- Tom Wampold
- Beverly Voss-Petredis

## STAKEHOLDERS

- Members of the NMRFA's A, B, and C shifts
- Volunteer Firefighters and Emergency Medical Technicians, Student Firefighters, and Community Response Team Members
- NMRFA Administration and Management
- North Mason residents and business owners



Founded in 1988, we are an interdisciplinary strategy and analysis firm providing integrated, creative, and analytically rigorous approaches to complex policy and planning decisions. Our team of strategic planners, policy and financial analysts, economists, cartographers, information designers, and facilitators work together to bring new ideas, clarity, and robust frameworks to the development of analytically-based and action-oriented plans.

### Consultant Team

Brian Murphy, Project Manager

Kevin Gifford, Co-Facilitator

# LETTER FROM THE CHIEF

It is with pride, honor, and admiration that we are able to present the North Mason Regional Fire Authority's 2015 Strategic Plan. This five-year planning document provides your Fire Authority with formal guidance on how to best meet the evolving public safety needs of our rapidly growing community. It was created with the invaluable input of our staff, volunteers, and community neighbors. As you will read, our mission to safeguard North Mason communities is at the center of each and every planning element.

In January 2014, Mason County Fire Districts 2 and 8 were combined to form the North Mason Regional Fire Authority (NMRFA). The results of this formation have exceeded all expectations. The formation of the NMRFA has created numerous opportunities to enhance the region's emergency services and this plan provides calculated guidance on how to turn these opportunities into reality. This plan has carefully constructed a **One NMRFA** theme which promotes the continued effort to unify and enhance public safety protection for all 22 local communities served by the Fire Authority.

I am happy to report that the NMRFA is in an excellent position to begin the plan's implementation process. The NMRFA values safety, its people and its community over anything else. We are fortunate to have the best professionals that our industry offers and we are humbled by the pride and support that the North Mason community continually shows for its emergency responders.

The North Mason community's trust and reliance on the NMRFA when situations are at their worst will always push us to be at our absolute best. With this plan's guidance, I am excited to lead your Fire Authority in continuing to do exactly that.



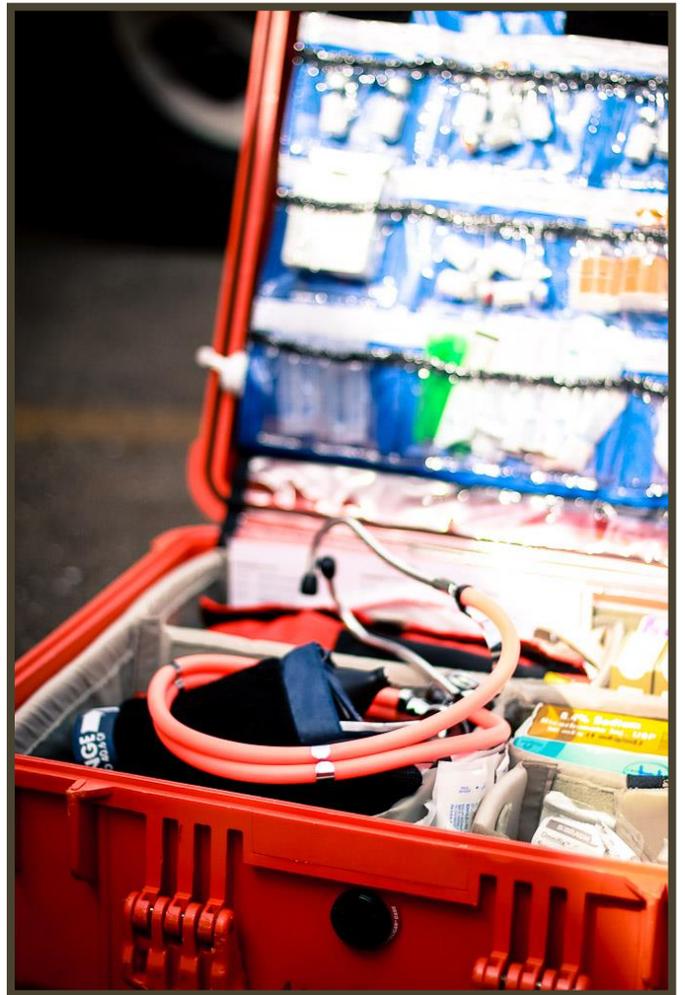
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Beau Bakken'. The signature is stylized and fluid.

