

CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE

Growlersberg Conservation Camp, Georgetown, CA

Reason for the Report

The California Penal Code requires Grand Juries to inspect and report annually on operations of all public prisons located within boundaries of each county.

Scope of the Investigation

Members of the Grand Jury inspected the Growlersberg Conservation Camp on March 7, 2003. The Jury members met with the Camp Commander of the Department of Corrections and the Assistant Chief of Administration for the Department of Forestry and Fire Protections. The Camp Commander escorted the Jury Members on a tour of the facility. The following documents were reviewed:

- Inmate Orientation Handbook
- Camp Reports
- Inspection reports
- Staff and Inmates written reviews of meals
- Performance evaluations of inmates
- Grand Jury Reports for 2000/2001 and 2001/2002

Background

Growlersberg Conservation Camp (Camp), a minimum security correctional facility established in 1967, is one of 18 camps operated by the Sierra Conservation Center. The Camp is jointly maintained and administered by the California Department of Corrections and California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. The California Department of Corrections is responsible for the inmates, laundry, and kitchen. The Department of Forestry and Fire Protection is responsible for the plant facilities, which include the buildings and fire fighting equipment.

The Camp appears to be very well run and maintained. The Camp is clean, quiet, and orderly. The addition of access ramps for the disabled to the indoor and outdoor visitation areas are now in compliance with Americans with Disability Act (ADA).

The Grand Jury Reports for 2000/2001 and 2001/2002 noted the need for an updated kitchen, with special concern regarding the kitchen-stove hood. This kitchen is part of the original 1967 construction. The Camp is scheduled for a new kitchen facility in the fiscal year 2003/2004. Due to State Budget constraints the scheduled construction may be postponed. The kitchen-stove hood will not be updated because of cost and the planned new kitchen facility. The State Fire Marshall, Department of Forestry, and Department of Correction have an agreement that until

funds are allocated to either restore the hood to code or build a new dining room/kitchen facility, an inmate specially trained to fight grease and chemical fires with special fire extinguishing apparatus must be on duty in the kitchen during cooking.

The Camp holds a maximum of 132 inmates. Inmates are thoroughly screened and classified. Sexual offenders, arsonists, and violent inmates are not classified for the Camp, as this is a minimum-security facility with open dorms and no fences. Inmates are required to have three years or less remaining on their sentences. The Camp is fully maintained by the inmates under staff supervision.

All inmates are required to work, with work ethic strongly emphasized. Work assignments, which include fire and rescue crews, laundry, kitchen, grounds, etc., are based on skill and needs. Inmates are given written job descriptions and written performance evaluations. They are paid a nominal hourly rate for their services.

Five fire crews, comprised of 16 to 17 inmates each, fight fires and help in rescues wherever needed in California and along the Nevada border. In addition, 22 inmates staff the Mobile Kitchen Unit, which can provide up to 3,000 meals at a time. Inmates also work in the Mill and Cabinet Shop, constructing desks, cabinets, tables, and other various wood furniture items for tax supported agencies at cost.

For the past eleven years the inmates have participated in “Helping Hands” where they raise funds through a comprehensive recycling program. Funds received from this program along with donations from the staff, civilians, and local businesses are used at Christmas to provide new bicycles, assembled by the inmates, and helmets for children in the community. The Superintendent of the local school district provides the Camp Commander with a list of parents and students to contact. The Camp Commander then contacts the parents asking if they wish to participate in the program. The bicycles and helmets are brought to a local school where the children make their selection.

Finding

F1. A solution to the code non-compliance of the kitchen hood has been agreed upon by the State Fire Marshall, Department of Forestry and Department of Corrections.

Response to Finding

F1 California State Department of Forestry
California State Department of Corrections