



EL DORADO COUNTY GRAND JURY 2009-2010

GROWLERSBURG CONSERVATION CAMP

Georgetown

Case No. GJ 09-036

REASON FOR REPORT

The California Penal Code §919(a) and §919(b) requires the Grand Jury to annually inspect all correctional facilities within the County.

BACKGROUND

Growlersburg Conservation Camp (Growlersburg) was built in 1967. It includes numerous facilities on 80 acres near Georgetown, CA. Originally built as an 80-bed facility, it has been expanded and now accommodates 132 beds. Currently the inmate population is 115, but that number can change weekly.

Growlersburg provides training in firefighting, emergency response, woodworking and other disciplines. A key mission of Growlersburg is fighting forest fires throughout California. Additionally, the inmates provide maintenance services to local public entities such as school districts, cemetery districts, state parks, the County Sheriff's Office and the El Dorado Irrigation District.

The facility is managed and operated by two entities: California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) and California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR). CAL FIRE owns the site and manages the firefighting and other duties performed by the inmates. CDCR is responsible for the security of the camp and the feeding, housing, custody, and care of the inmates. The staff of 24 consists of 10 correctional officers and 14 CAL FIRE personnel.

METHODOLOGY

Members of the Grand Jury inspected the facility on March 25, 2010. Inspections were made of the living quarters, day rooms, weight/exercise room, kitchen, mess hall, laundry, woodworking shop, saw mill, outdoor exercise/game areas, and garden.

People Interviewed:

- CAL FIRE Camp Division Chief
- CDCR Camp Commander
- CDCR Sergeant

Documents Reviewed:

- Grand Jury Report for 2008-2009
- Conservation Camp Management Survey, by Deputy Chief Operations, CAL FIRE Northern Region Operations Center and Facilities Captain, CDCR Camps Program, conducted at Growlersburg Camp on April 15-16, 2009, with its transmittal memorandum dated April 23, 2009
- Growlersburg CC#33 Action Plan dated January 1, 2010 completed by CAL FIRE Camp Division Chief and CDCR Camp Commander

FINDINGS

The Growlersburg command staff of CAL FIRE and CDCR informed the Grand Jury of the following:

- Growlersburg is one of 44 Conservation Camps in California, which house about 3,800 minimum security inmates;
- Three camps, all in Southern California, are for female inmates only. All of the other camps are male only;
- The average term remaining of an inmate's sentence is two years. No inmate will be sent to Growlersburg with a remaining term exceeding seven years;
- The average age of inmates is 30 years;
- The average annual cost for inmates in a state prison is \$38,000 - \$48,000, whereas at Growlersburg the cost is \$14,000 - \$18,000. Keeping inmates at Growlersburg and the other camps produce a substantial savings for the State of California budget;
- Five firefighting strike teams, containing up to 17 inmates each, are maintained at Growlersburg. Each strike team is managed by a CAL FIRE Captain. One strike team is always retained at the camp;
- Growlersburg is a staging area for other firefighting strike teams which may be brought into this area when needed.

The inmates receive extensive firefighting training. Included in this training is the proper use of equipment, including tools such as chain saws and the effective maintenance of motorized equipment. Other useful training is provided in woodworking, gardening, sawmill operations and cooking/baking.

The Grand Jury noted the facility was well maintained. Several inmates were busy cleaning walkways and other exterior areas. Interior areas inspected were found to be neat and clean. The quality of food, some of which was grown on-site, was found to be excellent. The camp's facilities were generally in good repair, but some deterioration due to age was noted. The Grand Jury was informed that a remodel project has been approved, including funding, and should be completed in 2012 or 2013.

The April 2009 Growlersburg Camp Management Survey was conducted jointly by senior representatives of CAL FIRE Northern Region and CDCR Camps Program. They reported that every item listed on the analysis work papers to be in partial or full compliance.

The Growlersburg CC#33 Action Plan dated January 1, 2010 reported all outstanding action issues have been completed, including filling two CAL FIRE vacancies and correcting vehicle maintenance records.

RECOMMENDATIONS

None

RESPONSES

No response is required.

COMMENDATION

The 2009-2010 El Dorado County Grand Jury commends the Growlersburg Conservation Camp and its leadership teams for providing:

- Excellent inmate training in firefighting;
- Significant assistance in fighting forest fires throughout California;
- Meaningful maintenance assistance to local districts and agencies;
- Working and living conditions for inmates to improve themselves and return to productive lives.