Chief Beau Bakken



# CONTENTS

- Introduction ..... 1**
  - Strategic Planning Process ..... 1
- Current Situation ..... 2**
- Vision, Mission, Core Services, and Core Values ..... 3**
- Plan Summary ..... 4**
- Managing From This Plan ..... 6**
- Goals, Action Strategies, and Implementation Steps ..... 7**
  - Goal 1 Continue to Evolve to Meet the Changing Health and Safety Needs of North Mason Communities..... 8
  - Goal 2 Continue to Improve and Standardize Fire Authority Programs and Systems ..... 10
  - Goal 3 Continuously Strive for Organizational and Individual Development... 12
  - Goal 4 Strengthen our Long-Term Planning ..... 14



# INTRODUCTION

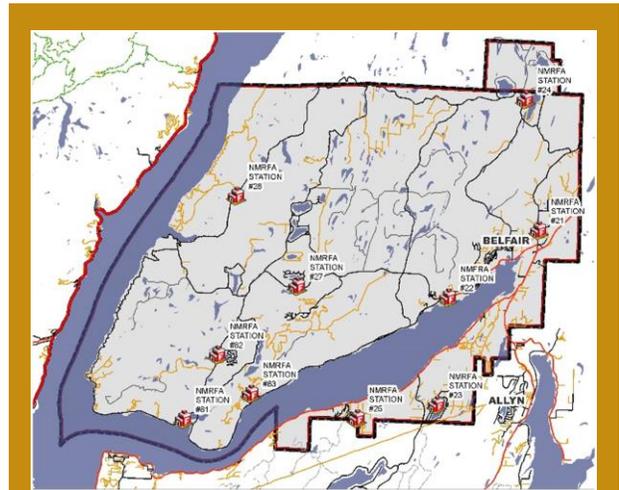
On November 5, 2013, North Mason voters overwhelmingly approved the merger of Mason County Fire Districts 2 and 8, forming a new entity: the North Mason Regional Fire Authority (NMRFA).

In recognition of the need to establish the identity and focus of the new organization, this Strategic Plan was promised to the North Mason community when the NMRFA was discussed and ultimately approved. Leadership and staff have benefited from the conversations, engagement, and reflection the planning process required. We now have a shared understanding of the strategic actions we must take to strengthen and advance the NMRFA.

## Strategic Planning Process

The strategic planning process incorporated feedback from NMRFA staff, members of the Board of Fire Commissioners, and the public. The NMRFA, assisted by BERK Consulting, organized a series of internal and public meetings to identify planning goals and form a framework for the strategic plan. Major steps in the planning process included:

- **Formation of Strategic Planning Committee.** The NMRFA formed this committee to establish goals for the planning process and guide preparation of the strategic plan. The committee included NMRFA staff and members of the Board of Fire Commissioners.
- **NMRFA Staff Work Sessions.** The Planning Committee organized work sessions for each shift, including volunteer members and Community Response Team (CRT) members. These work sessions, facilitated by BERK Consulting, solicited staff feedback on the NMRFA's strengths and weaknesses, as well as on opportunities and challenges for the future. Staff also provided suggestions on the Mission, Vision, and Core Values of the NMRFA.
- **Community Open House.** In November 2014, the NMRFA hosted an open house and invited local residents and business owners to attend. Participants were asked to contribute to the discussion of the NMRFA's Mission and Vision, as well as to provide input on the NMRFA's operations and priorities.
- **Drafting the Strategic Plan.** Assisted by BERK Consulting, the NMRFA used the input provided by staff and the public to prepare a draft strategic plan for review by the Board of Commissioners in July 2015. The final plan was adopted in October 2015.



The NMRFA serves a collection of 22 unique communities, focused by the “One NMRFA” concept. This philosophy drives the provision of high quality, equitable services across the NMRFA service area while addressing the specific needs of individual communities.

# CURRENT SITUATION

As part of the strategic planning process, input was gathered from NMRFA management, line staff, and the community regarding the current state of the NMRFA. The following table presents a summary of the feedback received regarding strengths, challenges, opportunities, and environmental threats.

