

EL DORADO COUNTY GRAND JURY 2014-2015

GROWLERSBURG CONSERVATION CAMP INSPECTION

Case GJ-14-11

California Penal Code § 919(b) mandates that “The grand jury shall inquire into the condition and management of the public prisons within the county.” There are three types of public prisons in El Dorado County: Adult jails, juvenile detention facilities and state-operated facilities. This report addresses the condition and management of the state-operated Growlersburg Conservation Camp.

BACKGROUND

Growlersburg Conservation Camp, located on 80 acres approximately 1½ miles north of Georgetown, is operated jointly by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE). Originally built in 1967 it initially housed 80 inmates. The camp dormitory building was increased in size nearly 40 percent in 1980 to house 120 inmates. Currently, Growlersburg can accommodate 132 inmates. The all-male facility is one of 44 conservation camps in California.

METHODOLOGY

- The Grand Jury conducted an onsite inspection of Growlersburg on Nov. 5, 2014.
- The Grand Jury questioned the Growlersburg staff.

DISCUSSION

To be eligible to serve a portion of his sentence at Growlersburg, an inmate cannot have a record of violent crimes, sex offenses, or drug related convictions. Average inmate stay at the camp is between 2 and 4 years. The primary mission of the camp is to provide inmates for wildfire fighting throughout California and to provide mobile kitchens and meals for both inmate and non-inmate fire personnel. There are no fences or guard towers at Growlersburg.

Growlersburg inmates work in assignments devoted exclusively to serving the community and local, state and federal agencies in wildland fire suppression as well as responding to emergencies such as floods and earthquakes and to search and rescue operations. They provide labor for the construction of shaded wildland fire safety fuel breaks, hiking and biking trails, maintenance of community parks, schools and local fire district and CAL FIRE facilities. They provide the landscaping, cleaning and grooming of Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park Museum in Coloma and assist the University of California in vegetation management research projects.

Growlersburg provides inmate programs intended to emphasize positive work ethics and the development of desirable employment skills.

There is a small lumber mill on site that produces the materials for various woodworking projects. In addition to a cabinet shop, two mobile dimension sawmills produce stock to build picnic tables that are sold to several public agencies. Growlersburg inmates build large conference tables used at many state and local government facilities, including the El Dorado County Grand Jury room in Placerville. The Grand Jury acknowledges the craftsmanship required to make their conference table. It is well made from solid wood and is appropriate for its purpose and for the space it occupies. It shows little wear.

The inmates also provide mechanical skills to maintain the facility's vehicles.

The camp buildings and grounds are very well maintained by the inmates. The barracks building is scheduled for remodeling and updating. The visiting grand jurors found the dining area was clean and pleasant and were served the same lunch as the inmates; it was tasty and plentiful.

The staff was informative and appeared to have a good rapport with the inmates. They are both very proud of the facility.

RESPONSE

No response is required.

This Report has been provided to the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.