

**CALAVERAS COUNTY  
CIVIL GRAND JURY FINAL  
REPORT  
2024-2025**



*California poppies outside the Animal Shelter in San Andreas. Photo by K. Klise.*

**Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury  
2024-2025 Final Report**

The 2024-2025 Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury approved the Final Report.

*Victoria M. Plaughter*

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**Vicki Plaughter, Foreperson**

Date: 07-21-2025

I accept this Civil Grand Jury report for the year 2024-2025 for filing and certify that it complies with Part II, title IV of the California Penal Code.

Signature: *Timothy S. Healy* \_\_\_\_\_

**The Honorable Timothy S. Healy  
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court**

Date: 7-21-2025

# CALAVERAS COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY

## GENERAL INFORMATION

*“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world.*

*Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”*

**Margaret Mead, Cultural Anthropologist**

Civil Grand Juries have existed in the State of California since the adoption of California’s original Constitution in 1850. The Constitution, Article 1, Section 23, requires that a Civil Grand Jury “be drawn and summoned at least once a year in each county.” The Grand Jury system in California is unusual in that Federal and County Grand Juries in most states are concerned solely with criminal indictments and have no civil responsibilities.

The number of Civil Grand Jurors impaneled in Calaveras County is nineteen (19) for a period of one year (July 1<sup>st</sup> through June 30<sup>th</sup>). In addition, a number of alternate jurors are selected, should an impaneled grand juror be unable to fulfil their term.

Civil Grand Jurors are citizens living within Calaveras County for at least one year and are of various ages and different walks of life. Serving on the Civil Grand Jury is a volunteer position. With regard to its watchdog authority, the Civil Grand Jury is well-suited to the effective investigation of local governments because it is an independent agency, operationally separate from the entities and officials it investigates. Civil Grand Jurors are officers of the Superior Court within Calaveras County. They are members of the Judicial branch of government, as opposed to the Legislative or Executive branches.

The Civil Grand Jury has duties that include:

- Investigating the operations of local government agencies and public officials;
- Examining the handling of public funds and resources;
- Recommending reforms or improvements based on investigative findings;
- Issuing reports and recommendations that, while not legally binding, can have a significant influence on public policy.

Each Civil Grand Jury is free to choose which local government entity or public official it would like to investigate. Decisions on what to investigate generally come by way of three avenues:

- Citizen complaints;
- Matters raised by members of the Civil Grand Jury;
- and referrals from the preceding Civil Grand Jury.

During any investigation it undertakes, the Civil Grand Jury acts as a finder of fact. All facts must be thoroughly established by more than one method to stand their accuracy in any published report.

Today, California's Civil Grand Jury system plays an integral role in fostering transparency and accountability at the local level. Civil Grand jurors often scrutinize everything from county and city government, school districts, joint powers agencies, special districts, housing authorities, public health, and other governing agencies to ensure the best interests of the citizenry are served.

Civil Grand Juries work. They can do what no other group or individual can do—thoroughly, systematically, and without bias, delve into actions and policies of local government entities and officials to evaluate their effectiveness in providing services to the people they are supposed to serve.



What other agencies, officials or persons have you contacted about this matter? What was (has been) their response to you? Provide names, addresses, phone numbers, contacts, dates, etc.

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Is the subject matter of your complaint currently involved in litigation?

NO \_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_

What action are you expecting from the Calaveras County Grand Jury?

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It is a crime to knowingly make a false report to the Grand Jury that a felony or misdemeanor has been committed (CA Penal Code Section 148.5).

Attach copies of all pertinent documents and correspondence. Use additional sheets if necessary.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Mail this completed form to:

Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury  
891 Mountain Ranch Road  
San Andreas, CA 95249

Or Email to: [ccgrandjuryfore@gmail.com](mailto:ccgrandjuryfore@gmail.com)

**MEMBERS OF THE 2024-2025 CALAVERAS COUNTY  
CIVIL GRAND JURY**

**Vicki Plaughter, Foreperson**

**Stephen Testa, Foreperson Pro Tempore**

**Deanna Correa, Treasurer**

**Vicki Goldman, Recording Secretary**

**Carl Brush, IT Officer**

**Terry Wong, Sergeant-at-Arms**

**Dawn Benson**

**Debra Sackett**

**Katharine Klise**

**Andy Anderson**

**Janet Kloffenstein**

**Mark Marsh**

**Mitzi Whitworth**

**Verity Totlebensmith**

**Vivian Eversole**

**In Memory of James “Jim” Narvaez**

Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury  
891 Mountain Ranch Road  
San Andreas, CA 95249

The Honorable Judge Timothy Healy, Presiding Judge  
Superior Court of Calaveras  
400 Government Center Drive  
San Andreas, CA 95249

September 10, 2025

Dear Judge Healy:

I would like to take the time to thank you for putting your trust in me to be the Foreperson of the 2024-2025 Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve our county in this position.

Serving on the Civil Grand Jury for the term of 2023-2024 only whetted my appetite to learn more about how our county government works and early on I made my decision to carry over. I have many people to thank but I would like to begin with Diane Lloyd, who unfortunately passed away in January 2025. Diane served as our foreperson during the 2023-2024 term, and she is sorely missed.

I would also like to thank our 2024-2025 Foreperson Pro Tempore, Stephen Testa, for helping me in my duties and providing words of calmness and wisdom when I needed them most and helping to guide other committees to find the right direction.

The staff at the county have been invaluable and made our job easier. The Civil Grand Jury depended on their expertise beyond measure. Specifically, I would like to recognize Deputy County Counsel Jonathan Frost, Deputy Clerk to the Board of Supervisors Stacy Simpson, Deputy CEO Denise Huebner, Administrative Analyst Candace Doyle, and the wonderful team at IT: Kelly Stefanick, Derrick Tribble, Aaron Shaw, Lars Roundy, and Greg Barnes.

I plan to contribute to our county in other ways while I take a break from my Civil Grand Jury duties, but I already have a feeling I will throw my hat in the ring again for the 2026-2027 Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury.

With gratitude and respect,

*Victoria M. Plaugher*

Vicki Plaugher, Foreperson  
2024-2025 Calaveras Civil Grand Jury

# Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury

## Calaveras County Planning Department Are We Running Out of Rock?

May 19, 2025



The Royal Mountain King Mine (Mine ID 91-05-0002, see Appendix A), which is undergoing reclamation, is located near Copperopolis, California. The pit is approximately 1600 by 500 feet in dimension, and 400 feet in depth. California EPA's State Water Resources Control Board shows arsenic levels in the pit water are consistently higher than prescribed limits. Photo by S.M. Testa.

## SUMMARY

As part of the “Mother Lode” region of California, Calaveras County has a rich mining heritage, dating back to the gold rush of the mid-1800s. Today its mines primarily produce sand, gravel, and aggregate, materials which are used in the construction of new homes, businesses, roads and other infrastructure projects throughout the County.

Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury examined how the County has been addressing its mining concerns in recent years, focusing on three areas of interest: the administration of surface mining operations, mineral resource management, and abandoned mines.

The Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975 (SMARA) provides regulations for the extraction of minerals that are essential to the continued economic well-being of California and the needs of society, as well as for the reclamation of mined lands in order to prevent or minimize adverse effects on the environment and public health. Under SMARA, authority over the operation of mining in a county is vested in a lead agency. In most counties, including Calaveras, the lead agency is the County Board of Supervisors (BOS), which delegates certain administrative duties, such as conducting annual mine inspections, to the Planning Department.

The BOS also has authority over the approval of the General Plan, an outline of long-term development goals for the County assembled by the Planning Department. In order to implement many of these goals, it is crucial to have an adequate supply of quality mineral products such as sand, gravel, and aggregate. Therefore, the General Plan also includes goals for making sure such resources continue to be available, and that their extraction does not conflict with new developments or negatively impact the environment.

Lastly, the County’s mining heritage comes with a potentially hazardous consequence: Abandoned mines which predate SMARA regulations are located throughout the County, but many only enter the public’s awareness when they result in bodily harm or threats to structural integrity. Abandoned mines fall within the BOS’s jurisdiction through nuisance laws and during the review of new development plans. However, not all abandoned mines are known to County officials, and there are few resources available at the County level to help the public mitigate the dangers abandoned mines can pose.

The Civil Grand Jury found during its investigation that the County could greatly improve its handling of mining concerns across all three areas of interest. The Planning Department has been fulfilling many of the lead agency’s basic responsibilities to the State under SMARA, and has done so without enforcement actions when warranted or adequate review of information provided by mine operators for accuracy. In addition, all Planning Department’s actions are performed without regular oversight or involvement by the BOS which serves as the SMARA lead agency. This level of performance could end up costing the County more to correct in the long term or even compromise the future availability of locally mined materials for County projects. Likewise, implementing the General Plan’s goals for conserving the County’s finite mineral resources remains a low priority.

The findings and recommendations presented in this report are intended to improve overall surface mining administration and mineral resources management by the County without significantly compromising existing staff levels or County finances. A more proactive approach to mining concerns, and improved communication between the Planning Department and the BOS, will help

to ensure Calaveras County can fulfill its mineral needs for decades to come.

## **GLOSSARY**

AMLU	Abandoned Mines Land Unit
BOS	Calaveras County Board of Supervisors
CCCGJ	Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury
CCR	California Code of Regulations
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
CGS	California Geological Survey
DMR	Division of Mine Reclamation
DOC	Department of Conservation
IMP	Interim Management Plan
MRMP	Mineral Resources Management Policies
PCC	Portland cement concrete
PRC	Public Resources Code
SMARA	Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975
SMGB	State Mining and Geology Board

## **METHODOLOGY**

Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury (CCCGJ) conducted interviews with relevant county employees and reviewed online documents from several sources, including the Calaveras County Planning Department, the California Department of Conservation (DOC) Division of Mine Reclamation (DMR) and Abandoned Mine Lands Unit (AMLU), the State Mining and Geology Board (SMGB), and news articles.

## **BACKGROUND**

Surface mining throughout California is regulated under the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975 (SMARA), Public Resources Code (PRC), Division 2, Chapter 9, Sections 2710-2796.5. SMARA's policies cover the extraction of minerals which are essential to the economic well-being of the State and the needs of society. It also provides guidelines for the reclamation of mined lands, in order to prevent or minimize adverse effects on the environment and public health and safety (PRC §2711(a)). Reclamation is the process by which a site where surface mining is no longer taking place is returned to a condition that is usable for other purposes, such as development, agriculture, or rewilding.

Prior to 1975, when the California Legislature signed SMARA into State law, mines were not required to undergo a reclamation process once they ceased operation, resulting in thousands of abandoned mines throughout California. These sites continue to pose a health and safety risk for the public.

SMARA was also created with the recognition that minerals are vital, finite, and important natural resources that must be protected and developed sustainably. The primary way local governments identify and protect the mineral resources within their jurisdiction is through general plans (PRC §2711 (e)).

CCCGJ decided to examine how Calaveras County is handling its own mineral resource concerns, given the General Plan states the importance of the County's rich mining heritage to its economy and character. CCCGJ's inquiry covers three specific areas of interest:

- the administration of surface mining in accordance with SMARA guidelines,
- mineral resources conservation through the General Plan,
- and legacy, or pre-SMARA, abandoned mines.

A well-run SMARA program at the County level should ensure that locally mined mineral resources are available for future use in County projects, surface mines within the County's jurisdiction are able to operate on a fair and even playing field, and risks to the health of the public and the environment are minimized.

### **Administration of SMARA**

There are thirteen surface mining operations within the jurisdiction of Calaveras County, based on a review of 2024 surface mining inspection reports submitted to the State, which are readily available on the DMR website (Appendix A). Of these, five are deemed active, five are administered under an Interim Management Plan (IMP; inactive or idle), one is post-closure and in reclamation with no intention to mine in the future, and two are newly permitted mines. Of the active mines, materials produced include sand, gravel, and aggregate.

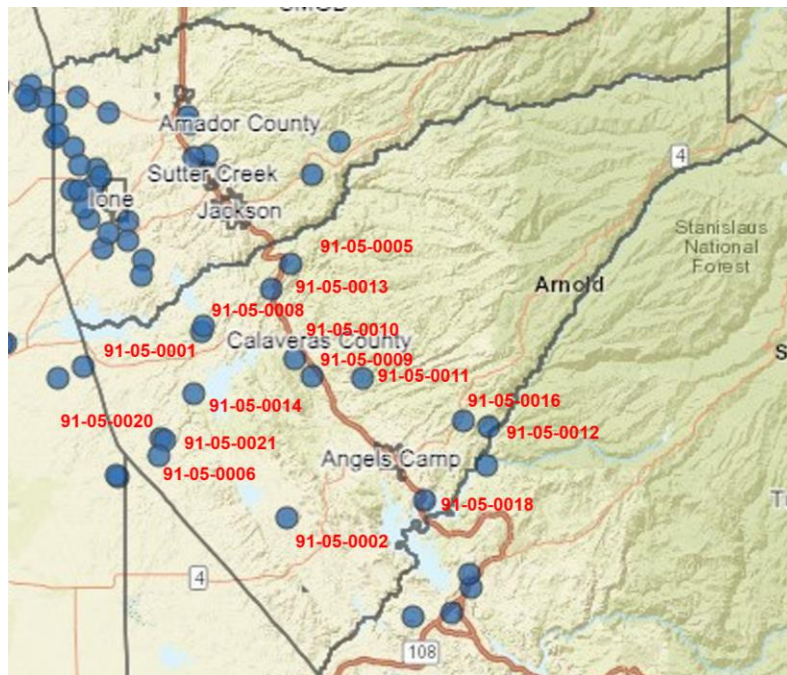


Figure 1. Location of surface mines in Calaveras County as noted by their mine identification number (see Appendix A).

SMARA is administered at the county level by a lead agency. “Lead agency” is defined as the city, county, or board which has the principal responsibility of approving a mine ordinance (PRC

§2774(a)), reviewing and approving reclamation plans (PRC §2728), as well as fulfilling annual reporting requirements to the State (PRC §2207). In Calaveras County, the County Board of Supervisors is recognized as having that authority and therefore is the lead agency. The BOS delegates some of its administrative responsibilities to the Planning Department.

Those administrative responsibilities include conducting annual inspections (and more if required), determining and approving financial assurances, and reporting requirements to the DMR. A financial assurance is a cost estimate approved by the lead agency that has been set aside to ensure funds are available to reclaim the mine site to a usable and safe condition that is readily adaptable for alternative land uses. A financial assurance takes the form of a surety bond, irrevocable letter of credit, or other mechanism. It is important an accurate estimate is approved so that the burden of cleanup falls on the operator and not the taxpayer.

As part of the inspection process, the lead agency also identifies and issues violations for non-compliance with SMARA. Identifying violations as part of surface mining site operations is not discretionary, whereas the BOS, serving as lead agency, does have the discretion to allow sufficient time for compliance and to issue financial penalties.

In addition, technical information (i.e., information regarding disturbed acreage, financial assurance amounts, and written reports provided by the surface mine operator or their consultant) needs to be prepared by licensed individuals such as licensed engineers, engineering geologists, and/or geologists. Such information is provided by the operator or their consultants and should undergo internal review by County staff or their consultants to ensure adequacy and accuracy prior to submittal to the DMR. Failure to do so can have significant bearing on maintaining compliance and establishing adequate financial assurances mechanisms.

There are six categories of violations by a lead agency under which the State Mining and Geology Board (SMGB) may find a lead agency needs to take corrective actions. Furthermore, the SMGB may take over or assume some or all of the lead agency's powers (except for permitting authority and vested rights determinations), should it find that a lead agency has done any of the following (PRC § 2774.4):

- Category 1 - Approved reclamation plans or financial assurances which are not consistent with SMARA;
- Category 2 – Failed to inspect or cause the inspection of surface mining operations;
- Category 3 – Failed to seek forfeiture of financial assurances and to carry out reclamation of surface mining operations;
- Category 4 – Failed to take appropriate enforcement actions;
- Category 5 – Intentionally misrepresented the results of inspections;
- Category 6 – Failed to submit information to the Department of Conservation.

The SMGB may also choose to assume the lead agency's responsibilities if it finds the lead agency's mine ordinance is not in accordance with State policies, and the lead agency fails to submit a revised mine ordinance within 90 days of notification (PRC §2774.5(a)). When a county's lead agency does not have an approved mine ordinance, the SMGB assumes its SMARA responsibilities until the county can take such action.

If a surface mining operation becomes idle, the operator must submit an Interim Management Plan (IMP) to the lead agency. The plan ensures that the mine site is maintained under certain conditions

imposed by the lead agency until mining resumes. The operator must submit an IMP within 90 days of the operation becoming idle. The operation is considered idle if it is curtailed by more than 90% of its previous annual production for at least one year.

If the IMP is not submitted within 90 days or an existing IMP has expired, the site is considered abandoned, and the operator must then complete reclamation in accordance with the approved reclamation plan. IMPs can remain in effect for up to five years. The lead agency can renew the IMP for another five years if the operator has complied with the IMP.

### **Mineral Resources Conservation**

As stated in the County General Plan, Calaveras County has a long history of mining with a rich array of mineral resources due to its location within the Mother Lode Belt of the Sierra Nevada foothills. While early development in the County revolved around extracting mineral resources such as gold and copper, more recently the emphasis is on construction materials such as clay, sand, and gravel. Mineral extraction from mine tailings is also common.

Sand, gravel, and crushed rock, collectively referred to as aggregate, are construction materials that provide essential components for Portland cement concrete (PCC), the basic ingredient of concrete. PCC aggregate is necessary to build a strong economy and is vital to building County infrastructure. Specifications for PCC aggregate are more restrictive than specifications for the other grades of aggregate, making deposits acceptable for use as PCC aggregate the scarcest and most valuable aggregate resource.

SMARA requires the State Geologist to classify land based upon the presence, absence, or potential occurrence of significant mineral deposits, including the minerals that comprise PCC. The purpose is to ensure that the mineral potential of land is recognized and considered before land-use decisions are made that could irreversibly preclude mining. The committing of land to uses incompatible with mining is a major factor in the loss of significant mineral resources in a region. Therefore, land-use and planning decisions need to be made with an understanding of underlying mineral deposits, and the important role they play in supplying future needs.

SMARA provides requirements and guidance as to how best to protect and conserve mineral resources. Mineral conservation includes the State classification and designation of mineral lands at the state level, and the development and exercise of Mineral Resources Management Policies (MRMP) by the lead agency. Mineral lands classified or designated by the State Geologist require a lead agency to prepare an evaluation of the area to ascertain the significance of the mineral deposits located in the area (PRC §2762) when considering alternative land uses. Such evaluation is more stringent regarding designated mineral lands.

Information regarding the County's approach to mineral resources conservation via MRMP is provided in the County's General Plan pursuant to the provisions of PRC §2762. MRMP must include but not be limited to:

- (a) A summary of the information provided by the classification and/or designation reports, or incorporation of PRC §2710 et seq., and state policy by reference, together with maps of the identified mineral deposits or incorporation by reference of the classification and/or designation maps provided by the SMGB.

(b) Statements of policy in accordance with the provisions of PRC §2762(a).

(c) Implementation measures including: (1) reference in the general plan of the location of identified mineral deposits, and a discussion of those areas targeted for conservation and possible future extraction by the lead agency; (2) use of overlay maps or inclusion of information on any appropriate planning maps to clearly delineate identified mineral deposits and those areas targeted by the lead agency for conservation and possible future extraction; and (3) at least one of the following:

(A) Use of special purpose overlay zones, mineral resource/open space zoning, or any other appropriate zoning that identifies the presence of identified mineral deposits and restricts the encroachment of incompatible land uses in those areas that are to be conserved.

(B) Recording, on property titles in the affected mineral resource areas, a notice identifying the presence of identified mineral deposits.

(C) Imposing conditions upon incompatible land uses in and surrounding areas containing identified mineral deposits for the purpose of mitigating the significant land use conflicts prior to approving a use that would otherwise be incompatible with mineral extraction.