## Strengths

- Strong community trust and good public perception of the NMRFA.
- Highly competent, hard-working staff.
- Dedication to customer service.
- Stable finances.
- Flexible organization, able to make quick decisions and creatively adapt.
- Commitment to professional development and staff improvement.

## Opportunities

- Public education on various emergencies and responsible use of 911 services.
- Partnerships with other agencies.
- Strengthened relationships with neighboring jurisdictions.
- Joint trainings with neighboring jurisdictions.

## Challenges

- Lack of staff diversity and ability to engage with minority populations.
- Need for improved internal customer service and communication between staff and management.
- Different cultures and expectations among career and volunteer staff.
- Evolving internal systems and standards, including logistics and coordination.
- Organizational infrastructure (aging facilities, station security, office space arrangements).
- Staff retention and succession planning.

## Environmental Threats

- Unpredictable North Mason growth trends create uncertainty in operational and financial planning.
- Growing low-income and homeless populations at risk during emergencies.
- Historic inter-jurisdictional politics.

# VISION, MISSION, CORE SERVICES, AND CORE VALUES

## Mission

*We safeguard North Mason communities.*

## Vision

*We are an essential, trusted, and valued community partner. We continuously improve and evolve with the communities we serve.*

## Core Services

- Emergency services, including fire response, rescue, and emergency medical services.
- Non-emergency services, including fire prevention and emergency management preparations.

## Core Values

North Mason Regional Fire Authority is uniquely suited to serve the distinct features and needs of North Mason communities. The following characteristics describe who we are and how we operate.

- **Safety!**
- **Community and service.** We exist to serve the residents, business owners, and visitors of North Mason. We put their needs before our preferences and focus our policies, procedures, and culture around this dedication to the communities we serve.
- **Professionalism and excellence.** We hold ourselves to extremely high standards and strive to be a well-managed, high-performing organization. We are committed to continuous improvement and recognize that we are on an evolving path from our roots as a rural volunteer-based organization to an agency where expectations are high and excellence is the norm.
- **Diligence and dedication.** We work hard. Our career staff and volunteers have chosen to join a production-oriented fire agency and come to each shift ready to train, prepare, and respond.
- **Innovation and flexibility.** We will continue to adapt to best serve North Mason communities, evolving as they evolve and embracing creative and agile solutions to the unique challenges we face.
- **Trust and opportunity.** The nature and culture of our organization creates tremendous opportunities for volunteers and staff. We encourage ongoing professional development and create leadership opportunities for dedicated individuals at all levels of the organization.
- **Accountability and transparency.** We value and depend on the public's trust, extended to us as stewards of public resources. We communicate transparently about the choices and investments we make and we engage community stakeholders in determining how best to deliver services.

# PLAN SUMMARY

## GOAL 1 CONTINUE TO EVOLVE TO MEET THE CHANGING HEALTH AND SAFETY NEEDS OF NORTH MASON COMMUNITIES

- A. STRENGTHEN OUR **ONE NMRFA** APPROACH WHILE MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITIES WE SERVE AND ADAPTING AS NORTH MASON CHANGES.
- B. IMPROVE OUR ABILITY TO SERVE THE DIVERSE COMMUNITIES THAT MAKE UP THE NORTH MASON POPULATION.
- C. PROTECT AND DEEPEN OUR TRUSTED POSITION IN THE COMMUNITIES WE SERVE.
- D. STRENGTHEN OUR WORKING RELATIONSHIPS WITH NEIGHBORING FIRE AGENCIES AND REGIONAL PARTNERS.

## GOAL 2 CONTINUE TO IMPROVE AND STANDARDIZE FIRE AUTHORITY PROGRAMS AND SYSTEMS

- A. REVIEW EACH CORE PROGRAM AREA TO ENSURE WE ARE SERVING OUR COMMUNITIES AS EFFECTIVELY AND EFFICIENTLY AS POSSIBLE.
- B. IMPROVE THE NMRFA'S ABILITY TO RESPOND TO HIGH RISK, LOW FREQUENCY EVENTS.
- C. STRENGTHEN EMERGENCY OPERATING GUIDELINES AND DEPLOYMENT PATTERNS.
- D. STRENGTHEN SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES FOR OPERATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION SHARING.
- E. ADDRESS NAVIGATION CHALLENGES THAT SLOW RESPONSE IN SOME AREAS.
- F. DEVELOP PROGRAMS AND STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS A CONTINUING INCREASE IN NON-EMERGENCY MEDICAL CALLS.

