

EL DORADO COUNTY GRAND JURY 2013-2014

GROWLERSBURG CONSERVATION CAMP INSPECTION

Case Number GJ-13-04

REASON FOR REPORT

Each year, the grand jury is mandated by California Penal Code §919(b) to “inquire into the conditions and management of the public prisons within the county.”

BACKGROUND

Growlersburg Conservation Camp (Growlersburg) was built in 1967. Originally built as an 80-bed camp, it has increased to accommodate 132 inmates. The primary mission of Growlersburg is fighting fires throughout California. They also perform some local brush clearing. It is operated and managed by two entities: California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) and California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire). Growlersburg is one of 44 Conservation Camps in California. The staff of 34 consists of 10 correctional officers, 14 Cal Fire staff and 10 CDCR staff. Inmates assigned to Growlersburg have a very low risk level classification; no fences or guard towers surround the facility. Growlersburg provides training in firefighting, emergency response, and other disciplines.

ACTIONS

This year’s jury inspected the site on September 30, 2013 and discussed operations with the personnel on duty at that time.

FINDINGS

1. The CDCR staff and Cal Fire staff at Growlersburg appear to interact well with each other and do a good job managing Growlersburg Conservation Camp.
2. Although built in 1967, this facility has been well maintained.
3. The jury members observed good morale at Growlersburg Fire Camp based on positive comments from several inmates.
4. This facility is reasonably self-sufficient. The inmates manage kitchen and laundry services, as well as most repair and maintenance issues. This facility has an on-site garden, which produces over 3,000 pounds of produce each year for camp consumption.
5. We were served the same food as the inmates, and found it quite satisfactory.
6. This facility prepares inmates for life after incarceration. This includes teaching skills in carpentry, mechanics, lumber milling and firefighting.
7. Recreational time is supported by the above mentioned wood working and mechanics shops, an arts and craft area, library, and physical fitness area.

8. Growlersburg operates an 18-wheeler “mobile kitchen” for use at fire sites. It is capable of providing up to 5,000 meals per day.
9. The facility has a family-friendly area for inmates’ families to visit during times when inmates are not out on fire suppression activities.

EVALUATION OF FINDINGS

Given the many inmate programs and opportunities and the good morale at Growlersburg, we consider this facility deserving of a commendation for excellent management.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. At some point in time, in spite of the excellent maintenance, this facility will need to be replaced with modern buildings.
2. Additional physical fitness equipment is needed. Citizen donations are allowed and encouraged.
3. This facility needs a new “cryovac” (food sealing) machine to better service their off-site firefighting food provision role.

Responses

Responses to both findings and recommendations in this Report are required by law in accordance with California Penal Code §933 and §933.05. Address responses to:

The Honorable Suzanne N. Kingsbury, presiding judge of the El Dorado County Superior Court, 1354 Johnson Blvd., South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150.

This Report has been provided to Cal Fire, and CDCR, as well as the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors.

The Presiding Judge of the El Dorado County Superior Court additionally requests that the responses be sent electronically as a “Word” file or “PDF” file to facilitate the economical and timely distribution of such responses. Please email responses to the El Dorado County Grand Jury at:

courtadmin@eldoradocourt.org