### **Abandoned Mines**

The Abandoned Mines Land Unit (AMLU) under the Department of Conservation Division of Mine Reclamation, reports that California has tens of thousands of abandoned mine sites statewide. In California, these mines are situated on public lands (about 64% on federal lands and 4% on lands owned by state and local governments) and privately-owned lands (about 32%), with a large concentration in the “Mother Lode” counties. It has been reported that in Calaveras County there are:

- 1,362 records of mining claims on public land managed by the Bureau of Land Management. Of these, 137 are active mining claims and 1,225 are closed.
- 584 pre-SMARA abandoned mines documented by the AMLU.
- 882 abandoned mines recorded by the USGS.

Obtaining accurate numbers for pre-SMARA abandoned mines is difficult because many of them were not well documented when they were initially excavated, or records were not well maintained or correct for a variety of reasons. The way abandoned mines are counted may differ from agency to agency, hence why the federal USGS and California AMLU report different tallies. Ultimately, reported numbers will most likely grow as mines that have been intentionally obscured for safety reasons or have been forgotten are rediscovered.

Many of these mines can present a public health and safety risk. These concerns include unstable rock and weak structural integrity; deep excavations and vertical shafts that may be hidden or

obscured; unstable dynamite or blasting caps; habitat for rattlesnakes, mountain lions, bears and other wildlife; pockets of oxygen-depleted air or lethal gas; dust particles containing hantavirus or valley fever; and naturally-occurring elements such as asbestos, arsenic, or chromium that can present a health risk.

Examples of public health and safety concerns surrounding abandoned mines in Calaveras County have been reported over the years. In April 1998, the *Modesto Bee* reported an off-road ATV rider left his vehicle and a companion to go exploring at night in a remote area and fell 75 feet down an air shaft into an abandoned gold mine. The victim lay injured with a broken back at the bottom of the shaft for more than twelve hours and was rescued only after the last shot fired from his handgun alerted rescuers to his location. In November 2010, the baseball diamond at San Andreas Community Park began to sink into a previously unknown, poorly sealed 200-foot mineshaft as children played on the field. In February 2022, Calaveras County Sheriff's Office warned of the variety of dangers that can be found in abandoned mines and caves.

On February 10, 2025, a group of friends decided to explore an abandoned mine, making international headlines when one fell into the 50-foot mineshaft and needed rescue. While the mine was located in Placer County, Calaveras possesses numerous abandoned mine sites that could lead to a similar incident. The story highlights the potential danger these legacy mines continue to pose to public safety.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Administration of SMARA**

CCCGJ reviewed the conditional use permit, reclamation plan, and inspection reports prepared by the County for the years 2021 and 2024, with an emphasis on 2024 since these reports reflect the most current understanding of site conditions. Comprehensive inspection reports have a direct relationship to determining adequate financial assurance amounts. Inspection reports generated by the Planning Department were completed and submitted to the DMR. However, several deficiencies were noted.

- As previously stated, the BOS, as the lead agency for the County, is the only body with the authority to approve reclamation plans and IMPs, not the Planning Department nor the mine inspector. CCCGJ discovered communication between the County's BOS and the Planning Department on surface mining issues in recent years has been inconsistent and lacking in certain respects. Inspection reports are simply filed once they are completed, with a copy submitted to the State DMR. However, no further internal review or administrative actions by the lead agency (such as the issuing of fines for violations) are considered since the "lead agency" is not included in the lines of communication. These practices have existed for years and reflect a culture in the County of avoiding the issuing of violations, addressing expired IMPs in a timely manner, and documenting site conditions with time to assure compliance with SMARA.
- Inspection reports do not indicate any violations being issued, nor recommendations for corrective measures. In review of the inspection reports, CCCGJ noticed some violations have existed for years, such as the configuration of slopes at Mine ID 91-05-0018, and elevated arsenic levels in surface waters at Mine ID 91-05-0002 (Figure 1). Inspection

reports do not provide any further documentation other than the minimal information provided on the State form submitted by the Planning Department on behalf of the lead agency. Violations are not brought to the attention of the BOS for enforcement consideration.

- Most of the reclamation plans were approved shortly after the SMARA program was implemented in 1975 and lack engineered scaled site maps of the surface mining operation, making determination and confirmation of disturbed acreage difficult. This raises questions as to whether the current state and configuration of each surface mining operation is truly reflected in the inspection report and approved reclamation plans.
- Technical information provided by the operator or their consultants (e.g., financial assurance amounts and disturbed acreage of a mining site) receives minimal internal review by Planning Department staff or their consultants for adequacy and accuracy prior to submittal to DMR, which can have significant bearing on maintaining compliance and establishing adequate financial assurances mechanisms.
- Financial assurances have not changed appreciably for many years. The County has relied on information provided by the site operator or their consultant, with no internal review for accuracy or compliance with the State Financial Assurance Guidelines. The estimated cost per acre for reclamation (Table 1) is lower in most instances than what would be necessary for full reclamation of lands disturbed by mining in accordance with the approved reclamation plan and conditions of approval.

<b>Table 1 Comparison of Approved Financial Assurance versus Estimated Reclamation Cost per Acre</b>		
<b>Mine ID No.</b>	<b>Approved Financial Assurance Amount</b>	<b>Estimated Remediation Cost per Acre</b>
91-05-0001	\$2,729.45	\$545.89
91-05-0002	\$3,302,000.00	\$5,503.33
91-05-0005	\$4,484.12	\$888.24
91-05-0006	\$80,000.00	\$1,212.12
91-05-0008	\$8,302.19	\$1,664.44
91-05-0010	\$2,932.00	\$1,466.00
91-05-0012	\$128,475.00	\$3,058.93
91-05-0013	\$35,072.18	\$5,010.31
91-05-0014	\$165,768.00	\$23,681.14
91-05-0016	\$38,634.00	\$6,439.00
91-05-0018	\$94,192.00	\$1,600.00
91-05-0020	\$35,000.00	\$2,333.33
91-05-0021	\$53,209.26	Uncertain

Note: Estimated reclamation cost per acre based on financial assurance amount divided by disturbed acres. Information was provided in the 2024 inspection reports for surface mines, shown in Appendix A.

- SMARA allows for the lead agency to charge the surface mining operator reasonable rates for administering its duties. A summary of rates charges by the County is presented in Table 2. For a period of time the Planning Department charged times and materials, then in 2018 decided to charge a flat rate for both conducting inspections and related administrative activities. The rates currently being charged are low when compared to what was deemed reasonable reimbursement pre-2018, especially considering that wages for County staff as well as the cost of materials and fuel have increased. The current rate reflects a minimum level of administrative effort, implying that all surface mining operations require the same amount of time to conduct inspections regardless of the size of the mining operation, acreage, level of activity, and complexity of the issues associated with each operation.

<b>Table 2 Summary of Administrative Fees and Inspection Fees</b>			
<b>YEAR</b>	<b>Administrative Fee</b>	<b>Inspection Fee</b>	<b>Total</b>
2009	148.00	615.00 – Deposit-Time and Materials	763.00
2010	148.00	Time and materials	Varied depending on mine
2011	148.00	Time and materials	Varied depending on mine
2012	148.00	Time and materials	Varied depending on mine
2013	148.00	Time and materials	Varied depending on mine
2014	148.00	Time and materials	Varied depending on mine
2015	148.00	Time and materials	Varied depending on mine
2016	148.00	Time and materials	Varied depending on mine
2017	148.00	Time and materials	Varied depending on mine
2018	None	205.00	205.00
2019	None	205.00	205.00
2020	None	205.00	205.00
2021	None	205.00	205.00
2022	None	205.00	205.00
2023	None	205.00	205.00

Lastly, certain surface mining operations that are deemed idle and have been approved to exist under an IMP may currently be considered abandoned since their approved IMP has expired (see

Figure 1, Mine ID 91-05-0001, ID 91-05-0010, and ID 91-05-0012). If a surface mining operation is deemed abandoned, SMARA requires the operator to commence reclamation promptly. A lead agency does not have the authority to issue an IMP or revert an operation’s status back to active once a site has been deemed abandoned. Should the operator decide to continue mining, the operator must start the permitting process over from the beginning, which would require a new reclamation plan compliant with current standards and statutes. Should the operator decide not to continue mining the site, the mineral resources that exist there will no longer be accessible unless or until a new surface mining operation is permitted on the site.

**Mineral Resources Conservation**

There have been four reports prepared by the California Geological Survey (CGS) pertaining to mineral classified lands throughout Calaveras County (Table 3). In Calaveras County, mining activities occur on both public (U.S. Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service) and private lands. As of 2025, no lands in Calaveras County have been designated as mineral areas of regional or statewide significance. As mineral resources are depleted elsewhere in the state, however, there is an increased need for future mineral designation considerations, especially for PCC, which is necessary for infrastructure projects. There are currently no lands classified for PCC aggregate in the County.

<b>Table 3 Mineral Classified Lands in Calaveras County</b>			
<b>Date Issued</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Report Number</b>	<b>Mineral commodity</b>
1982	Mineral Land Classification of the Ordway Skunk Gulch Carbonate Deposit, Calaveras County, California	DMG Open-File Report 83-1	Carbonates, industrial limestone and dolomite
1983	Mineral Land Classification of the Sutter Creek 15 Minute Quadrangle, Amador and Calaveras Counties, California	DMG Open-File Report 83-36	Clay, lignite, specialty sand, metals and industrial carbonates
1987	Mineral Land Classification of the Camino and Mokelumne Hill 15-Minute Quadrangles, El Dorado, Amador, and Calaveras Counties, California	DMG Open-File Report 87-2	Gold, silver, copper, lead, zinc, limestone and talc
1991	Mineral Land Classification of the San Andreas 15-Minute Quadrangle, Calaveras County, California	Special Report 169	Lode gold, metals, limestone and talc

Note: No mineral lands containing PCC-aggregate have been classified in Calaveras County.

In the 2019 General Plan, under “Associated Plans and Documents: Mineral Resources,” the County states it “maintains the following text, maps and diagrams identifying the location and relative importance of mineral lands countywide and the County’s adopted policies for managing those resources. Text, maps and diagrams are updated on a regular basis with current versions available at the Calaveras County Planning Department office.” These maps are not included as part of the General Plan.

Measures (Calaveras County Resource Production Element, June 27, 2019, pp. RP 13-14) delegated by the BOS to the Planning Department to implement the MRMP include:

1. County Code: Amending the County Code to address the use and development of geothermal resources.
  - Update the Mineral Extraction (-ME) Combining Zone district to be consistent with the State’s mineral classification scheme.
  - Clarify that a conditional use permit is required for all surface and subsurface mining activity unless specifically exempted pursuant to Section 17.56.040 (or equivalent).
  - Include notification procedures for designating mineral reserve areas.
  - Continue to use the -ME Combining Zone to designate existing permitted and grandfathered mining operations, to identify lands with commercial mineral potential and to allow owners of land containing commercially valuable mineral resources to apply for mineral extraction permits.
  - Address changes to state law and regulations from the SMGB.
  - Incorporate California Mineral Land Classifications in Table RP-1.
2. Subsurface Mines: Amending the County Code to establish permitting procedures and standards for subsurface mining operations and activities that are not addressed pursuant to County Code Section 17.18.030 [i.e., are outside the Mineral Extraction (-ME) zone].
3. Mineral Resources Information: Adopt a procedure for incorporating new Mineral Classification Reports from the State Geologist into the General Plan land use map to reflect newly classified valuable mineral resources.
4. Mining Advisory Committee: Consider establishing a Mineral Advisory Committee to make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors related to the management of mineral reserves countywide, to consider appropriate non-mining uses on mineral reserve lands, to review requests for general plan amendments on lands identified as containing important mineral reserves, and to review other actions related to mining operations in Calaveras County.
5. Abandoned/Historic Mines: Use guidelines from the Abandoned Mine Lands Unit of the Department of Conservation and reference this agency as a source of funding for remediating abandoned/historic mines.
6. Mineral Resources Zones: Petition the SMGB to prioritize additional areas of significant mineral resources in the county for consideration and designation as Mineral Resource Zones. Identify through appropriate zoning important mineral lands identified in State Classification Reports from the State Geologist to assist in their conservation for future use.
7. Reclamation: Continue to require a reclamation plan and financial assurances, consistent with state law including SMARA and adopted rules and regulations for the implementation of SMARA (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 2, Chapter 8, Subchapter 1, and as may be amended), and other applicable state and federal standards, for all mining operations that are not otherwise expressly exempted by state law. In addition to State-mandated requirements, reclamation plans shall:

- When creating or restoring plant or wildlife habitats, aesthetically blend the reclaimed site into the surrounding area or provide an acceptable alternative so far as is reasonably practical.
- Provide for the utilization of existing facilities and/or infrastructure for compatible uses other than those associated with mining.

Ranking priorities and establishing a timeline for review and completion of these measures promotes the importance of considering current and future mineral resource needs and increases the likelihood such policies will be implemented. The Planning Department has not to date formally set forth a priority ranking or schedule for accomplishing the objectives of the MRMP.

Furthermore, there is no measure in the General Plan that specifically addresses whether existing aggregate production in the County is sufficient to meet projections of future needs. According to the State Department of Finance's growth projections, as reported in the General Plan, the population of Calaveras County was expected to increase from 2019's level of 41,277 persons to 43,340 persons by 2035, a number which was already surpassed in 2023 (46,565 persons, according to the U.S. Census Bureau). If the County's population continues to increase at this rate, it will surpass the General Plan's projections for 2040 of 48,038 persons well ahead of time, making the need for new residences and the infrastructure to support them all the more pressing.

Many counties benefit from appointing a County Geologist, a county employee with a degree in geology or geological engineering and appropriate license to practice, who, in addition to their regular duties, is available to provide such expertise and continuity across various county departments on geological, hydrogeological, and geotechnical issues that may arise, including administration of a county's SMARA program and the implementation of goals set forth in the general plan. Calaveras County does not currently have a County Geologist.

### **Abandoned Mines**

Calaveras County BOS, as lead agency under SMARA, has authority over abandoned mines within its jurisdiction through nuisance laws and during the review of new developments. Lead agencies are required to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970 (CEQA) when permitting projects within their jurisdiction. CEQA requires the presence of an abandoned mine at the site of a proposed project to be adequately disclosed during the process. The Planning Department does not have a process for members of the public to report abandoned mines on their property, nor is proper disclosure well documented.

While the State and federal government maintain various maps of known abandoned mines, the Planning Department does not maintain a current map or tabulation of abandoned mines within its jurisdiction that can be readily accessed by other County departments when they encounter these features in the execution of their duties. The Sheriff's Office, for example, is a first responder to accidents, requests for rescue, and trespassing calls relating to abandoned mines.

Nor does the Planning Department's website provide resources to the public on abandoned mines, various mitigation measures available, disclosure requirements during property transfers, or how to contact the AMLU (1-877-OLD-MINE, [DMR@conservation.ca.gov](mailto:DMR@conservation.ca.gov)) for additional information.

## **FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, RESPONDENTS**

Pursuant to Penal Code §933 and §933.05, the Calaveras County Civil 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 CCCGJ report, invited responses must be received within 90 days.

After conducting interviews and reviewing documents, CCCGJ's findings and recommendations are as follows:

**F1.** The Planning Department does not update the Board of Supervisors on surface mining issues on a regular, annual basis, therefore the Board of Supervisors, as lead agency under SMARA, is unaware of the results of annual inspections, and is unable to adjust and approve annual financial assurance cost estimates or consider enforcement actions for surface mines within its jurisdiction.

**R1a.** Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends the Planning Department adopt a schedule for reporting the annual mine inspection results to the Board of Supervisors, including any recommendations for administrative action, on an annual basis or more frequently as deemed necessary, beginning December 31, 2025.

### **Required Response**

Calaveras County Board of Supervisors  
Calaveras County Planning Department

**R1b.** Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends the Board of Supervisors agendaize annually, or more frequently when needed, a report from the Planning Department's mine inspector as to the status of all surface mines within the County's jurisdiction, with recommendations for administrative actions when warranted, beginning December 31, 2025.

### **Required Response**

Calaveras County Board of Supervisors  
Calaveras County Planning Department

**F2.** The Planning Department does not appropriately note violations on annual mine inspection reports, which may be considered a substantial enough violation of the County's administrative responsibilities under SMARA that those responsibilities could potentially be subject to assumption by the State Mining and Geology Board.

**R2a.** Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends the Planning Department clearly note violations pursuant to SMARA when conducting annual inspections, which includes review of the site-specific reclamation plan, specific conditions set forth in the use permit issued by the Planning Department, observations made during mine inspection visits, and annual financial assurances adjustments, beginning December 31, 2025.

### **Required Response**

Calaveras County Planning Department

**R2b.** Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends the Planning Department present an overview of the annual mine inspection reports to the Board of Supervisors, including any

recommendations for administrative action, on an annual basis or more frequently as deemed necessary, by December 31, 2025.

**Required Response**

Calaveras County Board of Supervisors  
Calaveras County Planning Department

**F3.** The Planning Department’s failure and reluctance to appropriately issue violations that may be subject to financial penalties and corrective actions in its inspection reports and in reporting to the Board of Supervisors negatively impacts the lead agency’s ability to maintain compliance across all surface mining operations within its jurisdiction, provide a level playing field for surface mining in the County, as well as avoid hidden financial liabilities that may increase substantially over time if left unaddressed.

**R3a.** Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends the Planning Department notify the Board of Supervisors of violations identified during annual surface mine inspections and recommend financial penalties and/or corrective actions, beginning by December 31, 2025.

**Required Response**

Calaveras County Board of Supervisors  
Calaveras County Planning Department

**R3b.** Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends the Board of Supervisors, as the lead agency under SMARA, begin exercising their authority to issue financial penalties and/or corrective actions for non-compliant operators by December 31, 2025.

**Required Response**

Calaveras County Board of Supervisors  
Calaveras County Planning Department

**F4.** Without engineered scaled site maps, it is uncertain whether annual inspection reports prepared by the Planning Department reflect the true amount of disturbed acreage at each surface mining site.

**R4.** Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends the Planning Department issue more comprehensive inspection reports, which include scaled site maps and annual annotated photo documentation of site conditions, beginning by December 31, 2025.

**Required Response**

Calaveras County Planning Department

**F5.** The Planning Department depends on technical information provided by the surface mining operator and their respective consultants, which should include appropriately scaled maps of current site conditions, disturbed acreage, and financial assurance cost estimates, with minimal internal review for accuracy. Submitting inaccurate reports could be viewed as cause for the State Mining and Geology Board to assume the County’s administrative responsibilities under SMARA.

**R5a.** Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends all technical information provided by a surface mine operator or their consultant be verified that it was prepared by a California licensed

professional and be reviewed internally on behalf of the County by individuals qualified to review such information beginning December 31, 2025.

**Required Response**

Calaveras County Planning Department

**R5b.** Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends the Planning Department request at the time of each annual inspection an updated engineered site map from surface mine operators at an appropriate scale for all surface mining operations beginning December 31, 2025.

**Required Response**

Calaveras County Planning Department

**F6.** Instead of charging each surface mining operation the actual cost of time and materials associated with the completion of inspections, the Planning Department charges all operators the same amount regardless of the size of the operation and complexity of the issues associated with each one.

**R6.** Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends the Planning Department charge each surface mine operator reasonable reimbursement rates for time and other expenses associated with its annual inspection, rather than charging a flat rate, beginning December 31, 2025.

**Required Response**

Calaveras County Planning Department

**F7.** Certain surface mining operations are operating under an Interim Management Plan that has lapsed or expired, which puts them out of compliance with the County’s responsibilities under SMARA regulations.

**R7.** Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends the Board of Supervisors, as lead agency, inform the operator that the surface mining operation is out of compliance with SMARA and should promptly commence reclamation by December 31, 2025.