### **GOAL 3 CONTINUOUSLY STRIVE FOR ORGANIZATIONAL AND INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT**

- A. PRIORITIZE THE SAFETY AND HEALTH OF OUR PEOPLE.
- B. CREATE VARIED AND CHALLENGING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ONGOING SKILL DEVELOPMENT TO ENABLE THE NMRFA TO FULFILL ITS MISSION.
- C. CULTIVATE AND SUSTAIN LEADERSHIP AT ALL LEVELS OF THE ORGANIZATION.
- D. FOSTER A SUPPORTIVE CULTURE THAT ENCOURAGES INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL REFLECTION AND LEARNING.

### **GOAL 4 STRENGTHEN OUR LONG-TERM PLANNING**

- A. ESTABLISH A CAPITAL FACILITIES PLAN THAT PRIORITIZES ONGOING MAINTENANCE, REPLACEMENT OF AGING STRUCTURES, AND THE NEED FOR NEW FACILITIES.
- B. DEVELOP A VEHICLE AND EQUIPMENT REPLACEMENT PLAN.
- C. UPDATE PLANS FOR LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY AND EFFECTIVENESS.

# MANAGING FROM THIS PLAN

As this Plan is adopted, the NMRFA is involved in merger conversations with Central Mason Fire and EMS, which currently serves Central Mason County. If this merger goes forward, the process of integrating the District's people, facilities, and equipment into the NMRFA will require significant time and energy, limiting capacity to implement other action items identified in this Plan. If the merger does not come to pass, many of these other action items can be advanced in a more expedited manner.

While perhaps more pointed, the level of uncertainty regarding the possible merger is not atypical of the fluid and unpredictable environment in which the NMRFA operates. As a result, implementation of the aspirations and Goals in this Strategic Plan must be both structured and flexible, with a constant focus on what is most important coupled with the ability to nimbly adapt to changing circumstances.

This Plan articulates a long-term **Vision, Mission**, and set of **Core Values** to guide ongoing operations. It also establishes four long-term **Goals** that describe important areas of work that lie ahead for the organization. Each Goal is supported by a nested series of **Action Strategies** (lettered items) and **Implementation Steps** (numbered items). Given time and resource constraints, not every item will be advanced at the same time. As part of its planning and budgeting process each year (or as-needed if there are significant changes in the operating environment), NMRFA leadership will determine the Action Strategies and Implementation Steps that will be advanced in the coming year.

For projects selected for advancement, detailed implementation specifics describing exactly *what will be done, by whom, by when, and with what resources*, will be developed. These details will be captured, tracked, and reported.

The Strategic Plan will be thoroughly reviewed and revised when appropriate. While the Vision and aspirations may require five or more years to fulfill, it may be necessary to refresh and revise the document after three years, or more quickly if significant changes occur in our operating environment.



# GOALS, ACTION STRATEGIES, AND IMPLEMENTATION STEPS



# GOAL 1 CONTINUE TO EVOLVE TO MEET THE CHANGING HEALTH AND SAFETY NEEDS OF NORTH MASON COMMUNITIES



In fulfilling our Mission, pursuing our Vision, and putting our Core Values into practice, it is essential that we continuously adapt to best meet the needs of the communities we serve. This means taking a **One NMRFA** approach and providing a standard level of excellence across North Mason, while recognizing and responding to the particular needs of communities and individuals.

Goal 1 directs our services to geographic communities, cultural and linguistic communities, and vulnerable populations. It also describes our commitment to improving services through the growth and evolution of our organization or through close collaboration with neighboring fire agencies and other regional partners.

A. STRENGTHEN OUR **ONE NMRFA** APPROACH WHILE MEETING THE HEALTH AND SAFETY NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITIES WE SERVE AND ADAPTING AS NORTH MASON CHANGES.

1. Continually plan, deliver, and evaluate services to ensure that high quality and equitable emergency services are provided across the entire geography of the NMRFA.
2. Strengthen our use of meaningful quantitative data to evaluate and improve service.
3. Assess and address the priority needs of individual service areas each year, with meaningful involvement of community stakeholders.
4. Seek opportunities to improve service and achieve efficiencies through greater economies of scale by taking an expanded regional approach to providing fire and EMS services.

