

Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury

Calaveras County Detention Centers

October 14, 2020



SUMMARY

The Calaveras County Grand Jury is required by law to inquire into the condition and management of the detention centers within the County on an annual basis per California Penal Code §916(b). Calaveras County has two adult detention centers, the Calaveras County Jail and Vallecito Conservation Camp.

The Calaveras County Jail was built six years ago and is well maintained. On multiple visits, the Grand Jury noted the facility appeared clean, safe, and secure. The jail is managed by a dedicated, professional staff.

Vallecito Adult Conservation Camp CC#1 is a correctional facility located in Calaveras County with a capacity for 110 inmates. The Calaveras County Grand Jury inspection of the Camp found it to be clean and organized, with well-maintained grounds.

The Calaveras County Grand Jury found that the inmates at both facilities are treated with respect and dignity. Physical and mental health care are a priority.

The Calaveras County Grand Jury asked both the Vallecito Conservation Camp CC#1 and the Calaveras County Jail if they have COVID-19 protocols in place, and both do.

GLOSSARY

BOS	Calaveras County Board of Supervisors
BSCC	Board of State and Community Corrections
CAL FIRE	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
CCGJ	Calaveras County Grand Jury
CCJ	Calaveras County Jail
CCSO	Calaveras County Sheriff's Office
CDCR	California Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation
SCC	Sierra Conservation Camp
VCC	Vallecito Conservation Camp CC#1

METHODOLOGY

The Calaveras County Grand Jury (CCGJ) toured the Calaveras County Jail (CCJ) and the Vallecito Conservation Camp CC#1 (VCC). During both tours, the CCGJ posed a variety of questions to staff regarding the operation of the facilities. Additionally, the CCGJ interviewed CCJ personnel and inmates, and VCC personnel.

BACKGROUND

The Jail is a medium-security 240 bed detention center that opened in 2014. The CCJ is operated by the Calaveras County Sheriff's Office (CCSO) and holds inmates awaiting trial, sentencing, and those serving a jail sentence. The County jail is the central booking and intake location for all law enforcement agencies operating in Calaveras County.

On December 11, 2019, the Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) conducted their bi-annual inspection of the Calaveras County Jail. Pursuant to Penal Code §6031, this inspection was performed to determine compliance with the Minimum of Standards for Local Detention Facilities outlined in Title 15 (Adult Institutions, Programs and Parole Regulations) and Title 24 (Building Energy Efficiency Standards), California Code of Regulations (CCR). The inspection found the jail to be clean and extremely well maintained, with no issues of non-compliance with the Code of Regulations.

Vallecito Conservation Camp CC#1 (VCC) was constructed and opened in 1958. VCC is under the administrative supervision of Sierra Conservation Camp (SCC), a prison in the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) system. It is a minimum-security detention center and Fire Camp located in a rural area surrounded by woodlands and hills. CDCR personnel are responsible for the supervision, care, and discipline of inmates. CDCR works jointly with CAL FIRE, which maintains the camp and supervises the work of the inmate fire crews.

The primary mission of the Camp is to provide inmate firefighting crews for fire suppression and flood control activities in Calaveras County and throughout the State of California. CAL FIRE conducts additional projects for inmates. Inmate fire crews also provide a workforce for community service projects in the local area.

The CAL FIRE in-camp project is firehose pressure testing and repair. CDCR has multiple in-camp projects such as the care of a large vegetable garden, a hospitality program through Columbia College, a woodworking/hobby/art shop and landscape maintenance. They also offer GED, Alcoholics Anonymous, and Narcotics Anonymous programs, community college courses, and bible studies.

CDCR and CAL FIRE are in charge of ensuring the safe custody of inmate work crews on all community service projects and fires. Both organizations share the responsibility of training and supervising the inmate crews necessary to support this operation.

DISCUSSION

The CCGJ found that the County jail continues to be run professionally and efficiently. Additionally, the bi-annual report from BSCC confirmed the CCGJ observations, as did interviews with jail staff and inmates.

VCC inmates can, without much difficulty, make contact with outsiders who provide drugs and other contraband. Surveillance cameras would allow greater observation capabilities and improved security. Following accepted practice, one correctional officer monitors the camp from 11:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. Surveillance cameras would better enable the officer on duty to monitor the entire camp. On the following page is an aerial view of VCC.



Prior Grand Jury reports have recommended that the damaged seating in VCC common rooms be replaced. Contraband was being concealed in torn upholstery. The 2019-2020 CCGJ observed that common rooms had been remodeled and new furniture put into place.

The CCGJ asked both the CCJ and VCC if COVID-19 protocols were put in place to address the safety of inmates, staff, and the public. It was determined that the CCJ is following the directives of Calaveras County Public Health, the CDCR and the County Sheriff. The VCC is following the directions of the Governor's office and CDCR.

FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, and RESPONDENTS

Pursuant to Penal Code §933 and §933.05, the Grand Jury requires responses within 60 days from elected county official(s), and within 90 days from governing bodies. In order to be included and published in the next Grand Jury report, invited responses must be received within 90 days.

After conducting interviews, touring facilities, and reviewing reference documents, the Grand Jury findings and recommendations are as follows:

F1. The overall condition of the Calaveras County jail was found to be clean, organized, excellently maintained, and well run by dedicated officers and staff.

R1. None.

Required Responses

- None.

F2. The overall condition of the Vallecito Conservation Camp was found to be clean and well maintained, offering many programs and inmate participation in several projects.

R2. None.

Required Responses

- None.

- F3.** Correctional officers at Vallecito Conservation Camp are unable to observe the boundaries of the Camp to prevent incoming drugs and inmate misconduct because it does not have surveillance cameras.
- R3.** The Calaveras County Grand Jury recommends that surveillance cameras be installed by December 31, 2020.

Invited Responses

- Director of the California Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation
- Warden of Sierra Conservation Camp
- Vallecito Conservation Camp Commander

COMMENDATIONS

- C1.** The Calaveras County Grand Jury commends the CCJ officers and staff for their compassion and commitment to their jobs as well as to the inmates.
- C2.** The Calaveras County Grand Jury commends the VCC officers for dedication to their jobs and for providing the inmates with community-involved programs.

Reports issued by the Grand Jury do not identify individuals interviewed. Penal Code §929 requires that reports of the Grand Jury not contain the name of any person or facts leading to the identity of any person who provides information to the Grand Jury.

REFERENCE SOURCES

- Calaveras County Sheriff's Office Website (<https://sheriff.calaverasgov.us/>)
- Board of State and Community Corrections (www.bscc.ca.gov)
- Inmate Aid (<https://www.inmateaid.com/>)
- California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (<https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/>)