**Required Response**

Calaveras County Board of Supervisors  
Calaveras County Planning Department

**F8.** The Planning Department has neither conducted a comprehensive review nor analyzed the County’s existing quantities of permitted production of sand, gravel, and aggregate in relation to existing and future needs, which could impact the future availability of such materials as commercial and residential development and infrastructure repair increase throughout the County.

**R8.** Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends the Planning Department partner with the California Geological Survey to assess the County’s existing supply of mineral resources and future needs, notably in regard to sand, gravel and aggregate, beginning by December 31, 2025.

**Required Response**

Calaveras County Board of Supervisors  
Calaveras County Planning Department

**F9.** The Planning Department has mineral resource management objectives as part of the County's General Plan which it does not regularly track or set as tasks to be performed and scheduled for implementation or completion, thereby decreasing the likelihood they will be implemented at all.

**R9a.** Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends the Planning Department establish and maintain mechanisms for tracking progress on mineral resource management goals and setting reasonable timetables for completion by December 31, 2025.

**Required Response**

Calaveras County Board of Supervisors  
Calaveras County Planning Department

**R9b.** Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends the Board of Supervisors establish a Mineral Advisory Committee for recommendations related to the management of mineral reserves countywide as suggested in the General Plan by December 31, 2025.

**Required Response**

Calaveras County Board of Supervisors  
Calaveras County Planning Department

**R9c.** Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends the Board of Supervisors designate a County Geologist, who is licensed to practice in the State of California, to provide continuity on geological matters across all departments in County government by December 31, 2025.

**Required Response**

Calaveras County Board of Supervisors  
Calaveras County Planning Department

**F10.** Despite hundreds of abandoned mines dispersed throughout the County, the Planning Department does not maintain a current map or tabulation of abandoned mines within its jurisdiction for use by first responders and as a readily accessible and standardized reference across County departments.

**R10.** Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends the Planning Department maintain a database of known abandoned mines in Calaveras County for internal use by all affected County and State departments, to be implemented by December 31, 2025.

**Required Response**

Calaveras County Planning Department

**Invited Response**

Calaveras County Board of Supervisors  
Calaveras County Sheriff's Office  
Calaveras County Office of Emergency Services

**F11.** The Planning Department provides no information or State Abandoned Mine Lands Unit guidelines to the general public as to how best to report or mitigate hazards associated with

abandoned mines, many of which are on private land and could become liabilities for property owners if they are not adequately secured or disclosed in property transfers.

**R11.** Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends the Planning Department institute a process, accessible through their website, whereby the public can report locations of abandoned mines to the County and/or be directed to resources about mitigating their associated hazards, by December 31, 2025.

### **Required Response**

Calaveras County Planning Department

### **Invited Response**

Calaveras County Board of Supervisors

## **DISCLAIMER**

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

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**Appendix A  
Summary of Surface Mining Operations in Calaveras County**

Surface Mine Name	Mine ID No.	AB 3098 List	Surface Mine Status	Reclamation Plan Date of Approval	2024 Inspection Report	Financial Assurance	Approved Acreage	Disturbed Acreage	Produced Product(s)	Violations/ Corrective Measures/ Recommendations
Snyder Clay Pit	91-05-0001	Not listed	IMP (11/01/2018)	Vested; REC 89-05; 07/01/1952; IMP 1st 11/01/2018	04/26/2024	\$2,729.45; Approved (08/10/2017)	25	5	Clay	None
Royal Mountain King Mine	91-05-0002	Not listed	Post-Closure	REC 87-01 (01/26/1987)	05/07/2024	No FA 2023; \$3,302,00 (12/28/2004)	600	0	Gold	None; California EPA notes arsenic in pit water above prescribed limit
Herzig Sand and Gravel	91-05-0005	Listed	Active	REC 79-02 (07/05/1979)	05/07/2024	\$4,484.12 (06/10/2024)	0.5	0	Aggregate	None
Robie Ranch Aggregate Quarry	91-05-0006	Listed	Active	REC 1979-01; REC 2004-56 (04/13/1981, Phase II)	04/22/2024	\$80,000 (06/06/2015)	650	66	Aggregate	None
Valley Springs Clay Pit	91-05-0008	Listed	IMP	REC 78-06 (10/05/1978); IMP 2nd (05/30/2019)	04/23/2024	\$8,302.19 (06/22/2017)	60-85	5	Clay	None
The Flintkote Company	91-05-0009	Not listed	Uncertain	RESOLUTION 78-247; Conditionally approved (10.5/1978)	Not available	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Shale; weathered schist	None
Calaveras Cement Quarry #7	91-05-0010	Not listed	IMP	Vested (1973); RP 78-06 (10/05/1978); IMP (08/21/1992)	05/01/2024	\$2,932 (06/10/2024)	190	2	Shale; weathered schist	None
Catacart Limestone Quarry	91-05-0012	Not listed	IMP	REC 78-06 (10/05/1978); IMP 1st (04/27/2018)	05/01/2024	\$128,475 (06/06/2023)	120	66 (100); only 42 acres subject to SMARA?	Limestone; marble	None
Chili Gulch Quarry	91-05-0013	Listed		REC 85-04 (07/18/1985); MUP REC 85-04/PC Resolution #85-86	05/14/2024	\$35,072.18 (06/28/2023)	65 (15 vested)	7	Aggregate	None
Hogan Quarry – Ford Construction	91-05-0014	Listed	Active	Vested (pre-1965/confirmed 1990, 1993, 2004, 2006); REC 91-15 (09/20/1990)	05/10/2024	\$165,768 (06/11/2024)/\$200,000 (06/12/2024)	15	7	Aggregate	None
McCarty Pit	91-05-0016	Listed	Active	REC 87-07; amended PC Reso 94-137 (12/15/1994)	05/10/2024	\$38,634/\$40,000 (06/20/2024)	46	6	Sand and gravel	None
Carson Hill Rock Products	91-05-0018	Not listed	Active	REC 98-05 (06/04/1998)	04/30/2024	\$94,192 (11/03/2021); \$96,000 (04/18/2022)	Uncertain	60		None; benching and slope issues noted
Jenny Lind Aggregate	91-05-0020	Listed	IMP	REC 2002-54 (06/23/2003); IMP 2nd (09/14/2023)	04/18/2024	\$35,000 (06/18/2018)	107	15; 15 reclaimed	Aggregate	None
Jenny Lind Tailings Pile	91-05-0021	Listed	Newly Permitted		06/17/2024	\$67,766.15 (06/11/2012); \$53,209.26 (04/10/2019)	Uncertain (encompasses entire parcel except setbacks)	0		None

# Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury

## Calaveras County Adult Detention Facility Behind the Walls: Oversight and Observations of the Detention System

June 2, 2025



Courtesy of <https://www.dewberry.com/projects/calaveras-county-adult-detention-facility-and-sheriff-s-administration-building>

## SUMMARY

The Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury (CCCGJ) is required by law to inquire into the condition and management of detention centers within the County on an annual basis. There are two adult detention centers, Calaveras County Adult Detention Facility (CCADF) and Vallecito Conservation Camp #1, located within Calaveras County.

This report summarizes the CCCGJ's inquiry into the Calaveras County Adult Detention Facility. CCCGJ found the adult detention facility was very clean, organized, efficiently run and well maintained. CCCGJ was left with a favorable impression of the Sheriff's Office and CCADF officers for their professionalism, compassion and commitment to their jobs as well as to the inmates. The "tone from the top" is apparent and the staff demonstrates empathy while holding inmates accountable. Their mannerisms and interactions with the inmates are positive and create an environment of mutual respect and collaboration.

## GLOSSARY

BSCC	Board of State and Community Corrections
CCADF	Calaveras County Adult Detention Facility
CCCGJ	Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury
CCR	California Code of Regulations
CCSO	Calaveras County Sheriff's Office

## METHODOLOGY

Section 919(b) of the Penal Code mandates that the grand jury inquire into the conditions of any public prison within the county. Sections 919(a), 925 and 925(a) authorize the grand jury to investigate county and city jails and other detention facilities within their jurisdiction. The Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury (CCCGJ) requested and reviewed state and county inspection reports of the Calaveras County Adult Detention Facility (CCADF) from the last two years. CCCGJ also reviewed the established policies and procedures, and logs (e.g., safety cell, grievances, personnel training).

CCCGJ also toured the detention facility and had an opportunity to speak to Sheriff's Office personnel and inmates and had an opportunity to confirm practices were in line with current policies and procedures.

## BACKGROUND

The California Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) is a state regulatory agency that establishes and promulgates standards for the construction, operation and administration of local detention facilities. These standards are found in Title 15 and Title 24, of the California Code of Regulations (CCR).

The Calaveras County Adult Detention Facility (CCADF), located at 1045 Jeff Tuttle Drive in San Andreas, is a modern facility designed to meet current standards for inmate housing and rehabilitation. The facility houses up to 160 inmates within six separate pods that include double-bunked cells, rehabilitation program space, open communal space and outdoor recreation areas. The facility also includes a full-service kitchen, separate medical care areas, laundry, and tunnel

access between the detention facility and the county courthouse for inmate transport. The CCADF has financial contracts in place to house inmates from other counties should it be needed.

The Calaveras County Sheriff's Office (CCSO) oversees the operation of the detention facility, ensuring the safety and security of inmates and staff while providing essential services and programs aimed at rehabilitation and successful reintegration of inmates into the community after time served. The Sheriff's Office administration components include an emergency dispatch and operations center, evidence processing and storage area, interview rooms, locker rooms, public assembly space and staff communal area. The jail building contains electronic safety and security control systems which consist of an intercom, video visitation capabilities, interview recording and video surveillance.

## **DISCUSSION**

The Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury (CCCGJ) found the adult detention facility was very clean, organized, efficiently run and well maintained. Sheriff's Office personnel were transparent, professional and interactions with the inmates were respectful.

Inmates have access to portable tablets that allow them to view the meals for the month, order commissary goods and access personal entertainment. Video conferencing capabilities in dedicated spaces provide inmates with privacy between their medical and legal teams. Each pod has a communal area where inmates can lounge and watch television or spend time interacting with other inmates and playing games, reading and/or listening to music. There are dedicated rooms where classes are held to support rehabilitation and reintroduction back into society. Meals prepared by jail and inmate staff are pre-defined for the month and reviewed by a nutritionist to ensure they meet minimum requirements.

CCCGJ reviewed various logs and found safety checks and headcounts are routinely performed. Inmate time-out-of-cell exceeds the minimum regulatory requirements, and review of inmate grievances found that they were appropriately documented and addressed by Sheriff's Office personnel.

One of the challenges faced by the Calaveras County Sheriff's Office is the retention of officers. Adjacent counties offer higher salaries which often pull Calaveras County officers to new opportunities.

## **FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, RESPONDENTS**

Pursuant to Penal Code §933 and §933.05, the Calaveras County Civil 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 CCCGJ report, invited responses must be received within 90 days.

After conducting interviews and reviewing documents, CCCGJ's findings and recommendations are as follows:

**F1:** Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury was left with a very positive opinion of the Calaveras County Adult Detention Facility. The facility is well run, clean and properly maintained, and is

being operated in an efficient manner by committed officers and staff. Inmates are treated in a safe and humane manner.

### **Required Response**

Calaveras County Sheriff's Office

### **COMMENDATIONS**

**C1:** Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury commends the Sheriff's Office and Calaveras County Adult Detention Facility officers for their professionalism, compassion and commitment to their jobs as well as to the inmates. The "tone from the top" is apparent and the staff demonstrates empathy while holding inmates accountable. Their mannerism and interactions with the inmates are positive and create an environment of mutual respect and collaboration.

### **DISCLAIMER**

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

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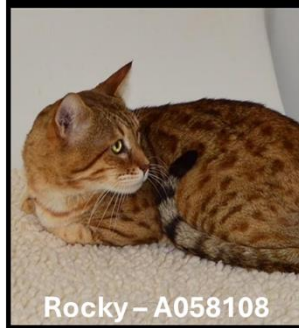
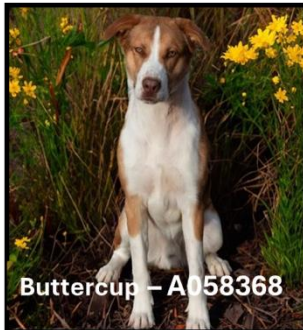
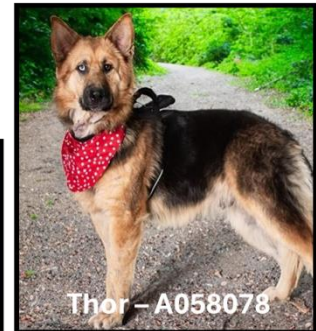
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# Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury

## Calaveras County Animal Services

**A new shelter: 140 dog years in the making.  
But are we close?**

June 2, 2025



Photos obtained from the Calaveras County Animal Services section of Petfinder.com  
<https://www.petfinder.com/member/us/ca/san-andreas/calaveras-county-animal-services-ca362/>

## SUMMARY

The Calaveras County Animal Shelter was built in the 1950s and it's no secret to the community the county remains in need of a new animal shelter in order to continue to support the current and growing needs of the animals, staff, and volunteers. Dating as far back as 1999, the Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury (CCCGJ) has issued seventeen (17) reports expressing the need for a new animal shelter. The intent of this year's CCCGJ review of the Calaveras Animal Shelter was to determine if there had been any forward momentum towards the building of a new animal shelter. And if not, what potential roadblocks may be slowing down the progress. CCCGJ was pleasantly surprised to find the county has recently made more progress than was previously thought.

Despite the age of the existing facility, the members of the CCCGJ made several positive observations during our visit. All the animals appeared well cared for and the facility was clean and organized to the best of the staff's ability. There were also several volunteers donating a portion of their day to ensure the animals were able to spend time outside of their various cages and kennels which helps improve their socialization and reduces their anxiety.

However, some aspects were not so positive. Facility construction is outdated and falling apart due to age and basic use. Also, supplies, kennels, exam rooms and staff are all competing for limited space. The facility lacks a designated space for animals requiring quarantine which means the staff must leave adjacent kennels empty to provide separation between those that are quarantined from other healthy animals. As a result, open kennel availability may be limited when the need for quarantine arises.

Fortunately, the Calaveras County Board of Supervisors has taken some much-needed early steps on the path to building an updated shelter. The County's approved budget provided approximately \$4 million for the project. And while that money isn't immune from reallocation, it has enabled the County to contract with a local architectural firm for the creation of new building plans which is more progress than has been made on previous attempts to modernize the shelter facility.

Additionally, according to reasonable estimates based on similar projects, the previously approved funds aren't sufficient to cover the total cost of building a new facility which leaves the County having to explore additional sources of funding. This goal is entirely possible to achieve, but it will require the continued attention and support of the members of our county as well as the clear communication of that support to the members of our Board of Supervisors. Whether the County finally reaches the goal of bringing our animal shelter facilities into the 21<sup>st</sup> century or continues to ignore the needs of these vulnerable animals for another 20 years depends entirely on the level of commitment the community has to helping the animals in its care.

## GLOSSARY

BOS	Calaveras County Board of Supervisors
CCAS	Calaveras County Animal Services
CCCGJ	Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury
RFQ	Request for Qualification

## **METHODOLOGY**

Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury (CCCGJ) conducted interviews with relevant county and non-county employees, conducted a site visit of the animal shelter, reviewed previous CCCGJ reports regarding the state of the current animal shelter, along with other documents. The CCCGJ also reviewed previous, relevant Calaveras County Board of Supervisor (BOS) meetings to establish the timeline of events beginning with the original Request for Qualifications (RFQ) in 2022 through the present year (2025).

## **BACKGROUND**

As a largely rural county, it's not uncommon for people driving through Calaveras County to pass by pastures containing large animals such as cows, horses, llamas, goats, sheep, or even elephants depending on what part of the county you're in. But we also have thousands of lesser seen animals living inside our homes such as dogs and cats that we tend to forget about. And while the larger animals need consideration, it's often the smaller pets that find themselves needing the most help finding new homes when their humans suddenly can't take care of them anymore. This is where the Animal Services Department steps up to provide for our county's non-human residents. This often happens during a pet surrender, or when Animal Control is called to pick up a stray found running the streets, or when the County has to perform a confiscation when living conditions aren't in the animal's best interest. Because this is such an important service aimed at providing for a population of residents that can't speak for themselves, it is the responsibility of the County to ensure that it is providing the best it can for the animals and the people responsible for its care.

Over the past several years the Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury has published many reports aimed at improving the various facilities and functions of the Calaveras Animal Services Department. Due to the age of the current facility, historic increases in county population resulting in an increase in pet owners throughout the County, and the recent Board of Supervisors interest in exploring the estimated costs of building a new facility, the CCCGJ decided to investigate the process of how the county would go about building a new facility if the current conditions justified the estimated project cost.

The county's budgeted and approved Animal Services funds for the fiscal year 2023-2024 was \$4,100,000 and for the fiscal year 2024-2025 the total approved budget was \$3,995,015. This reduction in available funds is due to money having been spent on hiring an architectural firm based out of Stockton, California. However, with this money being located in the General Fund, it is not exclusively designated for the animal shelter build and is potentially at risk of being used for other purposes. This means that those Board of Supervisors members, who have previously supported the building of a new animal shelter, must continue to maintain that commitment and protect this money for the length of time it takes in seeing a new shelter come to fruition. If this commitment is not maintained, the County will risk having spent money on building plans that will end up sitting on a shelf and may become obsolete depending on changes in construction regulations or standards of animal care, neither of which provides any benefit to the animals presently being kept in the current outdated facility.

## DISCUSSION

The current process of trying to bring our county's animal shelter into the 21<sup>st</sup> century officially began back on December 13, 2022, when the BOS authorized the creation of a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) from local architectural and engineering firms for the purpose of building a new animal shelter. The purpose of a RFQ is to notify local service providers of the type of project the county wants to do, projected timeline for certain elements of the project, along with various legal or project requirements a company might need to be aware of before deciding if they're interested in competing for the job contract. If a company is interested, they submit a packet explaining why they think they're qualified for such a job which usually includes past projects of a similar nature as well as their ability to meet the various legal requirements. Once the deadline is reached for the interested companies to have submitted their qualifications packets, the applications are graded by multiple county departments based on how well they meet the contract requirements, then those scores are averaged for each applicant to determine the company with the highest average score, and that company is awarded the contract. In this case that architectural design company was LDA Partners, Inc., located in Stockton, California.