B. IMPROVE OUR ABILITY TO SERVE THE DIVERSE COMMUNITIES THAT MAKE UP THE NORTH MASON POPULATION.

1. Improve our relationship with and our ability to engage with and serve the growing number of non-native English speakers who live in our service area.
2. Strengthen our ability to serve vulnerable populations, including individuals and families who are low-income, elderly, or homeless.
3. Continue to identify and address barriers to serving all individuals and groups that make up the communities we serve.

C. PROTECT AND DEEPEN OUR TRUSTED POSITION IN THE COMMUNITIES WE SERVE.

1. Establish a communications strategy to guide frequent information sharing with North Mason stakeholders, providing information in a variety of formats, including in person, by mail, by email, using the NMRFA's website, and through social media.
2. Cultivate a strong service ethic among NMRFA staff and volunteers.

D. STRENGTHEN OUR WORKING RELATIONSHIPS WITH NEIGHBORING FIRE AGENCIES AND REGIONAL PARTNERS.

1. Cultivate positive working relationships with neighboring jurisdictions at the leadership and line staff level.
2. Strengthen our connections to regional partners.

## GOAL 2 CONTINUE TO IMPROVE AND STANDARDIZE FIRE AUTHORITY PROGRAMS AND SYSTEMS



Our Core Values drive us to strive for professionalism and excellence. While our programs, systems, and practices have matured significantly since our early days as an all-volunteer department, there is more work to do. Goal 2 launches a process to evaluate and, if necessary, retool each of our core program areas to make sure we are providing the most effective and efficient service possible. A variety of options will be identified and evaluated for each program, ranging from maintaining the status quo to significant reinvention. Evaluations will be rigorous and based on a clear goal statement, current and projected community needs, and all available performance data.

As part of the review process, program policies will be created, confirmed, or revised. Key performance indicators will be established, along with a schedule and process by which to report on progress and make improvements. Prompts for a program review update will be set, determining the time limit or performance factors that will trigger another program review. The following programs will be assessed through this process: captain programs, data management, disaster preparedness, logistics, public education, student firefighter and volunteer programs, training, and vehicle maintenance.

Through Goal 2 we will also strengthen our ability to respond to high risk, low frequency events such as earthquakes or other natural or man-made events; further structure our Emergency Operating Guidelines and deployment patterns, maintaining some flexibility as circumstances require; strengthen internal communications; address navigation challenges; and embrace a continuing increase in non-emergency medical calls associated with growing elderly and low-income populations.

- A. REVIEW EACH CORE PROGRAM AREA TO ENSURE WE ARE SERVING OUR COMMUNITIES AS EFFECTIVELY AND EFFICIENTLY AS POSSIBLE.
  - 1. Establish a schedule and evaluation structure to assess each core program.
  
- B. IMPROVE THE NMRFA'S ABILITY TO RESPOND TO HIGH RISK, LOW FREQUENCY EVENTS.
  - 1. Identify and evaluate potential hazards, critical infrastructure, and key resources.
  - 2. Conduct and update emergency pre-planning for high-risk structures and hazard potentials.
  - 3. Create and implement new training programs as part of the NMRFA's training regimen (Goal 3, Strategy A).
  
- C. STRENGTHEN EMERGENCY OPERATING GUIDELINES AND DEPLOYMENT PATTERNS.
  - 1. Communicate our preferred approach — to balance consistency among shifts with the desire and practical need to be flexible.
  - 2. Evaluate options, drawing on current NMRFA practices and best practices from other agencies, and codify preferred approaches in updated Emergency Operating Guidelines (EOGs).
  - 3. Revise our training program based on these updated EOGs (see Goal 3, Strategy A).
  
- D. STRENGTHEN SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES FOR OPERATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION SHARING.
  - 1. Charter a team to develop an Internal Communications Plan.
  
- E. ADDRESS NAVIGATION CHALLENGES THAT SLOW RESPONSE IN SOME AREAS.
  - 1. Leverage NMRFA staff and volunteers to improve signage.
  - 2. Explore technical and non-technical approaches to improving navigation.
  
