

# Department of Public Works

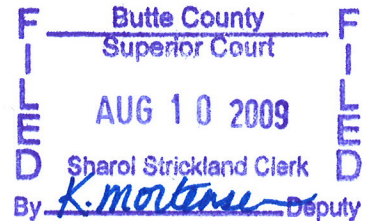
County of Butte

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August 5, 2009

Hon. James F. Reilley, Presiding Judge  
c/o Court Administration  
Superior Court of California, County of Butte  
One Court Street  
Oroville, CA 95965



## Re: Grand Jury Response

Dear Honorable Judge Reilley:

Below please find my response to the 2009 Grand Jury Report.

*Finding 1 – The draft General Plan 2030 does not adequately address all fire and safety issues in the foothill areas of Butte County.*

The respondent neither agrees nor disagrees with this finding as it falls outside the scope of responsibility of this department.

*Finding 2 – At present, there is only one major evacuation route south from the Upper Ridge and no viable routes north. There is a need for an additional evacuation route from Magalia and Paradise. The upgrade of Forest Road 171, classified as a recreational access road, is not fully funded, and even after completion, will not be sufficient as an evacuation route.*

The respondent partially disagrees with the finding. The respondent agrees that there is only one major evacuation route south from the Upper Ridge and no existing viable routes north. However, it is premature to assume that Forest Road 171 will not be sufficient as a viable evacuation route in the future. The County is actively seeking funding to complete the upgrade of Forest Road 171 and make it a viable evacuation road.

*Finding 3 – Skyway from Paradise to Chico could be upgraded and used in specific situations as an evacuation route.*

The respondent disagrees with this finding. Skyway between Paradise and Chico is a high volume divided 4-lane highway that can be used as an evacuation route in most cases.

*Finding 4 – With the exception of Skyway, evacuation routes do not have adequate shoulders for temporarily parking disabled vehicles.*

The respondent disagrees with the finding. Clark Road is also a viable evacuation route and does have several turnouts for disabled vehicles. However, the terrain along Clark Road does not allow for adequate shoulders for the entire length of Clark Road.

*Finding 5 – An Emergency Evacuation Plan has been developed for the Upper Ridge (Magalia and Paradise Pines) only.*

The respondent disagrees with this finding. The Town of Paradise has developed an Emergency Evacuation Plan. Additionally, fire safe councils within Butte County have developed and continue to refine evacuation plans for many communities in Butte County.

*Finding 6 – The development of new housing in fire-prone areas of the foothills is ongoing.*

The respondent neither agrees nor disagrees with this finding as it is outside the scope of responsibility of this department.

*Finding 7 – Butte County does not have a County Fire Code Ordinance specific to Butte County conditions.*

The respondent neither agrees nor disagrees with this finding as it is outside the scope of responsibility of this department.

*Finding 8 – During the recent wildfires, information on the County Emergency Broadcast System was often several hours old. Therefore, it did not provide timely information about the evacuation and fire status locations.*

The respondent neither agrees nor disagrees with this finding as it is outside the scope of responsibility of this department.

*Finding 9 – Adequate funding is not in place for foothill evacuation routes. There is currently a movement toward development of a Benefit Assessment District to include the areas of Paradise, the Upper Ridge, Concow and Centerville.*

The respondent agrees with the finding that adequate funding is not in place for foothill evacuation routes. The respondent is unable to comment on the Benefit Assessment District as it is outside the scope of responsibility of this department.

*Finding 10 – Fire safety information, about emergency evacuation routes and fire preparedness, is not reaching the public for whom it was intended.*

The respondent neither agrees nor disagrees with this finding as it is outside the scope of responsibility of this department.

### **Recommendations**

*Recommendation 1 – BCGP2030 needs to address emergency evacuation routes and fire preparedness for the foothill areas of Butte County.*

The respondent is unable to comment on this recommendation. The respondent does not have the authority to implement the recommendation.

*Recommendation 2 – Review the limitations of Forest Road 171 such as traffic speeds, volume of cars, and fire prone area and consider other feasible evacuation routes. Additional roads for evacuation of the Upper Ridge, such as Doe Mill Road, should be investigated.*

This recommendation has been implemented. Public Works worked with BCAG on reviewing the proposed FH 171 route and improvements. In addition, BCAG completed a study in 1994 entitled, Feasibility Study of State Route 191 Extension in Butte County, which evaluated alternate emergency routes from the upper ridge, including Doe Mill–Garland route. The study determined that the Doe Mill–Garland Road route if developed to standards would provide improved emergency access to the Upper Ridge.

The 1994 study provided cost estimates to improve the Doe Mill–Garland Road Route that ranged from \$3.9 to \$4.5 million to re-grade the route only (which would maintain the road as gravel), and replace the bridge on the Forks of Butte Creek up to \$28–\$87 million to fully reconstruct the route as a paved road and replace the bridge. This top range included several bridge replacement alternatives ranging from \$9.7 to 45 million.

*Recommendation 3 – Consider immediate modification of Skyway, from Paradise to Chico, as an emergency evacuation route, by removing trees and brush and creating fire barriers on both sides of the road.*

The recommendation has been partially implemented. The County removed many of the dead and dying trees and brush within the Skyway right of way after the summer 2008 fires. Sheriff work crews are also used to clear brush from County road rights of ways.

*Recommendation 4 – BCGP2030 should address how to handle disabled vehicles on emergency evacuation routes and the use of both traffic lanes for evacuation.*

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not reasonable for BCGP2030 to address how to handle disabled vehicles or emergency evacuation routes and/or use both traffic lanes for evacuation.

*Recommendation 5 – Address the needs for creation of Emergency Evacuation Plans for all high-risk fire areas in the Butte County foothills.*

The respondent is unable to comment on this recommendation. The respondent does not have the authority to implement the recommendation; however, Public Works will support the establishment of Emergency Evacuation Plans for any high risk fire area.

*Recommendation 6 – Put a moratorium on all multi-home development in fire prone areas until all fire safety, traffic, and emergency water supply issues are resolved.*

The respondent is unable to comment on this recommendation. The respondent does not have the authority to implement this recommendation.

*Recommendation 7 – The Butte County Board of Supervisors should request and implement a County Fire Code Ordinance specifically designed for the Butte County foothill’s environment.*

The respondent is unable to comment on this recommendation. The respondent does not have the authority to implement this recommendation.

*Recommendation 8 – In cases of emergency, the County Emergency Broadcast System should update information frequently, with specific, current information about evacuation recommendations, location and status of the emergency, and the forecast of future actions.*

The respondent is unable to comment on this recommendation. The respondent does not have the authority to implement this recommendation.

*Recommendation 9 – The Board of Supervisors should encourage the formation of a Benefit Assessment District on the Ridge.*

The respondent is unable to comment on this recommendation. The respondent does not have the authority to implement this recommendation.

*Recommendation 10 – Consider inserting, in the local phone directory or property assessments, information about emergency travel routes and public assembly points, as shown in Appendix C.*

The respondent is unable to comment on this recommendation. The respondent does not have the authority to implement this recommendation.

Sincerely,



Mike Crump  
Director of Public Works

MC:jg

cc: Butte County Board of Supervisors