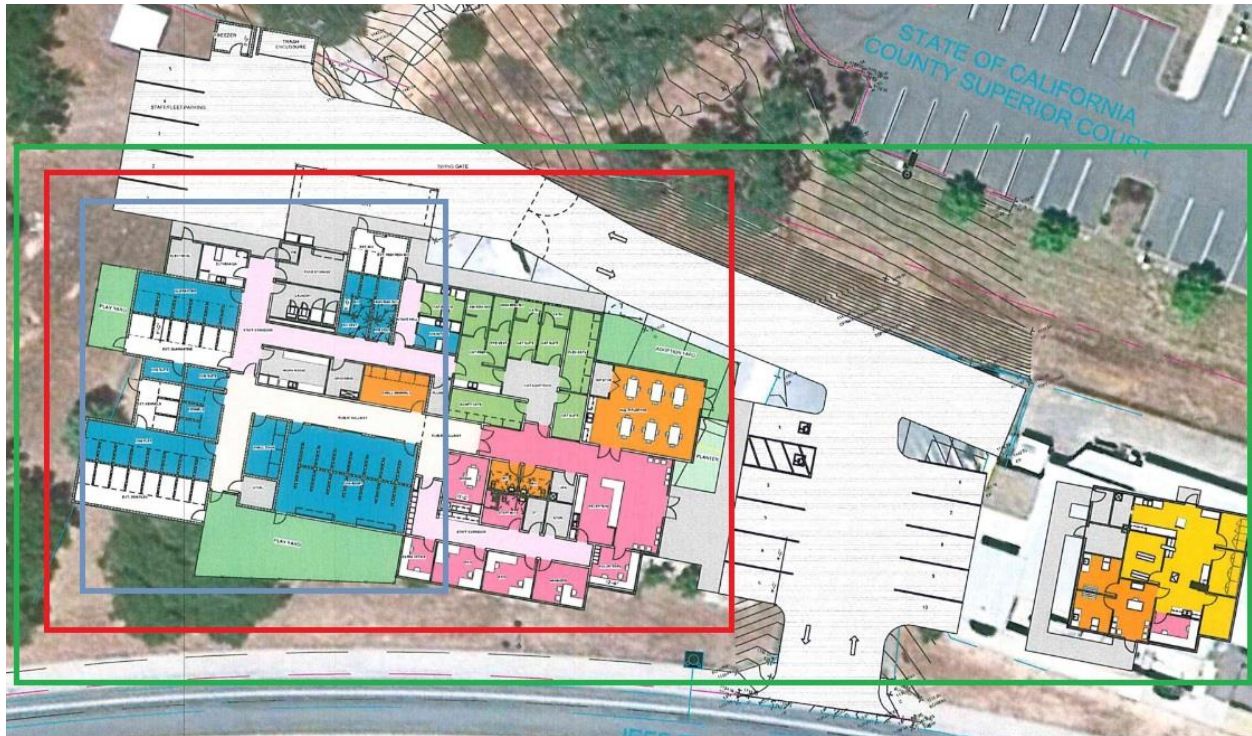
Upon the selection of LDA Partners the proposed project would be divided into two separate phases. Phase One would consist of programming and conceptual design (concept drawings), and Phase Two would include design development, construction documents, and construction administration (completed construction blueprints).

On April 11, 2023, a contract agreement was reached between LDA Partners and Calaveras County for LDA to move forward with Phase One. Those Phase One concept plans were presented to the BOS during their board meeting on January 23, 2024. At that time LDA Partners presented a couple of options for the county to choose from. Option 1 was a plan for a new building that would house the dog kennels, cat kennels, and administrative office spaces but staggered the construction of each section of the building to allow for the animals and staff to continue utilizing the buildings currently on the property until their building section was completed. Option 2 was a plan for a new building that also housed the dogs, cats, and administrative offices but also included a separate optional building that would provide shelter veterinary services. This was seen as potentially beneficial as the county currently has to contract with local providers for veterinary care, resulting in animals requiring transportation to those veterinary facilities. Having those capabilities available on-site allowed the county to have more flexibility in how they served the community.

It was at this meeting after LDA finished their presentation that several things happened that ended up creating some confusion regarding how the process would move forward. First was the BOS being concerned about the cost of such a project. They had approximately \$4 million in the county General Fund they planned to use for this project and wanted to know what the various options were expected to cost. While it's impossible to accurately predict the final cost of a project at that stage of plan development, LDA Partners stated the rough estimate prices were based on other similar projects in nearby counties at the time. Those estimates were as follows:

- Option 1: \$7 million for a facility that only housed the dog kennels, which is the greatest need (below image outlined in blue).
- Option 2: \$10 million for a facility that housed dogs, cats, and includes office space for administrative staff (below image outlined in red).

- Option 3: \$13 million if they wanted to also add on the additional veterinary care building (below image outlined in green).



Picture obtained from LDA Partners PowerPoint presentation to the Calaveras BOS.

The members of the Board briefly discussed the need for a new building as well as the need to use the available funds responsibly, and that Phase 2 documents would be needed in order to more accurately estimate final project costs. They then instructed the county Administrative Office staff to draft a contract for Phase 2 construction documents so that the BOS could make more informed budgetary decisions. However, because the BOS had not made a decision on which option to pursue the Administrative Staff was unable to move forward with contracting for Phase 2 plans at that time.

The next BOS meeting to address the shelter project was March 26, 2024, where the Administrative Office staff presented an agreement between the County and LDA for Phase 2 plans not to exceed \$798,000, but the BOS didn't authorize that agreement because they still wanted the County and LDA to explore other options that would keep within the previously mentioned \$4 million budget. On April 9, 2024, the BOS directed the Administrative Office staff to bring back two options for consideration to move forward with Phase 2 designs. One plan consisted of a new facility for dogs only, and the second option for the facility housing dogs, cats, and office space for administrative staff. Those plans were presented the following month at the May 14, 2024 meeting and did not have significant estimated cost reductions. However, the BOS did vote to move forward with Phase 2 documents for a facility to accommodate dogs, cats, and administrative staff at that time.

With the previously supplied rough cost estimates in mind, CCCGJ wanted to better understand what justified spending that much money on construction of a facility that housed animals. For reference, the \$10 million estimate provided a building for dogs, cats, and administrative office spaces that was approximately 10,695 square feet (sq ft). Those estimates sounded high when compared to a building of similar size built for people until further investigation revealed how much more an animal shelter needs to be able to handle than a human home does. These additional considerations do come with additional costs causing facilities of this type to range anywhere between \$900 - \$1000 per sq ft. In comparison, the cost for a building of similar size in the residential sector is approximately \$600 per sq ft.

For example, the materials of construction used in the current facility are not in alignment with the present-day standards for animal shelters. The concrete floors are old and porous making proper sanitation and drainage practices difficult. Updated flooring materials reduce the porousness which helps prevent contamination from animal waste from soaking into the floor. They are also more resistant to the harsh chemicals often used for sanitizing kennel spaces on the occasions that Animal Services has to treat sick animals.

The kennels in the current facility are all indoor spaces with the built-in floor drain located at one end of the room. As a result, when staff wash down the insides of the kennels, all the contaminated run-off travels across multiple kennel spaces to reach the drain, sharing all the waste and germs with the animals in the neighboring spaces as the water travels. The current standard of construction creates kennel spaces with an indoor and outdoor section that can be closed off for cleaning and safety using a drop-down door panel and uses built-in drainage for both inside and outside kennel spaces. This improves the ease and ability to clean each kennel while reducing the risk of cross contamination and also improves the quality of life for the animal by providing indoor and outdoor access.

Additional modernizations would include specialized HVAC systems that exchange air from the inside with outside air every few minutes instead of recirculating inside air, which helps prevent the spread of airborne illnesses. Higher density wall materials are designed to withstand the destructive nature of scared and anxious animals, and additional sound insulation to reduce hearing damage and unwelcome stimulation for animals already living in a stressful environment.

Animal Services also has the unfortunate responsibility of dealing with animals that die from old age, injury, or illness. As a result, they need to have spaces capable of holding or storing those animals such as isolation rooms and large refrigeration/freezer spaces to prevent the spread of illness.

There are countless other updates and improvements involved with the modernization of this sort of facility, but the main takeaway is that all of them are there to improve the health and safety of the animals being cared for. And as it was explained to the members of this jury, an animal that is healthy and feels safe has lower anxiety, is more relaxed and accepting of interaction which promotes the end goal of faster adoption.

Phase 2 plans have been completed and were submitted to the County as of March 2025. These “shovel ready” plans are construction blueprints that have undergone a process called Plan Check where various County departments will review them and clarify any portions that are unclear as well as ensuring they comply with the many local and State building code

requirements. Though the current process of the Plan Check is ongoing, once the check is complete, the BOS will be able to seek additional funding sources such as grants or bond measures and eventually seek bids from local contractors for what they would charge to complete the project.

At the time of the writing of this report, the current remaining funds set aside for this build are at \$3,995,015.00, which includes the funds already authorized to be paid to the LDA architectural firm for the plans and services they've been contracted to provide. However, CCCGJ learned those remaining funds were located in the county General Fund and are not secured, which means, if the County has a more pressing need, that money may be taken from the animal shelter and used for other purposes. CCCGJ recognizes a few members on the Board of Supervisors, when speaking on other County projects, have publicly acknowledged the risks associated with irresponsible management of County funds when not dedicating appropriate funding towards development and completion of plans they've already committed resources to.

As the needs of the County are largely determined by the BOS understanding of what the residents of the County consider to be a priority, the continued dedication of those funds for the new animal shelter is overwhelmingly dependent upon how vocal and persistent the taxpayers are in making their desire for the new shelter heard by the BOS. This is more important now because the County has spent more money and completed more of the process than it ever has before. If the BOS permits these funds to be reallocated to other projects, or if the community fails to continue to stress the importance of this commitment upon the members of the BOS, we could easily find ourselves having paid for plans that sit on a shelf and do nothing but collect dust or become outdated due to future changes in animal care standards or building codes.

## **FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, RESPONDENTS**

Pursuant to Penal Code §933 and §933.05, the Calaveras County Civil 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 CCCGJ report, invited responses must be received within 90 days.

After conducting interviews and reviewing documents, CCCGJ's findings and recommendations are as follows:

**F1:** The conditions and construction of the current Animal Services facility do not adequately provide safe care and housing for animals according to current industry standards.

**R1:** Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends the Calaveras County Board of Supervisors provide their direction on whether or not the County will proceed with the construction of the industry standard compatible facility outlined in the plans purchased through the contract with LDA Partners, Inc., by October 1, 2025, in order to minimize the impacts of future financial market factors on plan viability.

### **Required Response**

Calaveras County Board of Supervisors

### **Invited Response**

## Calaveras County Animal Services

**F2:** The remaining \$3,995,015.00 set aside for this project are held in the General Fund and are not guaranteed to remain exclusively for the Animal Services build and may be redirected to other projects at the discretion of the Board of Supervisors. This could potentially negatively impact the efforts of the county to secure matching grant funding or donations.

**R2:** Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends the Calaveras County Board of Supervisors consider passing a resolution to officially designate the remaining project funds located in the General Fund as Committed Funds according to the policies outlined in General Administrative Policy-Finance, B-01 Budget and Finance, Resolution 2012-087 and 20250128r007, effective date January 28, 2025, by October 1, 2025.

### **Required Response**

Calaveras County Board of Supervisors

### **Invited Response**

Calaveras County Animal Services

## **DISCLAIMER**

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

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# Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury

## Calaveras County Code Compliance

# Communication is a Two-Way Street

June 2, 2025



Photo by E. Özel (Pixabay.com).

## **SUMMARY**

“Compliance through education” is one of the core values of Code Compliance, a division of Calaveras County’s Building Department. It serves as the code enforcement arm for a variety of departments within the County, and also receives and investigates complaints from concerned citizens about possible safety and nuisance code violations in their community. Compliance in the County is complaint-driven, meaning Code Compliance often needs the public’s help to know when there is a problem, typically by submitting a citizen complaint form.

Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury (CCCGJ) received complaints from members of the public that complaints submitted to Code Compliance were received with an inadequate response back to the complainants. While Code Compliance does note on both its website and its citizen complaint form that it is the responsibility of the complainant to contact the department for updates on a submitted complaint or code enforcement case, CCCGJ found that the existing submittal process leaves some citizen complainants doubting whether their complaints are actually received and treated seriously. Others are left frustrated by the difficulty of obtaining an update on an open case from Code Compliance staff.

Code Compliance has one of the smallest department staffs in the County, considered fully staffed at five full-time employees, yet currently it is operating on a staff of four, only one of whom is dedicated to code enforcement. CCCGJ has reported on understaffing and underfunding at Code Compliance leading to public frustration for years, while the number of complaints it receives continues to rise. This has led Code Enforcement Officers to devise creative solutions for assigning caseload by section of the County, as well as adopting a point-based system for ranking cases by priority. Code Compliance is also in the process of implementing an eTRAKiT system that integrates and streamlines the permitting, inspecting, and violation citing process for all staff, including Code Enforcement Officers in the field.

CCCGJ found there is room to improve how Code Compliance staff interface with the public, notably in regard to citizen complainants, who want to know their concerns about the health, safety, and beauty of their neighborhoods are heard and taken seriously. Increasing staff to better handle workload and following Code Compliance’s own core values to respond to and educate citizen complainants in a timely, respectful manner are important steps toward decreasing frustrations within the community.

## **GLOSSARY**

CCCGJ            Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury

## **METHODOLOGY**

In order to better understand the citizen complaints it received, Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury (CCCGJ) conducted various interviews and reviewed information available online, including the Calaveras County Code Compliance website, citizen complaint form, and previous CCCGJ reports on this subject. Internal Code Compliance documents were also reviewed to provide greater understanding of how the department operates and to establish consistency.

## **BACKGROUND**

CCCGJ received complaints from members of the public regarding the difficulty of obtaining follow-up information related to a submitted citizen complaint. CCCGJ decided to inquire into what Code Compliance's stated internal obligations are to respond to complainants, and whether they are meeting those obligations.

Code Compliance is a division of the Calaveras County Building Department which notifies property owners when their property is in violation of State or County law, and may issue fines or other abatement measures if the owner does not bring their property into compliance. Code Compliance is responsible for overseeing the County's Abandoned Vehicle Abatement (AVA) program, and it also acts as the code enforcement arm for other County departments (e.g., Planning, Public Works, and the Environmental Management Agency), ensuring the County in its various projects is acting in compliance with building and zoning codes while safeguarding the public and environment.

Compliance enforcement in Calaveras County is primarily complaint driven. Code Compliance relies on complaints from the public to know where a possible violation exists before it can be addressed.

CCCGJ has published multiple reports on Code Compliance over the years. In 2009, a reduction in tax revenue for Calaveras County led the Building Department to reduce Code Compliance from a staff of five (a Code Enforcement Officer for each County district) to two, as reported by the 2013-2014 CCCGJ. This understaffing and the inefficiency that resulted from it generated numerous citizen complaints to the Civil Grand Jury.

The 2012-2013 CCCGJ report recommended Code Compliance increase its staff. While the Board of Supervisors agreed, it would not approve increasing staff numbers until a source for funding those positions could be found. Application fees for medical cannabis cultivation provided those funds in 2016, and Code Compliance was able to increase its staff from two employees to five. However, the County's cannabis ordinances are subject to change, and today funding for Code Compliance is primarily coming from the County's general fund and the recovery of costs accrued in the abatement process through fees.

CCCGJ in its 2018-2019 report on Code Compliance recommended that Code Compliance keep five Code Enforcers on staff—one to handle cases from each County district—plus one supervisor. In its response to the report, the Building Department agreed with this recommendation.

The Building Department and Code Compliance also agreed with the 2018-2019 CCCGJ's recommendation that Code Compliance adopt a policies and procedures manual, and by the end of 2019 a manual was in circulation among Code Compliance staff. The Code Compliance Policy and Procedure Manual is based on the on-the-job experience and institutional knowledge of its Senior Code Enforcement Officer, and provides guidelines to staff for, among other things, prioritizing cases and addressing various issues that arise during the abatement process.

## DISCUSSION

Code Compliance states on its website that its mission is “to protect the health, safety, and welfare of our community members, to mitigate public nuisances, and to protect property values by encouraging compliance with state and local laws.” Its stated primary goal is to promote voluntary compliance through education.

As such, Code Compliance repeatedly emphasizes the importance of best communication practices in its Policy and Procedure Manual. It exhorts Code Enforcement Officers to act professionally, courteously, and fairly when speaking with members of the public, and to treat every interaction as an opportunity to educate. Code Enforcement Officers also receive training in de-escalation techniques and situational awareness, as issuing a citation of violation can lead to heightened emotions and confrontation.

When it comes to communication with a complainant, in most situations Code Compliance relies on the complainant to make contact. On the Frequently Asked Questions section of its website, it explains that “due to caseload, we typically only contact reporting parties if more information is needed. You are always welcome to contact Code Compliance for an update or to provide more information.”

The old citizen complaint form for mailing or faxing a complaint used similar language, urging complainants to “keep us informed of any improvement or lack of improvement. We rely on you to request further service when needed!”

Whether a member of the public receives acknowledgement when they submit a citizen complaint form differs depending on the method of submittal. If a complaint is sent by email through Code Compliance’s website, the complainant will receive an electronic receipt that does not include a case number. (Because a case still needs to be opened to obtain a case number, the complainant would need to contact Code Compliance to request that information.) If the complaint is given in person at Code Compliance’s office, a case will be opened the same day and the complainant may receive a case number but no receipt.

However, if a complainant sends in a complaint form by posted mail, there is no system in place nor obligation for Code Compliance to acknowledge receipt of the complaint beyond opening a case.

In any of these situations, if the complainant wants more information about the progress of their case, the complainant still needs to contact Code Compliance with that request. Code Compliance does not provide that information unprompted for a variety of reasons, including time constraints imposed on Code Enforcement Officers by their caseload and travel to visit sites, the privacy of the owner of the property against which a complaint has been leveled, and the fact that some cases deemed low priority or not a violation (such as neighborly disputes about noises, aesthetics, or easements) are resolved by communication between the affected parties without Code Compliance’s involvement.

CCCGJ examined whether Code Compliance’s Policy and Procedure Manual contains any guidance for Code Enforcement Officers responding to citizen complainants. Code Compliance’s Policy and Procedure Manual states that it is a living document that needs to be updated as laws and best practices change, while also emphasizing that it is a set of guidelines and that Code Enforcement Officers ultimately must use their own discretion when making judgment calls.

Cases where there is imminent danger to health or safety are addressed as soon as possible. For all others, the Policy and Procedure Manual contains a priority assessment matrix of seven criteria to help Code Enforcement Officers triage cases, where a case is assigned one point for each of the criteria it meets. Cases that meet more of those criteria are ranked higher priority for investigation, whereas those that meet only one are lowest priority and, due to high caseloads, may remain unaddressed as higher-scoring cases come in.

The Policy and Procedure Manual contains general guidance on how best to communicate with, educate, and treat members of the public, especially property owners who are receiving a notice of violation or in the abatement process. However, it lacks similar guidance on Code Enforcement Officers' obligations when it comes to communicating with those who have filed complaints and addressing their concerns about the safety of their neighborhoods and value of their properties.

The main reason given for a lack of follow-up with complainants is the volume of complaints Code Compliance receives. Code Compliance typically receives about 120-150 complaints per year, but in 2024 that number was over 300. CCCGJ found that while the number of complaints each year has been steadily increasing, the department is regularly operating with less than a full staff.

While officially part of the Calaveras County Building Department, Code Compliance has one of the smallest staffs in the County, considered fully staffed at five employees. However, currently Code Compliance has four employees on staff, two of whom are full-time Code Enforcement Officers, with only one of those dedicated to handling compliance cases. Because cases are typically assigned to Code Enforcement Officers by the County district in which the properties they concern lie, Code Compliance has had to find creative solutions to allocating cases to employees since it has not had sufficient staff to assign one Code Enforcement Officer to each County district. In addition to processing complaints from the public, Code Compliance also acts as the code enforcement arm of other County departments, which further complicates the likelihood of cases deemed low priority being addressed.

One solution the Building Department has offered to mitigating the perennial high caseload to low staffing problem is the adoption of the electronic tracking system eTRAKiT, which integrates the permitting and inspecting process for County staff across relevant departments. When fully implemented, it is the hope that a Code Enforcement Officer will be able to reference codes, document site conditions complete with photos, and enter and print out citations even while in the field, greatly saving the amount of time spent traveling between properties and the office. However, though technology can help decrease the amount of time a Code Enforcement Officer spends on each case, it does not negate the need for more staffing.

## **FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, RESPONDENTS**

Pursuant to Penal Code §933 and §933.05, the Calaveras County Civil 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 Civil Grand Jury report, invited responses must be received within 90 days.

After conducting interviews and reviewing reference documents, the CCCGJ findings and recommendations are as follows:

**F1:** Code Compliance does not have a consistent mechanism in place to acknowledge and confirm the receipt of citizen complaints by all methods of submittal (email, posted mail, and in-person), leaving some concerned citizens unsure whether their complaints are even received.

**R1:** Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends Code Compliance adopt a system of acknowledging and confirming to the complainant that their complaint has been received, including a case number if a case is opened, for all methods of complaint submittal, to be implemented by December 31, 2025.