- F. DEVELOP PROGRAMS AND STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS A CONTINUING INCREASE IN NON-EMERGENCY MEDICAL CALLS.
  - 1. Inform members of the public about their best options for various emergency and non-emergency medical needs.
  - 2. Develop a community-based EMS program to provide non-emergency medical services.
  - 3. Seek creative ways to provide financial tools for low-income residents, seniors, and others who may need assistance in covering medical costs.

## GOAL 3 CONTINUOUSLY STRIVE FOR ORGANIZATIONAL AND INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT



The NMRFA has a long tradition of valuing training and education. This tradition is aligned with our commitment to continuous improvement of the organization and ongoing development of the individuals who comprise it. In an organization that includes volunteers and career firefighters, it is important to regularly train on the basics while ensuring that long-term personnel have opportunities to take up new responsibilities and challenges, enhancing our ability to fulfill our Mission.

Goal 3 describes our ongoing commitment to the safety and well-being of our team. It also describes how we will seek to build the skills of our team, extending trust and opportunities for growth to everyone. Finally, Goal 3 outlines how we will continue to innovate, sometimes taking risks, and always learning from our experiences, both individually and collectively.

## A. PRIORITIZE THE SAFETY AND HEALTH OF OUR PEOPLE.

1. Establish and support a high-functioning Safety Committee to advance our top priority of keeping our members safe.
2. Establish and continue to prioritize a program to safeguard the health and wellbeing of our members.

## B. CREATE VARIED AND CHALLENGING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ONGOING SKILL DEVELOPMENT TO ENABLE THE NMRFA TO FULFILL ITS MISSION.

1. Establish a Training Committee responsible for creating mechanisms and processes that ensure the NMRFA's training program is informed by best practices, data analysis, and up-to-date EOGs.
2. Review and update our training program. Ensure that under the updated program:
  - There is an integrated approach to developing both basic and advanced skills, balancing the retention of basic skills, and the development of advanced skills.
  - Staff at all levels are encouraged to be experts on specific topics and are given the opportunity to train others.
  - Updated training targets and performance measures emphasize quality rather than the number of hours trained.

## C. CULTIVATE AND SUSTAIN LEADERSHIP AT ALL LEVELS OF THE ORGANIZATION.

1. Formalize the process for advancing individual goals to be in line with organizational goals.
2. Establish a succession plan for key positions and seek opportunities to cultivate a new generation of leaders.
3. Seek to assign special projects to staff as a learning and leadership opportunity.

## D. FOSTER A SUPPORTIVE CULTURE THAT ENCOURAGES INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL REFLECTION AND LEARNING.

1. Debrief individual calls to identify takeaways and document best practices.
2. Establish a regular cycle for reviewing and learning from organization-level performance data.
3. Encourage feedback that supports the learning and professional growth of all members of the NMRFA.

## GOAL 4 STRENGTHEN OUR LONG-TERM PLANNING



Effective responses to the incidents and challenges that make up our day-to-day work are possible because of the long-term planning and effective management strategies that ensure the NMRFA has the necessary facilities, equipment, personnel, and financial resources to do its job. Goal 4 calls for the development of two new plans – a capital facilities plan and a vehicle and equipment replacement plan – as well as the incorporation of other essential long-term planning.

A. ESTABLISH A CAPITAL FACILITIES PLAN THAT PRIORITIZES ONGOING MAINTENANCE, REPLACEMENT OF AGING STRUCTURES, AND THE NEED FOR NEW FACILITIES.

1. Assess and address critical capital facilities needs in Belfair, on the South Shore, and in Tahuya.
2. Plan for long-term capital facilities needs throughout the NMRFA's service area.

B. DEVELOP A VEHICLE AND EQUIPMENT REPLACEMENT PLAN.

1. Update the existing plan and prioritize resource allocation based on identified critical needs.
2. Maintain an ongoing and continual planning process.

C. UPDATE PLANS FOR LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY AND EFFECTIVENESS.

1. Maintain a current Strategic Plan and actively use it to inform decision making and to direct our actions.
2. Engage the public in subarea planning that addresses the particular needs and desires of individual sub-geographies within the NMRFA.
3. Maintain concurrence with external planning requirements, including those of Mason County, the Washington State Department of Transportation, and others.
4. Employ long-term financial modeling and forecasting for the ongoing financial sustainability of the NMRFA. This will include working towards renewal of the EMS and continual cultivation of financial reserves.