**Required Response**

Calaveras County Board of Supervisors

**Invited Response**

Calaveras County Code Compliance

**F2:** Code Compliance’s citizen complaint form and website create a reasonable expectation that a complainant request for follow-up information will be answered in a timely and professional manner. Yet Code Compliance’s Policy and Procedure Manual lacks guidance regarding Code Enforcement Officers’ obligations, if any, to respond to complainants requesting follow-ups on their cases.

**R2a:** Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends Code Compliance, in order to better adhere to their stated core values, institute a clear procedure for responding to complainant requests for follow-up information, by December 31, 2025.

**Required Response**

Calaveras County Board of Supervisors

**Invited Response**

Calaveras County Code Compliance

**R2b:** Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends Code Compliance follow their stated core values to treat every interaction as an opportunity to educate, and respond in a timely and professional manner to complainant requests for follow-up information regarding complaint cases, beginning no later than December 31, 2025.

**Required Response**

Calaveras County Board of Supervisors

**Invited Response**

Calaveras County Code Compliance

**F3:** With staff vacancy rates frequently at 20% or higher, Code Compliance is operating at staff levels insufficient to handle its high case load, leading to cases taking longer to be resolved, if they are deemed a high enough priority to be addressed at all.

**R3:** Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends Code Compliance hire additional Code Enforcement Officers to bring Code Compliance up to fully staffed levels, that being five employees, by December 31, 2025.

**Required Response**

Calaveras County Board of Supervisors

**Invited Response**

Calaveras County Code Compliance

**DISCLAIMER**

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

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# Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury

Calaveras County Health and Human Services Agency

## Breaking the Cycle

Re-integration Strategies for Homeless Families with  
Children

June 2, 2025



Project Playground Family Housing Insecurity 2024

## SUMMARY

Are we doing all we can to help the homeless population in Calaveras County get back on their feet and become successfully reintegrated into society? In 1994, the US House of Representatives published Title 42 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Public Health. In this document, Congress issued a directive on what is needed to combat homelessness. However, since then, the homeless situation has only gotten worse. Per the September 2023 edition of the *Calaveras Enterprise*, in an article entitled “San Andreas Residents Concerned about Homelessness,” a statement says “Point-in-time counts reflected an 81% increase in homeless individuals in the county from 2015 to 2018.” Reflecting that, as a county, we have been unable to find a solution that will help reduce that number.

California has passed laws over the last decade in an effort to address homelessness, but it remains a difficult challenge for the State. Calaveras County may not have the large homeless population that other counties have, but we also have fewer resources available to assist the homeless we do have. Everything from emergency shelter availability, permanent housing opportunities, and funding for supportive services becomes a challenge to provide. And while the Calaveras County Health and Human Services Agency has remained dedicated to facing these challenges, there is no simple solution due to the wide array of causes that may contribute to an individual or family becoming homeless.

While the homeless situation can affect many different subsets of our population, the Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury does not have the resources to investigate all of these. Therefore, CCCGJ chose to focus our time and efforts on one of the most vulnerable subsets: homeless families with children.

## GLOSSARY

BOS	Calaveras County Board of Supervisors
CoC	Continuum of Care
HHSA	Calaveras County Health and Human Services Agency
HUD	Housing and Urban Development

## METHODOLOGY

To better understand the current condition of homeless families with children within the county the CCCGJ gathered relevant information using the following methods:

- Interviews with personnel from various county agencies and non-profit organizations
- Review of documentation and reports released by HHSA
- Reports and publications available through the HUD website
- Reports and publications from various online sites

## BACKGROUND

Calaveras County provides resources to the homeless members of our community with programs and services available through the Health and Human Services Agency. These services are

provided using a variety of funding sources including federal, state and local taxes, as well as various grants that may become available throughout the year. Calaveras County HHSA also works in cooperation with various local non-profit organizations and faith-based organizations in an effort to fill in gaps in service availability as well as improving the accessibility of information to those in need.

Federal funding through Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is based upon the annual count of sheltered and unsheltered homeless, utilizing a Point-in-Time survey, conducted across the country on a single night in January. Every year a team of government agencies, non-profits, and trained volunteers conduct a coordinated count of homeless individuals located in emergency shelters, transitional and temporary housing, and permanent supportive housing. Additionally, every other year (years ending on an odd number), this team of volunteers also counts the unsheltered homeless located under bridges, in tent cities, or any other location they can find them. This information is then sent to HUD who creates a report used by Congress to assess the efficacy of policy and distribute funding.

Since Calaveras County is a very rural community, it is often difficult to locate the temporary and improvised shelters used by the homeless population, especially in January. This leads to the counts being lower than reality. According to the Calaveras Planning Coalition, “the method and timing of the *Point In Time count*, along with the limited number of volunteers doing the work assures a significant under-count. In 2017, the count totaled 19 countywide! According to county Health and Human Services, data from 2017-18 applications for CalWORKs and MediCal revealed 819 Calaveras County residents who identified themselves as homeless. A number that has increased by 35% over the last five years” (emphasis original).

HUD has developed a model for categorizing the homeless population into 4 Categories. After the counts are completed, HUD then reviews and approves or denies grants, though HUD grants are only available to the homeless described in Category 1 as seen below.

<b>CRITERIA FOR DEFINING HOMELESS</b>	<b>Category 1</b>	Literally Homeless	(1) Individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning: (i) Has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not meant for human habitation; (ii) Is living in a publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state and local government programs); <u>or</u> (iii) Is exiting an institution where (s)he has resided for 90 days or less <u>and</u> who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution
	<b>Category 2</b>	Imminent Risk of Homelessness	(2) Individual or family who will imminently lose their primary nighttime residence, provided that: (i) Residence will be lost within 14 days of the date of application for homeless assistance; (ii) No subsequent residence has been identified; <u>and</u> (iii) The individual or family lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing
	<b>Category 3</b>	Homeless under other Federal statutes	(3) Unaccompanied youth under 25 years of age, or families with children and youth, who do not otherwise qualify as homeless under this definition, but who: (i) Are defined as homeless under the other listed federal statutes; (ii) Have not had a lease, ownership interest, or occupancy agreement in permanent housing during the 60 days prior to the homeless assistance application; (iii) Have experienced persistent instability as measured by two moves or more during in the preceding 60 days; <u>and</u> (iv) Can be expected to continue in such status for an extended period of time due to special needs or barriers
	<b>Category 4</b>	Fleeing/ Attempting to Flee DV	(4) Any individual or family who: (i) Is fleeing, or is attempting to flee, domestic violence; (ii) Has no other residence; <u>and</u> (iii) Lacks the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing

HUD Homeless Definition,

[https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HomelessDefinition\\_RecordkeepingRequirementsandCriteria.pdf](https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HomelessDefinition_RecordkeepingRequirementsandCriteria.pdf)

Therefore, there are no grants available from HUD to people with an immediate risk of becoming homeless. Those people must seek out other avenues of assistance and that is where Calaveras County Health and Human Services Agency comes in.

To help alleviate homelessness, California passed the Housing First law back in 2016 with the goal of removing many of the barriers faced by individuals in HUD Category 1 trying to qualify for housing assistance. By expanding their focus to Calaveras residents in Category 2, HHS has been able to provide early intervention for many of these at-risk individuals and families and kept them from falling into Category 1. While anyone in Categories 1 or 2 can request housing assistance from HHS, applicants can also voluntarily enroll in a series of education and training

courses tailored to their specific needs with the goal of preventing future repeats of the conditions that caused the homelessness or near homelessness to begin with. This could be anything from classes on budgeting and basic house maintenance to how to read and understand a leasing agreement. Training can last anywhere from 6-18 months and families will stay at a place selected by HHSA until it is completed. The “graduation” from this program then makes the families eligible for permanent housing. HHSA will aid the families in finding the housing and will also provide up to a year of follow-up services.

## **DISCUSSION**

While HHSA is the primary source of aid available, there are other options available through the Calaveras County Housing Resource Partnership which is comprised of various public and private entities, faith-based organizations, and nonprofit groups working together to care for those in need. Calaveras County is also implementing a “navigation” system that will better connect the government services an individual has been referred to as well as when they accessed those services. This added connectivity utilizes the “no wrong door” concept, meaning individuals seeking assistance from any one of the services provided by the County can also be connected to many of the other services that might be able to assist them as they move toward stabilization and self sufficiency. This will help Social Workers support their clients as they make progress on their reintegration journey.

It also networks with HHSA in surrounding counties that are part of the geographic region HUD identifies as our Continuum of Care (CoC). The CoC is a HUD program created for the purpose of providing a framework for coordination at a variety of levels from the federal government all the way down to the local level with county agencies, nonprofits, and other volunteer organizations. Our CoC supports the homeless populations of Amador, Calaveras, Tuolumne, and Mariposa Counties. Through the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and the added connections created by the “navigation” system, the appropriate services can be located and offered. At any future time, if someone in need approaches a different government aid location within our CoC, their information will already be in the system.

The end result of this added networking ability is improved access to services for those in need while also helping HHSA better identify people who need more specialized attention. But it also helps prevent the misuse of services by giving HHSA a tool to identify individuals traveling from county-to-county attempting to take advantage of services. This is more difficult to do when counties are able to communicate with each other regarding who is accessing their various services.

In Title 42 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) – Public Health, Chapter 119, Homeless Assistance, Subchapter 1 General Provisions, Section 11301, Findings and Purpose, as referenced above, the US Congress found that:

(1) the Nation faces an immediate and unprecedented crisis due to the lack of shelter for a growing number of individuals and families, including elderly persons, handicapped persons, families with children, Native Americans, and veterans;

(2) the problem of homelessness has become more severe and, in the absence of more effective efforts, is expected to become dramatically worse, endangering the lives and safety of the homeless;

(3) the causes of homelessness are many and complex, and homeless individuals have diverse needs;

(4) there is no single, simple solution to the problem of homelessness because of the different subpopulations of the homeless, the different causes of and reasons for homelessness, and the different needs of homeless individuals;

(5) due to the record increase in homelessness, States, units of local government, and private voluntary organizations have been unable to meet the basic human needs of all the homeless and, in the absence of greater Federal assistance, will be unable to protect the lives and safety of all the homeless in need of assistance; and

(6) the Federal Government has a clear responsibility and an existing capacity to fulfill a more effective and responsible role to meet the basic human needs and to engender respect for the human dignity of the homeless.

By following the approach laid out by the U.S. Congress, Calaveras County has a responsibility to help the homeless, regardless of which HUD category they fall into. Calaveras County Health and Human Services Agency's proactive approach of assisting Category 2 residents is not a method adopted by all counties in California. Many counties choose to focus their efforts on serving people in Category 1 through providing emergency sheltering options and getting the affected individuals a roof over their head as fast as possible. While there is no denying a person who is without shelter benefits from having a shelter provided quickly, it does little to prevent a relapse into the conditions that caused the initial situation, leading to a cycle of repeated homelessness. With Calaveras County HHS assisting people in Category 2, and by offering participation in the personalized education program, upwards of 70% of the people who graduate to self-sufficiency remain that way and do not fall back into needing HHS intervention for homelessness again.

### **Housing First**

Calaveras County HHS has implemented additional training for their Social Workers that provides an emphasis on a housing focused approach, maximizing the utility of all available programs that may benefit the families in need. These Social Workers are then able to help families succeed with their Housing First approach. They are also assigned smaller case loads to allow Social Workers to focus more time addressing the individual needs of their clients.

The previously mentioned Housing First law passed in 2016 identifies the immediate need of a family with children to have a roof over their heads. This usually is accomplished by placing the family in a motel. The family is allowed to stay there until they graduate from the housing training program. This gives the family a sense of stability that will help them reach their goals. If the family chooses to not participate in the voluntary training program offered, they will still receive the required housing assistance but will miss out on the opportunity to receive all of the personalized educational services available.

The former California housing readiness program required individuals to address their various medical, mental, and behavioral health concerns prior to receiving long-term housing placement. The new Housing First law removes those prerequisites and focuses on getting people into long-term housing first so they have more stability when attempting to address those concerns later.



January 26, 2018 | Jon Anderson

Stable Housing is The Single Best Way to Combat Poverty And Save Money

Taking this proactive approach and providing this highly beneficial customized training does not come without additional cost. As previously mentioned, HHSA funds these programs through various grants. Currently HHSA is able to apply for grants up to \$50,000. When applying for grants exceeding \$50,000, HHSA must first obtain approval from either our County Board of Supervisors or a State agency. As with all processes, particularly government processes, additional steps mean additional time. This added time negatively impacts the ability of HHSA to apply for this funding, meaning they might miss out on grants they would otherwise have qualified for. It also creates a delay in how fast that money is received, which negatively impacts their ability to respond to the needs of our vulnerable populations in a timely manner.

Finding housing for the homeless is not an easy task. There is a need for both temporary emergency shelters as well as permanent housing. There is an active landlord engagement program where landlords may contact HHSA when they have available properties. These may come with a reduced rent or financial assistance from HHSA. However, this is not enough.

Studies show that homeless shelters often provide access to healthcare services, helping residents address physical and mental health issues. This helps reduce the strain on emergency medical services in the community which improves stability of service availability as well as the individual lives of the homeless. In essence, by providing shelter and support services for people who are homeless, shelters contribute to community stability by helping individuals transition out of homelessness.

Within the HHSA is the county Public Health department, and one of their primary duties is the prevention of communicable diseases. The Public Health website lists this as the first goal of the Infectious Disease Control and Prevention Unit. And according to an article published online in 2020 by the Cambridge University Press titled “Communicable disease among people experiencing homelessness in California,” the homeless population is disproportionately affected by numerous injuries and communicable illnesses as a direct result of the conditions associated with homelessness. Conditions such as poor hygiene and sanitation, poor nutrition, overcrowding due to limited shelter availability, and the exacerbation of preexisting conditions caused by environmental exposure are all drastically improved by the ability to get these at-risk individuals off the street and into emergency shelters, temporary transitional housing, or long-term housing.

However, due to the impact public opinion has had on the County’s lack of emergency shelters, Calaveras falls short on the ability to meet that commitment to these residents who have paid taxes to ensure these services would be available if they ever needed them.

The following timeline shows Calaveras County’s most recent attempt to address the need for an emergency homeless shelter.

- In June of 2016, the BOS directed staff to determine what type of emergency shelter the County needed.
- By May of 2018, a new taskforce had been formed to look into the homeless situation.
- In December 2018, the taskforce gave its first update to the BOS.
- In May 2019, the taskforce gave its second update to the BOS and the BOS declared a shelter crisis.
- In June of 2019, the BOS, in a unanimous vote, paid \$5,529 to have a plot of land in West Point rezoned to allow the placement of tiny houses for the homeless.
- In July of 2019, the BOS approved the use of property on Government Center Drive for the second location of tiny houses.

Following the July 2019 BOS meeting, the plans had been drawn up, with the funding available through grant money totaling \$1,000,000. These new shelter plans were presented to the public via a Town Hall meeting, which according to an article in the *Ledger Dispatch*, became “heated” as the project was discussed. One Supervisor stated they experienced a level of embarrassment when Calaveras County had to seek help for the homeless from other counties that do have emergency shelters. Representatives from Health and Human Services Agency were available and pointed out the many benefits of an emergency shelter, however, some Supervisors and residents of the affected districts made their disapproval known.

Following the Town Hall, residents from these districts attended the next two BOS meetings and made their sentiment clear – Not In My Backyard. The plan was subsequently cancelled and the grant money had to be returned.

The establishing of an emergency shelter is a subject the local communities have a variety of opinions about. And while the county as a whole has a duty to take those opinions into consideration, it must also weigh those opinions against the expectation of service availability made to the members of our community when they pay their taxes, as well as the legal obligations placed upon our state and local government to promote and protect the public health.

By placing those families who have graduated from the training program directly into appropriate housing located throughout the community, the residents being assisted would be able to reintegrate into our community without being burdened by the stigma associated with homelessness or receiving housing support services. This helps to reduce the negative public perception of “government housing” and allows people getting back on their feet to maintain their dignity and be judged on their abilities and contributions going forward instead of on labels assigned by situations from their past. Children who live in housing subsidized by HHSA programs no longer live on the other side of the tracks; they live on the other side of the street. And when the kids on the block meet up to play ball or a game of tag, they never know that their housing situation is only slightly different than their neighbors’.

This is an invaluable benefit for helping create the sense of community belonging that so many who have experienced homelessness struggle to find. Media often portray the homeless as dirty, lazy, crazy, addicted, and delinquent. And while addiction, disabilities, and mental health are frequent contributors to a person becoming homeless, these media representations tend to ignore the many other causes. Economic instability, catastrophic illness, or unexpected changes in employment are also common situations that lead to homelessness. The hard truth is any one of us could find ourselves in a situation where we needed to rely on the support provided by our community while we stabilize our foundation and begin to rebuild our lives.

Not every person seeking assistance qualifies for the HHSA skills program and Transitional Housing. Or if they do, they may need some time gathering necessary documentation to apply. For these people, having emergency housing is crucial because the options available to them are even more limited. Currently HHSA, various nonprofits, and faith-based organizations rely on donations to purchase motel vouchers to assist with the immediate need while more stable arrangements are made. However, because these are donations, fund availability can’t be guaranteed and may be insufficient to meet all the needs that come up during the year. Additionally, for the nonprofits fortunate enough to have a home donated or purchased to be used as emergency housing, other challenges are presented. It’s not uncommon for multiple individuals or families to need shelter at the same time. When this happens, due to space constraints, personal safety, and legal responsibilities, it’s a common practice to house women and children together while leaving the single and married males to find other accommodations, which don’t always exist. Some counties address this by having separate emergency shelters for men and women with or without children, some repurpose vacant commercial spaces by working with local leadership to update zoning codes, or some even provide individual tiny house units that can be assigned based on family size or need.

As evidenced by the 2019 Town Hall meeting, many people agree that there is a role for local government to play in addressing homelessness, even if they don’t all agree what that role is or the extent to which the services should be provided. And while the apprehension of taxpayers to

have emergency shelters located in or near their communities is understandable, to simply not provide the service due to disagreements about the location does nothing to resolve the lack of emergency shelters. It is far more productive to work together as a community to remedy the concerns causing the objections. Not providing a home for these families based solely on not wanting it in our backyard not only reflects poorly on us as a community, but also does nothing to address the situation of the homeless family in need who will still be homeless and still be in our community.

## **FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, RESPONDENTS**

Penal Code §933 and §933.05 require responses to the Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury Reports within 60 days from applicable elected county official(s) and department heads, and within 90 days from governing bodies. In order to be included and published in the next CCCGJ report, invited responses must be received within 90 days.

After conducting interviews and reviewing documents, CCCGJ's findings and recommendations are as follows:

**F1:** Calaveras Health and Human Services Agency's ability to respond quickly to community needs by applying for grants or securing contracts is negatively impacted by the current \$50,000 limit before requiring Board of Supervisors or State approval.

**R1:** The Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends the Calaveras County Board of Supervisors and Health and Human Services Agency develop methods of improving accessibility for funding above \$50,000 by October 1, 2025.

### **Required Response**

Calaveras County Board of Supervisors  
Calaveras County Health and Human Services Agency

**F2:** Calaveras County does not have a dedicated emergency shelter which greatly limits the County's ability to provide emergency housing for residents in crisis.

**R2a:** The Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends the Board of Supervisors and Calaveras Health and Human Services Agency coordinate with local non-profits and other members of the Housing Resource Partnership to reevaluate the County's need for an emergency homeless shelter by October 1, 2025.

### **Required Response**

Calaveras County Board of Supervisors  
Calaveras County Health and Human Services Agency

**R2b:** The Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends the Board of Supervisors and Calaveras Health and Human Services Agency coordinate with local non-profits and other members of the Housing Resource Partnership for the purpose of developing plans to mitigate

the resident concerns that resulted in the cancelation of the 2019 emergency shelter plan by October 1, 2025.

### **Required Response**

Calaveras County Board of Supervisors  
Calaveras County Health and Human Services Agency

**F3:** With annual budgetary and resource allocations being based on Point-In-Time data collected on a single day of the year, County agencies are not able to accurately plan to accommodate the changes in the homeless population and their needs throughout the year.

**R3:** The Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends the Calaveras County Board of Supervisors, with the assistance of Calaveras Health and Human Services Agency, develop supplemental data collection methods to compile a more accurate real-time count of the homeless population throughout the year by January 1, 2026.

### **Required Response**

Calaveras County Board of Supervisors  
Calaveras County Health and Human Services Agency

## **COMMENDATIONS**

**C1:** The Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury would like to commend the Calaveras County Health and Human Service Agency for their continued efforts in assisting the homeless families with children within our county. Based on the 2024 data released by the Central Sierra Continuum of Care, the number of homeless families with children has decreased since the last Calaveras County 5-year plan to end homelessness released in 2019.

## **DISCLAIMER**

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

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# Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury

Vallecito Conservation Camp #1

## From Incarceration to Integration: Building Bridges to Reentry

June 2, 2025



## SUMMARY

The Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury (CCCGJ) is required by law to inquire into the condition and management of detention centers within the County on an annual basis. There are two adult detention centers, Calaveras Country Adult Detention Facility (CCADF) and Vallecito Conservation Camp #1, located within Calaveras County.

This report summarizes the CCCGJ's inquiry into the Vallecito Conservation Camp #1. The CCCGJ found the Vallecito Conservation Camp #1 was very clean, organized, efficiently run and well maintained. The CCCGJ was left with a positive impression of the camp and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) and CAL FIRE staff. The work being performed by the staff and incarcerated crews is vital to the county and state. The program provides numerous benefits to the community while offering opportunities for inmates to rehabilitate and reintegrate as productive members of the community.

## GLOSSARY

CAL FIRE	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
CCCGJ	Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury
CDCR	California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation
GED	General Equivalency Diploma
MKU	Mobile Kitchen Unit
SCC	Sierra Conservation Center
VTC	Ventura Training Center

## METHODOLOGY

Section 919(b) of the Penal Code mandates that the grand jury inquire into the conditions of any public prison within the county. Sections 919(a), 925 and 925(a) authorize the grand jury to investigate county and city jails and other detention facilities within their jurisdiction. The Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury (CCCGJ) requested and reviewed state and county inspections reports of the Vallecito Conservation Camp #1 from the last two years. CCCGJ also reviewed the established policies and procedures, and logs (e.g., safety cell, grievances, personnel training).

CCCGJ also toured the detention facility and had an opportunity to speak to California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) personnel and inmates and confirm practices were in line with current policies and procedures.

## BACKGROUND

Vallecito Conservation Camp #1, located at 3225 Six Mile Road, Angels Camp, is a minimum-security correctional facility that is operated by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) in collaboration with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE). The camp functions under the administrative oversight of the Sierra Conservation Center (SCC). It is capable of housing approximately 110 inmates.

The camp was established in 1958 with the mission to provide incarcerated individuals with opportunities to engage in fire suppression and flood control activities. CDCR is responsible for the security, supervision and care of the inmates. CAL FIRE maintains the camp and supervises the work performed by the incarcerated fire crews while in their custody. Inmates volunteer to participate in the conservation camp program and must undergo a physical health evaluation to ensure that they are able to carry out their expected duties.

Inmate fire crews were most recently deployed to support the Los Angeles fires. When not fighting fires, incarcerated crew members perform community service projects throughout the County which include:

- Fuel reduction and fire breaks in State and federal parks
- Control burns
- Hazardous tree removal
- Watershed and campground maintenance, including hiking trails
- Brush removal on county roads
- Ground maintenance at county schools, parks and cemeteries

Vallecito Conservation Camp #1 maintains and operates a mobile kitchen unit (MKU) which is dispatched to emergencies and can provide 350 meals to support firefighters on an active fire while prepping additional meals. Additionally, the camp operates a fire hose and repair station, and a chain saw maintenance and repair station for both Tuolumne and Calaveras Counties.

The camp offers rehabilitation and educational opportunities which include a General Equivalency Diploma (GED) and college courses from Columbia College during their non-work hours. Incarcerated fire crews also obtain their initial certification to work on fires, with the opportunity to obtain additional CAL FIRE certifications which make them eligible to apply to become full-service firefighters upon release.

## **DISCUSSION**

The Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury (CCCGJ) found the Vallecito Conservation Camp #1 to be well maintained for the age of the facilities, efficient and functional for its purpose. The staff were professional and interactions with inmates during the tour were respectful.

During the tour, the staff explained their commitment to the California Model which leverages national and international best practices to create a safe and satisfactory workplace environment, rehabilitation for those incarcerated, and improved success of re-entry efforts of decarcerated back into the community. One example discussed was related to an inmate who has been recently referred to the Ventura Training Center (VTC) Enhanced Firefighter Training program, which provides additional rehabilitation and job training skills to qualified inmates who upon successful completion of the program will be eligible to apply for entry-level firefighting jobs with local, state or federal firefighting agencies.

The camp is currently housing 64 inmates, which represents an in-house team and two strike crews consisting of 17 inmates per crew. The in-house team manages the operational activities within the camp, which include the laundry service for all inmates, meal preparations, and grounds maintenance. Additionally, the saw shop is operated by inmates who service and repair fire crew equipment. The camp currently has an inmate with significant small engine repair

experience who has developed a reputation for doing such great work within the Sierra Conservation Center that inmates from other camps will come to train with him and take that knowledge back to their camps. The camp also has a fire hose repair service, which reconditions and/or repairs fire hoses and returns them back to service.

During the off-season or when not supporting active fires, the strike teams work on community service projects such as fuel breaks, hazardous tree removal, campground clean up, trail work and controlled burns within Calaveras Big Trees State Park or Stanislaus National Forest. Residents may have seen crews clearing brush and debris along County roads. Crews may also be hired for lot clearing and fuel reduction on public property and may include grounds and building maintenance at county schools, cemeteries and the county fairgrounds.

Once inmates have completed their work duties, there are opportunities for recreational time or to visit the on-site library. Inmates also support sustainability efforts within the camp by planting an annual garden on-site and produce is then served as part of their meals. Inmates may also use the opportunity to work toward their GED or further their education by taking online courses offered by Columbia College.

## **FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, RESPONDENTS**

Pursuant to Penal Code §933 and §933.05, the Calaveras County Civil 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 CCCGJ report, invited responses must be received within 90 days.

After conducting interviews and reviewing documents, CCCGJ's findings and recommendations are as follows:

**F1:** Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury left with a very positive opinion of the Vallecito Conservation Camp #1. The facility is well run, clean and properly maintained, and is being operated in an efficient manner by dedicated officers and staff.

### **Required Response**

None

## **COMMENDATIONS**

**C1:** Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury commends the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation and CAL FIRE for their compassion, professionalism, and commitment to their jobs as well as to the inmates. The work being performed by the staff and incarcerated crews is vital to the county and state. The program provides numerous benefits to the community while offering opportunities for inmates to rehabilitate and reintegrate as productive members of the community.

## **DISCLAIMER**

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

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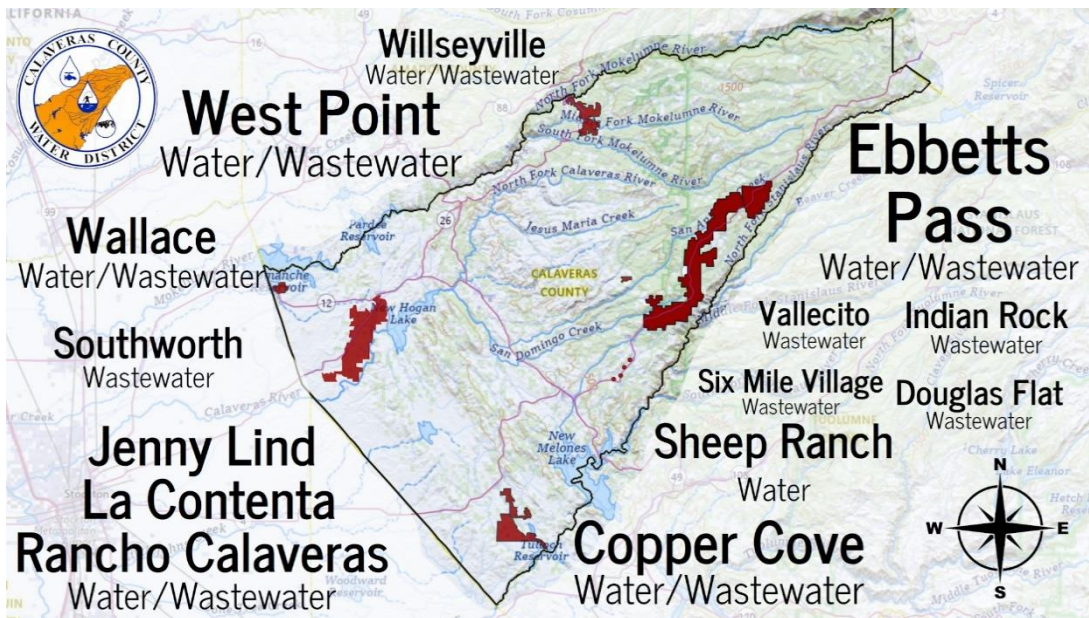
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# Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury

## Calaveras County Water District

### The Cost of Water

June 13, 2025



Graphic from CCWD's website, [www.cwd.org](http://www.cwd.org).

## **SUMMARY**

During 2023-2024, the Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury (CCCGJ) received over 170 written complaints related to the five-year water and wastewater rate increase proposal imposed by the Calaveras County Water District (CCWD). Public outcry focused on the amount of the proposed and subsequently implemented rate increase. Given the public outcry, CCCGJ pursued an investigation into the proposed rate increase. In addition, the 2023-2024 CCCGJ in their report looked into other areas requiring further inquiry, including the CCWD vehicle lease program, enterprise resource planning (ERP) software integration, and workplace culture resulting in high employee turnover. As a result, the 2023-2024 CCCGJ required responses from CCWD. CCWD subsequently provided responses to the findings and recommendations set forth by the 2023-2024 CCCGJ.

In its review of the CCWD responses, the 2024-2025 CCCGJ finds that CCWD responded in a timely manner in accordance with Penal Code §933(c), and with mandated wording requirements set forth in Penal Code §933.05, which also included a summary of implemented actions. CCCGJ is also satisfied that CCWD communicated planned rate changes and conducted public meetings according to the requirements of Proposition 218.

However, CCCGJ believes that although CCWD has taken steps to improve its public outreach efforts, additional improvements could be made. CCCGJ recommends that CCWD continue to evaluate and improve its public outreach efforts. It is recognized that such efforts can take many forms. Factors affecting water rates changes are complex and multifaceted. Significant increases over a short period of time without a clear understanding of those factors by stakeholders and the general public are not favorably received and result in the sort of outcry experienced in 2023.

## **GLOSSARY**

CCCGJ        Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury  
CCWD        Calaveras County Water District

## **METHODOLOGY**

The 2024-2025 Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury (CCCGJ) reviewed the Calaveras County Water District (CCWD)'s Response dated October 3, 2024, to the 2023-2024 report titled "Still Waters Run Deep" dated June 30, 2024. CCCGJ also conducted interviews with relevant CCWD employees, and reviewed online documents from several sources, including documents provided by CCWD.

## **BACKGROUND**

California Penal Code (PC) Section (§) 933(a) requires a civil grand jury to "submit to the presiding judge of the Superior Court a final report of its findings and recommendations that pertain to county public agency matters during the fiscal or calendar year." Governing bodies required to respond to the findings and recommendations must do so within 60 days of the release of a civil grand jury's report. Elected county officers and agency heads if required to respond must do so within 90 days.

Over 170 written complaints related to the five-year water and wastewater rate increase proposal from CCWD were received by the 2023-2024 CCCGJ. The complaints generally centered around the amount of the proposed rate increase, non-compliance with California Proposition 218 (the State-mandated process for special districts seeking a rate increase), and the perception that employee salaries are exorbitant for the water/wastewater utility industry. Complaints were also widespread on social media sites.

Given the extent of the public outcry, the 2023-2024 CCCGJ decided to further pursue an investigation into the water rate increase proposal which was subsequently implemented. The original investigation expanded to include the CCWD vehicle lease program, enterprise resource planning (ERP) software integration, and workplace culture, with particular attention to employee turnover.

The CCCGJ June 30, 2024, report presented seven findings and fourteen recommendations as summarized in Table 1. Also summarized in Table 1 are CCWD’s responses presented in their October 3, 2024, correspondence.

<b>Table 1 Summary of CCCGJ Findings, Recommendations, and CCWD’s Responses</b>			
<b>Finding No.</b>	<b>Findings</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>CCWD Response</b>
<b>CCWD Proposed Five-Year Rate Plan</b>			
Finding No. 1	<u>Finding 1, Pg. 12</u> : The five-year rate increase is disproportionately spread by meter size and usage, which has caused the 5/8" and 3/4" meter customers to bear a greater percentage of the overall rate increase.	<u>R1</u> : Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends that, by December 31, 2024, Calaveras County Water District follow their own policy and recalculate the base and usage rates so that the smaller meter customers are not subsidizing the larger meter customers.	CCWD disagrees with the finding. The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted.
		<u>R1a</u> : Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the Calaveras County Board of Supervisors request that the California State Controller conduct a review of CCWD's internal control system to determine the adequacy of CCWD's controls for conducting its operations, preparing financial reports, safeguarding of assets, and ensuring proper use of public funds. Government Code Section 12422.5 authorizes the State Controller to "audit any local agency for purposes of determining whether the agency's internal controls are adequate to detect and prevent financial errors and fraud."	The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted.  Invited response includes Calaveras County Board of Supervisors; no invited responses provided.
<b>Vehicle Lease Program</b>			
Finding No. 2	<u>Finding 2, Pg. 12</u> : The Lease-To-Own Program has not resulted in the purchase ownership of any vehicles, despite what was stated in Calaveras County Water District's community presentations.	<u>R2</u> : Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends that, by December 31, 2024, Calaveras County Water District publish a correction to the statement made in their community presentations.	CCWD disagrees with the finding.

		<u>R2a</u> : Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the Calaveras County Board of Supervisors request that the California State Controller conduct a review of CCWD's internal control system to determine the adequacy of CCWD's controls for conducting its operations, preparing financial reports, safeguarding of assets, and ensuring proper use of public funds. Government Code Section 12422.5 authorizes the State Controller to "audit any local agency for purposes of determining whether the agency's internal controls are adequate to detect and prevent financial errors and fraud."	See CCWD response to R1a.  Invited response includes Calaveras County Board of Supervisors; no invited responses provided.
Finding No. 3	<u>Finding 3, Pg. 13</u> : Vehicle Lease-To-Own programs are not always the most effective use of funds.	<u>R3</u> : Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the management of Calaveras County Water District, by December 31, 2024, re-evaluate the effectiveness of the Lease To-Own Program by initiating a study that compares the cost of leasing and subsequently returning vehicles, versus the ownership of vehicles throughout a reasonably expected useful lifespan.	The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted.
		<u>R3a</u> : Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the Calaveras County Board of Supervisors request that the California State Controller conduct a review of CCWD's internal control system to determine the adequacy of CCWD's controls for conducting its operations, preparing financial reports, safeguarding of assets, and ensuring proper use of public funds. Government Code Section 12422.5 authorizes the State Controller to "audit any local agency for purposes of determining whether the agency's internal controls are adequate to detect and prevent financial errors and fraud."	See CCWD response to R1a.  Invited responses include CCWD Director of Operations and Calaveras County Board of Supervisors; no invited responses provided.
Finding No. 4	<u>Finding 4, Pg. 13</u> : The practice of assigning district vehicles to management personnel is unnecessary to operations and creates additional expense and liability.	<u>R4</u> : Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends that, by December 31, 2024, all Calaveras County Water District vehicles be used by personnel only within the scope of their job descriptions during business hours with exceptions of after-hours by on-call and emergency response personnel.	CCWD disagrees with the finding.
		<u>R4a</u> : Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the Calaveras County Board of Supervisors request that the California State Controller conduct a review of CCWD's internal control system to determine the adequacy of CCWD's controls for conducting its operations, preparing financial reports, safeguarding of assets, and ensuring proper use of public funds. Government Code Section 12422.5 authorizes the State Controller to "audit any local agency for purposes of determining whether the agency's internal controls are	See CCWD response to R1a.  Invited response includes Calaveras County Board of Supervisors; no invited responses provided.

		adequate to detect and prevent financial errors and fraud."	
<b>Enterprise Resource Planning Software Migration</b>			
Finding No. 5	<u>Finding 5, Pg. 14</u> : The Enterprise Resource Planning software integration issues cause unnecessary inefficiencies in day-to-day operations.	<u>R5</u> : Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends that, by December 31, 2024, Calaveras County Water District contract with an information technology firm that has the expertise to identify and provide an action plan to resolve the current system integration issues.	CCWD disagrees with the finding.
		<u>R5a</u> : Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the Calaveras County Board of Supervisors request that the California State Controller conduct a review of CCWD's internal control system to determine the adequacy of CCWD's controls for conducting its operations, preparing financial reports, safeguarding of assets, and ensuring proper use of public funds. Government Code Section 12422.5 authorizes the State Controller to "audit any local agency for purposes of determining whether the agency's internal controls are adequate to detect and prevent financial errors and fraud."	See CCWD response to R1a.  Invited responses include the CCWD Business Services Manager, CCWD General Manager, and Calaveras County Board of Supervisors; no invited responses provided.
		<u>R5b</u> : Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends that, by December 31, 2024, a process and timeline be created for the migration of other standalone applications at Calaveras County Water District into their Enterprise Resource Planning platform.	The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted.
<b>CCWD Employee Turnover and Workplace Culture</b>			
Finding No. 6	<u>Finding 6, Pg. 15</u> : Given the fear of retaliation, rank and file employees at Calaveras County Water District do not feel they can express their concerns to their superiors.	<u>R6</u> : Calaveras County Grand Jury recommends that, by December 31, 2024, an outside human resource consultant be contracted to address the root of workplace culture issues with all Calaveras County Water District management and employees.	CCWD disagrees with the finding.
Finding No. 7	<u>Finding 7, Pg. 15</u> : Regularly scheduled employee performance reviews are not being completed in a timely or consistent manner, causing a lack of accountability at all levels of the workforce.	<u>R7a</u> : Calaveras County Grand Jury recommends that all employees in a supervisory level position review the District employee performance evaluation policy and comply with that policy by December 31, 2024.	The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented within three months.
		<u>R7b</u> : Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends that, by December 31, 2024, the Calaveras County Water District Human Resources Department document and enforce the execution of regularly scheduled employee performance reviews.	The recommendation has been implemented.

Pursuant to Penal Code §933 and §933.05, CCCGJ 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 CCCGJ final report, required and invited responses must be received within 90 days.

## **DISCUSSION**

CCWD delivered its responses to the 2023-2024 CCCGJ report on October 3, 2024, in accordance with Penal Code §933(c), and with mandated wording requirements pursuant to Penal Code §933.05. Among these responses was a summary of certain actions implemented since issuance of the 2023-2024 CCCGJ report, as well as actions planned to be implemented (see Table 1).

CCWD's full, detailed responses will be published in the 2024-2025 CCCGJ final report.

### **Water Rates Increase**

CCCGJ reviewed the CCWD responses to its 2023-2024 report and pursued further inquiry. An evaluation of current water rates from adjacent counties were reviewed and tabulated in Table 2. Water rates varied as anticipated; however, current rates established by CCWD are not inconsistent with other counties reviewed. Many factors influence changes in rates. Some of the most common factors include aging infrastructure upgrades, technology upgrades, cost of materials, and administrative costs including salaries and operating expenses. Furthermore, the most recent five-year water rate change cycles were adversely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic's disruptions to work schedules and the supply chain.

CCCGJ was satisfied that CCWD communicated planned rate changes and conducted public meetings according to the requirements of Proposition 218. However, CCCGJ was not able to clearly confirm that the rate increase resulted from the increased cost of doing business and/or due to required improvements to aging infrastructure.

CCWD recognizes the importance of public outreach and education. The current form of such efforts is through its department of External Affairs, which according to CCWD's website "strives to provide educational outreach opportunities for partnering agencies, community organizations and community members" as well as "provide educational curriculum for a school." Although the name "External Affairs" does not reflect the importance of public outreach, CCWD has continued to improve upon its efforts which include providing speakers upon request. Relevant to this discussion is the lack of clarity as to how water rates could be increased as dramatically as they were in 2023.

It is recognized that outreach efforts can take many forms. Factors affecting changes to service rates are complex and multifaceted. Imposing large increases over a short period of time without a clear understanding of the contributing factors, and why those increases need to be imposed now rather than in a more gradual way, exemplifies why such rate increases were not favorably received and resulted in the outcry from the public and stakeholders that CCWD experienced.

**Table 2**  
**Select Water Rates for Various Jurisdictions**

<b>Calaveras (CCWD)</b> <b>RATE P/CCU</b> <b>(100 cu ft, 748g)</b> <b>Residential 5/8" Meters</b>		<b>Mariposa PUD</b>		<b>Placer (PCWA)</b>		<b>El Dorado Irrigation District</b>		<b>City of Jackson</b>	
Fixed Bi-Monthly Water Rate	\$152.36	Monthly Meter Rate	\$29.05	Monthly Meter Rate	\$24.70	Monthly Meter Rate	\$77.88	Monthly Meter Rate	\$44.49
Fixed Bi-Monthly Wastewater Rate	\$263.41	Monthly Per Unit Wastewater Base Rate	\$73.58	Monthly Renewal, Replacement Fee	\$22.05	Wastewater Flat Rate	\$66.34	Wastewater Flat Rate	
Consumption Based Water Rates per CCU		Consumption Based Rates (converted from gal) Rate is per 1000 gallons or 1.33 CCU	P/CCU	Consumption Based Water Rates per CCU	P/CCU	Consumption Based Water Rates per CCU	P/CCU	Consumption Based Water Rates per CCU	P/CCU
Tier 1 - up to 15 CCU	\$2.32	Tier 1 - up to 5k gallons / 6.68 CCU	\$2.61	Tier 1 - up to 9 CCU	\$1.97	Tier 1 - up to 18 CCU	\$2.33	Water Rate by CCF	\$4.80
Tier 2 - up to 30 CCU	\$2.52	Tier 2 - 5k to 10k gallons / 13.36 CCU	\$3.12	Tier 2 - next 19 CCU	\$2.37	Tier 2 - to 45 CCU	\$2.80		
Tier 3 0 > 30 CCU	\$2.79	Tier 3 - 10k to 20k gallons / 26.73 CCU	\$3.26	Tier 3 - "over" 28 CCU	\$2.58	Tier 3 - above 45 CCU	\$3.45		
		Tier 4 - > 20k gallons /	\$5.05						

CCU = 100 cubic feet; (standard billing measure)

1 CCU = 748 gallons

1 cubic foot = 7.48 gallons

## **FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, RESPONDENTS**

Pursuant to Penal Code §933 and §933.05, the Calaveras County Civil 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 Civil Grand Jury report, invited responses must be received within 90 days.

After conducting interviews and reviewing documents, CCCGJ's findings and recommendations are as follows:

**F1.** The Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury finds that the Calaveras County Water District responded in a timely manner in accordance with Penal Code §933(c), and with mandated wording requirements pursuant to Penal Code §933.05, which also included a summary of implemented actions.

**R1.** Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends no further action is required regarding the findings and recommendations presented in the 2023-2024 Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury report.

**Required Response**

Calaveras County Water District Board of Directors

**F2.** Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury is satisfied that Calaveras County Water District communicated planned rate changes and conducted public meetings according to the requirements of Proposition 218. However, although Calaveras County Water District has taken steps to improve upon its public outreach efforts, the extent of the public outcry to the recent rate increases demonstrates that improvement to those outreach efforts should be ongoing.

**R2.** Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the Calaveras County Water District continue to evaluate and improve upon its public outreach efforts. Such efforts should be reviewed annually, at minimum, the first annual review being conducted by December 31, 2025.

**Required Response**

Calaveras County Water District Board of Directors

**DISCLAIMER**

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

**REFERENCE SOURCES**

Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury. “Still Waters Run Deep.” June 30, 2024.

<https://grandjury.calaverasgov.us/Reports>.

Calaveras County Water District. “Calaveras County Water District’s Response to Calaveras County 2023-2024 Grand Jury Final Report.” October 3, 2024.

[https://grandjury.calaverasgov.us/Portals/grandjury/Documents/Responses/2024%20-%202025%20Responses/Response%20from%20Calaveras%20Co%20Water%20Dist.pdf?ver=MSnGco\\_LIB4RCFgMdCcfDg%3d%3d](https://grandjury.calaverasgov.us/Portals/grandjury/Documents/Responses/2024%20-%202025%20Responses/Response%20from%20Calaveras%20Co%20Water%20Dist.pdf?ver=MSnGco_LIB4RCFgMdCcfDg%3d%3d).

**RESPONSES TO THE 2023-2024  
CALAVERAS COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY  
REPORTS**

**Included are responses to the following reports:**

**Calaveras County Animal Services Department: Still Scratching the  
Surface**

**Calaveras County Water District: Still Waters Run Deep**

**Ebbett's Pass Veterans Memorial District: The Value of  
Transparency**

**Child Welfare Services in Calaveras County: Striving for Success:  
Doing More With Less**

**The Final Report of the 2023-2024 Civil Grand Jury  
can be read on our website:**

**[grandjury.calaverasgov.us/Reports](https://grandjury.calaverasgov.us/Reports)**



# CALAVERAS COUNTY

## BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

891 Mountain Ranch Road

San Andreas, California 95249

(209) 754-6370

FAX (209) 754-6733

August 27, 2024

The Honorable Timothy S. Healy, Presiding Judge  
Superior Court State of California  
P.O. Box 850  
San Andreas, CA 95249

**RE: Board of Supervisors response to "Calaveras Animal Services Department: Still Scratching the Surface" Grand Jury Report**

Dear Honorable Judge Healy:

In accordance with California Penal Code sections §933 & §933.05, the County of Calaveras Board of Supervisors submits this response to the above referenced Grand Jury report dated June 30, 2024, which was received in the Office of the County Administrator on July 19, 2024. The Board wishes to thank the members of the Grand Jury for their professionalism and dedication to public service, which made this report possible.

**GRAND JURY FINDINGS OF CALAVERAS COUNTY ANIMAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

**Grand Jury Finding F1**

The Animal Services website needs improvements for the public to use as an information resource.

***County Response to Finding F1***

The County disagrees partially with this finding. While the website will benefit from the recommended revisions it still provides a beneficial resource to the public as currently configured.

***Grand Jury Recommendation R1***

Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends that Animal Services update its website with current information and improved user-friendly operations as suggested in the Discussion—Website portion of this report by November 1, 2024.

Gary Tofanelli  
District 1  
286-9002

Jack Garamendi  
District 2  
286-9003

Martin Huberty  
District 3  
286-9007

Amanda Folendorf  
District 4  
286-9050

Benjamin Stopper  
District 5  
286-9059



# CALAVERAS COUNTY

## BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

891 Mountain Ranch Road

San Andreas, California 95249

(209) 754-6370

FAX (209) 754-6733

### **County Response to Recommendation R1**

This recommendation will be implemented. Several recommendations have been implemented including updates to: Lost & Found Pets; Fees & Licensing; Forms Page and weekly updates to the Calaveras County Animal Services Amazon Wish List. The remaining updates including the Codes & Laws Page and Services recommendations are currently being evaluated and will be completed by November 1, 2024.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Garamendi".

John "Jack" Garamendi  
Chair

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be a stylized "A" or similar mark.

RECEIVED

SEP 04 2024

CALAVERAS SUPERIOR COURT

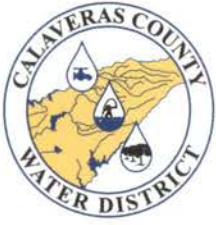
Gary Tofanelli  
District 1  
286-9002

Jack Garamendi  
District 2  
286-9003

Martin Huberty  
District 3  
286-9007

Amanda Folendorf  
District 4  
286-9050

Benjamin Stopper  
District 5  
286-9059



# CALAVERAS COUNTY WATER DISTRICT

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120 Toma Court • San Andreas, CA 95249 • (209) 754-3543

October 3, 2024

Honorable Timothy S. Healy  
Superior Court of California, County of Calaveras  
400 Government Center Drive  
San Andreas, California, 95249-9794

**Re: Calaveras County Water District's Response to Calaveras County  
2023-2024 Grand Jury Final Report**

Dear Judge Healy:

Calaveras County Water District (CCWD or District) wishes to thank the Grand Jury for their commitment to public service and their extensive efforts in the development of the most recent Grand Jury Report.

As required by the Calaveras County 2023-24 Grand Jury Final Report entitled "Still Waters Run Deep," CCWD has reviewed the Report and developed responses to the findings and recommendations. The CCWD Board of Directors discussed the Report and the District's responses in multiple public meetings and has authorized this response. Accordingly, on behalf of the CCWD Board of Directors, CCWD's responses to the Report's findings and recommendations are attached.

Please do not hesitate to call me at (209) 754-3001 if you have any questions or require further clarification.

Sincerely,

CALAVERAS COUNTY WATER DISTRICT

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "M Minkler", is written over a horizontal line.

Michael Minkler  
General Manager

Attachment: CCWD's Responses to Calaveras County's 2023-2024 Grand Jury Report

Copy: Vicki Plaughter, Grand Jury Foreperson

RECEIVED

OCT 07 2024

CALAVERAS SUPERIOR COURT

## Calaveras County Water District Draft Response to 2023/24 Grand Jury Report

**Finding F1, Pg. 12:** The five-year rate increase is disproportionately spread by meter size and usage, which has caused the 5/8" and 3/4" meter customers to bear a greater percentage of the overall rate increase.

**CCWD Response to Finding 1, Pg. 12:** CCWD disagrees with the finding.

CCWD's 2023 rate study did more than identify the need to raise additional revenue. The study also reassessed the cost allocation across different meter sizes, customer classes and the number of tiers for consumptive use charges. As required by Prop 218, the study included a detailed assessment of the cost to serve different sized meters to ensure a fair allocation of costs. The result was an adjustment of the cost allocation among meter sizes and the elimination of one of the tiers for consumptive charges. This was explained in detail in the Cost-of-Service study and in CCWD's public presentations.

The Report's Finding F1 states that the five-year rate increase is disproportionately spread by meter size and usage, which has caused the 5/8" and 3/4" meter customers to bear a greater percentage of the overall rate increase the redistribution of consumptive costs among different meter sizes, but it does not address the basis for those changes. The Report provides no basis for this conclusion other than the fact that increases weren't applied evenly to each meter size, which would have been a violation of Prop 218 because it would not have been based on the actual cost of service.

When allocating costs, the rate study looked at recent and representative water use, such as winter, summer, and peak usage, across all customers classes – residential, non-residential and irrigation. The use of current data is important as water use trends change over time, whether it is due to new customers, reduced water use because of drought or water conservation, change in water efficiency, or improved data detailing consumption trends. The allocations are not arbitrary, nor are they based on past cost of service studies.

The same applies to establishing the five-year cost projections for the District's water and sewer systems, both operating and capital programs. The cost of operating such a complex and geographically diverse system has changed significantly since the last Cost of Service rate study was performed in 2018. Cost drivers such as high inflation, energy, chemicals, aging infrastructure, and increased regulatory burdens were reflected in the five-year budget projections, or revenue requirements, for operations and capital.

After the revenue requirements are determined, those costs are allocated to each customer in proportion to their demand on the system. The revenue requirements are recovered through fixed charges and commodity rates (consumptive) charges, which also have a tiered component.

**Calaveras County Water District Draft Response to 2023/24 Grand Jury Report**

<b>Meter Size</b>	<b>Capacity Ratio</b>	<b>Meters</b>	<b>Account Services</b>	<b>Meter Capacity</b>	<b>FY 2024 Proposed Bi-Monthly Base Fixed Charge</b>
5/8"	1.00	13,231	\$25.69	\$110.34	\$136.03
3/4"	1.50	3	\$25.69	\$165.51	\$191.20
1"	2.50	79	\$25.69	\$275.85	\$301.54
1 1/2"	5.00	23	\$25.69	\$551.70	\$577.39
2"	8.00	21	\$25.69	\$882.72	\$908.41
3"	16.00	2	\$25.69	\$1,765.44	\$1,791.13

The fixed rate component is not determined by a percentage increase over the prior rates and should not be viewed as such. The new rate study includes a comprehensive new analysis of the cost of providing service to each customer class and corresponding account. Therefore, the cost allocations to each customer class are recalibrated based on the current meter and consumption (water usage) data. FY 2024, the first year of the new rate study, includes not only an increase in revenue but also appropriately reflects the updated reallocation of costs to each customer class. This results in a different rate increase by customer class in FY 2024, which is then increased in future years by the corresponding revenue adjustments for each subsequent fiscal year (12%, 13%, 7%, 7%). Trying to make a direct connection to prior rates is not the correct analysis and oversimplifies the work that was done to ensure rates are fairly and proportionately allocated.

CCWD changed the rate structure to ensure that the charges to each class of customer accurately reflected the cost of service. CCWD did not give a “discount” to commercial customers, as the Report alleges, and we cannot arbitrarily decide to charge residential customers less than their fair share of consumptive costs compared to commercial customers, even if that might seem more equitable to some. Prop 218 requires CCWD to evaluate the cost of delivering service and then allocate that cost to the appropriate customers based on actual water use characteristics, which is what we did.

**R1. Recommendation for Finding 1, Pg. 12:** *“Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends that, by December 31, 2024, Calaveras County Water District follow their own policy and recalculate the base and usage rates so that the smaller meter customers are not subsidizing the larger meter customers.”*

**CCWD Response to Recommendation for Finding 1, Pg. 12:** The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted.

The recommendation implies that CCWD did not follow its own policy when it adopted the new rate schedule, but it does not cite any policy that was violated. The Report quotes language from CCWD’s website, which explains that larger meters pay more for greater capacity to ensure customers with smaller meters are subsidizing customers with larger meters. As shown in the table above, larger meters still pay significantly more than smaller meters to account for their share of system capacity and the cost of service. That does not mean, however, that rates will always increase by the same percentage.

## Calaveras County Water District Draft Response to 2023/24 Grand Jury Report

As explained in detail in response to F1, CCWD did a comprehensive study to ensure the cost of service is fairly allocated among the different meter sizes. We did not simply apply a flat increase to each meter size nor did we give a discount to any customer class, which would have been prohibited by Prop 218.

CCWD's decision to change the rate structure and the basis for the differential rate increases are supported by the information in the Cost-of-Service study. As such, CCWD does not see the need to recalculate the base and usage rates, nor change the rates charged to smaller meter customers as they are not subsidizing the larger meter customers.

**Recommendation for Finding 1a, Pg. 12:** *“Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the Calaveras County Board of Supervisors request that the California State Controller conduct a review of CCWD’s internal control system to determine the adequacy of CCWD’s controls for conducting its operations, preparing financial reports, safeguarding of assets, and ensuring proper use of public funds. Government Code Section 12422.5 authorizes the State Controller to “audit any local agency for purposes of determining whether the agency’s internal controls are adequate to detect and prevent financial errors and fraud.”*

**CCWD Response to Recommendation for Finding 1a, Pg. 12:** The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted.

CCWD follows all generally accepted accounting standards and is audited every fiscal year by an outside certified public accounting firm that is well versed in water and wastewater enterprise accounting. The audits are reviewed in public Board meetings every year and are available for public review. Auditors have found nothing to support the Grand Jury recommendation that the Calaveras County Board of Supervisors request that the California State Controller conduct a review of CCWD's internal control system to determine the adequacy of CCWD's controls for conducting its operations, preparing financial reports, safeguarding of assets, and ensuring proper use of public funds. Since CCWD reviews its internal controls every year during its annual audit, we don't see the need to conduct additional review, which would put an undue burden on staff. Nonetheless, CCWD is committed to transparency and would fully cooperate if additional regulatory oversight was required.

**Finding 2, Pg.12:** *The Lease-To-Own Program has not resulted in the purchase ownership of any vehicles, despite what was stated in Calaveras County Water District's community presentations.*

**CCWD Response to Finding 2, Pg. 12:** CCWD disagrees with the finding.

The Enterprise lease-to-own program that CCWD participates in is not a conventional vehicle lease program in that CCWD retains the equity it invests in each vehicle. Some of the key features of the program that are not accurately described in the Report, include:

- There is no requirement to return the vehicle at the end of the lease term.

## Calaveras County Water District Draft Response to 2023/24 Grand Jury Report

- Once the balance of the vehicle is paid, CCWD has some options:
  - Own the vehicle
  - Sell the vehicle and keep the profit
  - Sell the vehicle and roll the profit into paying down other vehicles within the Enterprise Program
- There are no mileage restrictions
- There are no penalties for vehicle condition.
- CCWD and Enterprise meet routinely to determine how the program is working in order to optimize the program to provide the greatest benefit to the District.

In 2019 CCWD implemented the program to leverage Enterprise's considerable automotive industry experience and expertise to identify replacement vehicles for its aged fleet. CCWD vehicles were failing at a rate that exceeded the District's ability to cost effectively purchase replacements. The program leased 10 vehicles in 2019. The lease cost for the 10 vehicles of 83,000 for that particular year allowed the District to provide staff with safe, reliable vehicles. It also provided the opportunity for the District to surplus 10 obsolete vehicles. The example of cost saving improvements referenced in the slide in the grand jury report illustrates the benefit provided by the program in that 10 unreliable, inefficient, and questionably safe District trucks were replaced at an annual cost similar or equal to that of a purchase of one service truck. Considering the additional facts that time and reliability are money, this benefit becomes even more valuable.

Here is a snapshot of the efficacy of the Program in 2022 – The District was able to obtain 19 service trucks and two dump trucks from 2019 to 2022. Prior to that time, CCWD purchased 31 service trucks in the previous 20 years. Only 7 trucks were purchased between 2008 and 2016. As of 2022 CCWD still had 27 trucks 15 years old or older and 6 trucks that were over 20 years old. Current vehicle emissions requirements don't even allow trucks manufactured in 2003 or before to be operated more than 1,000 miles per year in Calaveras County. They can't be operated at all in many Counties in the State. The condition and age of the fleet made it difficult for CCWD to conduct reliable and compliant work for its 6 water and 13 wastewater systems spread throughout the County. Financing vehicles through a lease to own program provided a cost-effective solution.

Vehicle unreliability results in system unreliability. If Staff cannot respond to system issues in a timely manner, water supply reliability and sewer system integrity are reduced. Public health and safety is of utmost importance and a priority to CCWD. Vehicle reliability is a huge component of that. This fact is not just something CCWD recognizes, many water & wastewater Districts utilize the Enterprise Program to improve vehicle reliability. Some examples include Calaveras County, Stanislaus County, Kern County, Yuba County, Yuba City, the Amador Water Agency, the Lower Tule River Irrigation District, and Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District..

Currently, CCWD has 35 leased vehicles in its fleet of over 70. This year the first 10 vehicles leased in 2019 will be owned by CCWD and can be sold back to Enterprise. The proceeds from the sale of these vehicles can be reinvested into the program. This will bring the District close to a fleet comprised of a majority of trucks five years old or newer. CCWD could never have improved its fleet to this extent without this financing solution.

## Calaveras County Water District Draft Response to 2023/24 Grand Jury Report

**R2. Recommendation for Finding 2, Pg. 12:** *“Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends that, by December 31, 2024, Calaveras County Water District publish a correction to the statement made in their community presentations.”*

**CCWD Response to Recommendation 2, Pg. 12:** The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted.

As explained in detail in response to F2, no correction is necessary.

**Finding 3, Pg. 13:** *Vehicle Lease-To-Own programs are not always the most effective use of funds.*

**R3. Recommendation 3, Pg. 13:** *“Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the management of Calaveras County Water District, by December 31, 2024, re-evaluate the effectiveness of the Lease To-Own Program by initiating a study that compares the cost of leasing and subsequently returning vehicles, versus the ownership of vehicles throughout a reasonably expected useful lifespan.”*

**CCWD Response to Recommendation 3, Pg. 13:** The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted.

CCWD routinely reviews the viability of the Enterprise Vehicle Lease Program from (among other aspects such as safety) a cost versus value perspective and routinely provides updates to the Board. The District will continue to do so and adjust as necessary.

**Finding 4, Pg. 13:** *The practice of assigning district vehicles to management personnel is unnecessary to operations and creates additional expense and liability.*

**CCWD Response to Finding 4:** CCWD disagrees with the finding.

District vehicles are an essential tool for CCWD due to the distance between and breadth of CCWD facilities. On-call staff and certain members of the management team are permitted to take vehicles home, but personal use of District vehicles is not allowed.

**R4. Recommendation 4, Pg. 14:** *Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends that, by December 31, 2024, all Calaveras County Water District vehicles be used by personnel only within the scope of their job descriptions during business hours with exceptions of after-hours by on-call and emergency response personnel.*

**CCWD Response to Recommendation 4, Pg. 14:** The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted.

CCWD operates 24/7/365 so the concept of “business hours” is not particularly relevant to the use of District vehicles. CCWD will comply with District policy and ensure that District vehicles are not used improperly.

## Calaveras County Water District Draft Response to 2023/24 Grand Jury Report

**Finding 5, Pg.14:** *The Enterprise Resource Planning software integration issues cause unnecessary inefficiencies in day-to-day operations.*

**CCWD Response to Finding 5, Pg. 14:** CCWD disagrees with the finding.

Implementation of the new ERP system has been difficult and may have resulted in some temporary inefficiencies. The system is also providing new functionality and increased efficiency in other respects. Furthermore, implementation of the remaining modules will be substantially complete by the end of 2024, which will provide the full suite of benefits from the new software. CCWD will also continue to improve the Utility Billing module to address the temporary inefficiencies.

Calaveras County Water District (CCWD) implemented the Tyler Technologies CIS Software, Incode (Utilities Pro) in September 2021. Before selecting a specific platform and subsequent implementation process, an internal committee of CCWD employees was formed to discuss and explore the best option based on the district's operational needs. Alternative options were considered to the existing software since the previous vendor could not offer a viable upgrade that met the District's needs. All employees within the committee were encouraged to actively participate in the selection process and although a couple members of the committee voiced concerns about the Tyler Technologies option, the entire group ultimately decided that Tyler Incode was the best option available to CCWD. CCWD delayed the selection of new software for several months to ensure the committee had time to evaluate options and voice their concerns. During this time, CCWD also reached out to several other water agencies to confirm the applicability of Tyler Incode for CCWD's operations.

Once the District settled on Tyler Incode, the implementation process began. In hindsight, there are several decisions regarding the implementation that CCWD management staff has been transparent in confirming could have been addressed and processed differently, including:

- The implementation of the Utility Billing (UB) module after the successful implementation of the core financial and payroll modules.
- The simultaneous implementation of the UB module and the district's AMI meter implementation.

While there has been significant staff time spent over the past three years to optimize and build processes within the Tyler platform, and much progress has been made to better integrate into the UB module, further modifications will be needed in all areas as the district moves forward with the core financial and payroll implementation. Some progress to note includes:

- The reduction in office staff hours needed to process regular billing each month (from approx. 20-40 hours to 5-10 hours).

## Calaveras County Water District Draft Response to 2023/24 Grand Jury Report

- Implementation of the next phase, which includes core financials, payroll, and personnel management is on track for substantial completion by the end of 2024.

CCWD staff is engaged with a team from Tyler to implement the core financials and payroll/HR modules, and a detailed timeline for the implementation was presented at the CCWD Finance Committee meeting on August 20, 2024. Furthermore, CCWD is working with an outside consultant to participate in the implementation and assist in optimizing the UB module. Currently, CCWD anticipates successful transition and full integration into the Tyler ERP system by the end of December 2024 with only minor ancillary modules needing roll out within January & February 2025.

Once implementation is complete, and the new AMI system is fully integrated and optimized, CCWD staff will have access to all the benefits that the new, modern ERP system will provide.

**R5. Recommendation 5 Pg. 14:** *Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends that, by December 31, 2024, Calaveras County Water District contract with an information technology firm that has the expertise to identify and provide an action plan to resolve the current system integration issues.*

**CCWD Response to Recommendation 5, Pg. 14:** The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted.

In March 2024, CCWD contracted with a consulting firm, Eide Bailly, that is skilled in finance and ERP software implementations. Eide Bailly will continue to assist and advise CCWD as the District moves forward with resolving any existing Utility Billing integration issues, in addition to implementing the Core Financials and Personnel modules within this calendar year.

**Recommendation 5b, Pg. 15:** *Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends that, by December 31, 2024, a process and timeline be created for the migration of other standalone applications at Calaveras County Water District into their Enterprise Resource Planning platform.*

**CCWD Response to Recommendation 5b Pg. 14:** The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted.

A timeline has already been established between CCWD and Tyler Technologies for the implementation of the Core Financials and Personnel Management modules. Current solutions, Springbrook (Finance) and ADP (Payroll/Personnel), will be phased out. Migrating Finance and Human Resources to Tyler will integrate all financial processes, payroll processes, personnel management and time management, and utility billing and utility customer management into one system. The established timeline for the completion of the ERP conversion is slated for the end of December 2024, with smaller ancillary modules requiring roll out within the first several months of 2025.

## Calaveras County Water District Draft Response to 2023/24 Grand Jury Report

**Finding 6, Pg.15:** *Given the fear of retaliation, rank and file employees at Calaveras County Water District do not feel they can express their concerns to their superiors.*

**CCWD Response to Finding 6:** CCWD disagrees with the finding.

The Report makes serious allegations regarding workplace culture and a widespread fear of retaliation that are unsubstantiated and inconsistent with CCWD's own findings. CCWD has indeed experienced a high rate of employee turnover, but the data gathered from departing employees do not support the Report's accusations that the rate of turnover is related to a negative workplace culture. Nonetheless, CCWD has discussed the issue of retaliation with staff since the Report was issued to make sure all staff know that CCWD encourages, and even depends on, input from all levels of the organization and that retaliation for raising concerns will not be tolerated. Employees are made aware that they have multiple avenues to report concerns or misconduct and that State law and District policy will protect them from retaliation.

The Reports findings appear to be based on a small sample of input that is not representative of the workplace culture at CCWD. It is unfortunate that these unsubstantiated accusations were included in a public report as it has the potential to undermine CCWD's reputation in the community and could frustrate CCWD's efforts to recruit the highly-skilled workers it needs to provide safe and reliable services to communities throughout Calaveras County. CCWD prides itself on being one of the best places to work in our region and we are extremely proud of our dedicated employees.

**R6. Recommendation 6 Pg. 15:** *Calaveras County Grand Jury recommends that, by December 31, 2024, an outside human resource consultant be contracted to address the root of workplace culture issues with all Calaveras County Water District management and employees.*

**R6. CCWD Response to Recommendation 6 Pg. 15:** The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented within six months.

CCWD asks a lot of its employees. At the same time, we want them to work in a safe and positive workplace free from the fear of retaliation. While CCWD disagrees with Finding 6, we take allegations of retaliation seriously and we acknowledge there is always room for improvement when it comes to workplace culture. Accordingly, CCWD is acting on this recommendation and is currently evaluating quotes from HR consultants specializing in organizational development.

**Finding 7, Pg. 15:** *Regularly scheduled employee performance reviews are not being completed in a timely or consistent manner, causing a lack of accountability at all levels of the workforce.*

**R7a. Recommendation 7a Pg. 15:** *Calaveras County Grand Jury recommends that all employees in a supervisory level position review the District employee performance evaluation policy and comply with that policy by December 31, 2024.*

## Calaveras County Water District Draft Response to 2023/24 Grand Jury Report

**CCWD Response to Recommendation 7a Pg. 15:** The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented within three months.

CCWD will remind supervisory employees of policies related to performance evaluations, as recommended. The District recognizes the importance and need for Employee Performance Reviews. As CCWD embarks on training and coaching efforts as the result of HR consulting efforts described in Finding 6, the importance of conducting timely performance reviews will be discussed. CCWD management also acknowledge that annual employee evaluations are not the only or the most effective method to provide feedback to employees. CCWD must ensure employees receive the feedback they need for their professional development while recognizing that feedback and accountability should not be reduced to an annual evaluation.

**R7b. Recommendation 7b Pg. 16:** *Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends that, by December 31, 2024, the Calaveras County Water District Human Resources Department document and enforce the execution of regularly scheduled employee performance reviews.*

**CCWD Response to Recommendation 7b Pg. 15:** The recommendation has been implemented.

The tracking of performance evaluation due dates is already done by the District's Human Resources Department. However, the District will work with Supervisors and Managers to ensure the timely completion of performance reviews.

Revised  
CD

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OCT 07 2024

CALAVERAS SUPERIOR COURT

Ebbetts Pass Veterans Memorial District  
P.O. Box 175  
Murphys, CA 95247

August 6, 2024

Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury  
P.O. Box 1414  
San Andreas, CA 95249

To Whom It May Concern,

This letter is in response to the report issued by the Civil Grand Jury on June 30, 2024. The Civil Grand Jury made four recommendations: (1) that current Board members receive training in the Brown Act, (2) that future Board members receive training in the Brown Act, (3) that the District deploy a new website by January 1, 2025, and (4) that the District create a, "standard means for the public to submit agenda items." Each of the recommendations is addressed below.

- (1) The District will request that the Office of the County Counsel provide Brown Act training to current Board members as soon as practical.
- (2) The District will recommend to future Board members that they receive training regarding the Brown Act.
- (3) The District launched an ADA compliant website in July 2024:  
[www.ebbettspassvetsdistrict.com](http://www.ebbettspassvetsdistrict.com).
- (4) The District's new website includes contact information, such as mailing and email addresses that the public can use to suggest items that can be included on a future meeting agenda. The District notes that the District's previous website also included contact information that the public could use to suggest items for inclusion on a future meeting agenda. The District, therefore, is puzzled by the Civil Grand Jury's fourth recommendation, which does not appear to take into account the contact information provided by the District on its old website.

Sincerely,

Don Padou  
Chairman, Ebbetts Pass Veterans Memorial District



# CALAVERAS COUNTY

## BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

891 Mountain Ranch Road

San Andreas, California 95249

(209) 754-6370

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August 27, 2024

The Honorable Timothy S. Healy, Presiding Judge  
Superior Court State of California  
P.O. Box 850  
San Andreas, CA 95249

**RE: Board of Supervisors response to "Child Welfare Services in Calaveras County/Striving for Success: Doing More with Less" Grand Jury Report**

Dear Honorable Judge Healy:

In accordance with California Penal Code sections §933 & §933.05, the County of Calaveras Board of Supervisors submits this response to the above referenced Grand Jury report dated June 30, 2024, which was received in the Office of the County Administrator on July 19, 2024. The Board wishes to thank the members of the Grand Jury for their professionalism and dedication to public service, which made this report possible.

### **GRAND JURY FINDINGS OF CALAVERAS COUNTY CHILD WELFARE SERVICES**

#### **Grand Jury Finding F1**

The current level of staffing at Child Welfare Services risks decreasing the department's ability to properly meet the needs of our community due to employee burnout and turnover.

#### ***County Response to Finding F1***

The County disagrees wholly with this finding. Child Welfare staff are within the optimal range of workload assignment according to the Child Welfare Services Workload Study completed as a result of SB 2030. Optimal caseload assignments based on this study are Emergency Response Investigation – 9.88, Family Maintenance – 10.15, Family Reunification – 11.94, Permanent Placement – 16.42.

The average caseload for a social worker holding a combination of Family Maintenance, Family Reunification and Permanent Placement cases in Calaveras County is 12.

The average monthly investigations assigned to an Emergency Response social worker is 8.

The staffing level is adequate to meet the needs of our community and there is an increased focus on training and support for social workers to manage secondary traumatic stress and burnout.

Reference: <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/cdssweb/res/cws/sb2030final/pdf/section5.pdf> (pages 15, 23, 28 and 35)

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Martin Huberty  
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# CALAVERAS COUNTY

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### ***Grand Jury Recommendation R1a***

Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends that, by December 31, 2024, a task force be established by Calaveras County Health and Human Service Agency, with representatives from Child Welfare Service, and Calaveras County Economic and Community Development Department to create a campaign to attract and recruit qualified candidates for Social Work positions in Calaveras County.

### ***County Response to Recommendation R1a***

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. The workforce crisis in Child Welfare is a statewide problem. Many counties face significant vacancy rates and are actively recruiting social workers with very little traction. Schools of Social Work within the state's University Systems, which is a large pipeline into County Child Welfare employment, have reported declining enrollment in their Title IV-E Stipend programs for Child Welfare focused social work, which has restricted the number of qualified candidates applying for open positions.

The current active recruitments for social worker positions are specialized, non-case carrying positions.

### ***Grand Jury Recommendation R1b***

Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends the resulting Health and Human Services task force implement the campaign by March 31, 2025.

### ***County Response to Recommendation R1b***

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. A task force is unlikely to affect County recruiting efforts because the workforce crisis in Child Welfare is a statewide problem. Many counties face significant vacancy rates and are actively recruiting social workers with very little traction. Schools of Social Work within the state's University Systems, which is a large pipeline into County Child Welfare employment, have reported declining enrollment in their Title IV-E Stipend programs for Child Welfare focused social work, which has restricted the number of qualified candidates applying for open positions.

### ***Grand Jury Finding F2***

Operating under the current county contract procedure can sometimes delay or prevent the ability to provide prompt access to health providers, which can be detrimental to clients in need of services.

### ***County Response to Finding F2***

The County disagrees wholly with this finding. The County follows contract processes that are legally required.

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### ***Grand Jury Recommendation R2***

Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends that Calaveras County Health and Human Services create standardized contracts with language previously approved and then tailored to the requirements of each individual division of Health and Human Services Agency by March 31, 2025.

### ***County Response to Recommendation R2***

This recommendation has been implemented. Contract templates have been in use for many years. The templates are regularly updated to ensure regulatory compliance.

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### ***Grand Jury Finding F3***

A shortage of pre-approved service providers can delay access to much-needed services for clients.

### ***County Response to Finding F3***

The County agrees with this finding.

### ***Grand Jury Recommendation R3a***

Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends that, by December 31, 2024, HHSA establish a process of prequalifying and pre-approving anticipated health care providers prior to an immediate need.

### ***County Response to Recommendation R3a***

This recommendation has been implemented. There is a process in place through which Child Welfare Services can access immediate need services in crisis situations, pending the finalization of contracts with service providers. Child Welfare Services has active contracts in place with pre-approved providers and consistently conducts outreach activities to pre-approve providers in anticipation of the needs of the community.

### ***Grand Jury Recommendation R3b***

Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends that, by December 31, 2024, HHSA streamline the process of renewing contracts with established service providers prior to contract expiration dates.

### ***County Response to Recommendation R3b***

This recommendation has been implemented. There is a current process in place to streamline the process of renewing contracts with established services providers. This process has been further streamlined in recent months and is expected to have a positive impact on timely renewal of contracts.

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# CALAVERAS COUNTY

## BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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### **Grand Jury Finding F4**

Child Welfare Services and Calaveras County Sheriff's Office have different understandings of what security is needed for social workers in the field during volatile or hazardous calls.

### **County Response to Finding F4**

The County disagrees with this finding. Currently, the Sheriff's Office is responsive to all requests for assistance received from Child Welfare Services. When a request for assistance or standby is received, the Sheriff's Office follows its existing protocol and policy for assessing the situation and gauging its response. Child Welfare and Calaveras County Sheriff's Office communicate frequently and effectively and a positive and professional relationship exists and is maintained between them.

### **Grand Jury Recommendation R4**

Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury recommends that, by December 31, 2024, representatives from Calaveras County Health and Human Services Agency, Child Welfare Services, and Calaveras County Sheriff's Office meet to establish a mutual understanding regarding these anticipated situations and meet quarterly thereafter.

### **County Response to Recommendation R4**

This recommendation will be implemented. The Calaveras County Sheriff's Office will coordinate a meeting with members of Calaveras County Health and Human Services and Child Welfare Services in the third or fourth quarter of 2024. Additionally, the Sheriff's Office will formalize communication, which it already has with Health and Human Services and Child Welfare Services, and transition to quarterly meetings between appropriate staff

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Jack Garamendi in black ink.

Jack Garamendi  
Chair

Handwritten signature of Gary Tofanelli in black ink on a yellow sticky note.

Gary Tofanelli

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SEP 12 2024

CALAVERAS SUPERIOR COURT

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**Office of the Sheriff**

1045 Jeff Tuttle Drive  
San Andreas, CA 95249



Rick DiBasilio, Sheriff

209.754.6500  
sheriff@co.calaveras.ca.us

**DATE:** July 29, 2024

**TO:** Honorable Timothy S. Healey, Presiding Superior Court Judge

**FROM:** Rick DiBasilio, Sheriff

**SUBJECT:** Response to 2023-24 Grand Jury Report on the Sheriff's Office Complaint Process

**Cc:** Board of Supervisors

The 2023-2024 Grand Jury Report was reviewed by The Calaveras County Sheriff's Office and staff members. The Grand Jury's investigation into the Child Welfare Services Division of the Calaveras County Health and Human Services outlines four findings. Of these four findings, one of these findings (F4) required a response from the Calaveras County Sheriff's Office.

**Finding 4:**

***Child Welfare Services and Calaveras County Sheriff's Office have different understandings of what security is needed for social workers in the field during volatile or hazardous calls.***

**Recommendation:**

***Calaveras County Grand Jury recommends that, by December 31, 2024, representatives from the Calaveras County Health and Human Services Agency, Child Welfare Services, and the Calaveras County Sheriff's Office meet to establish a mutual understanding regarding these anticipated situations and meet quarterly thereafter.***

**Sheriff's Office Response:**

The Sheriff's Office, in full respect for the Grand Jury's findings, does not agree or disagree with this particular finding. Currently, the Sheriff's Office is responsive to all requests for assistance received from Child Welfare Services. The Sheriff's Office does not assume that it is made aware of all investigations that are conducted by Child Welfare Services; however, when a request for assistance or standby is received, the Sheriff's Office follows its existing protocol and policy for assessing the situation and gauging its response.

The Sheriff's Office is continuing its commitment to the youngest and most vulnerable members of the Calaveras County Community by continuing to have specially trained members of its sworn staff who have duties specifically related to investigating crimes against children and children who are existing in a drug endangered environment.

These staff and other members of the Calaveras County Sheriff's Office communicate frequently and effectively with staff from Child Welfare Services. A positive and professional relationship exists and is maintained between them.

The Calaveras County Sheriff's Office will coordinate a meeting with members of Calaveras County Health and Human Services and Child Welfare Services in the third or fourth quarter of 2024. Additionally, the Sheriff's Office will formalize communication, which it already has with Health and Human Services and Child Welfare Services, and transition to quarterly meetings between appropriate staff.

The Calaveras County Sheriff's Office thanks the Grand Jury for its diligent work regarding the shared responsibility of advocating for and protecting the next generation of Calaveras County.

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Real & Cordell

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CALAVERAS SUPERIOR COURT