

FILED

MAY 20 2019

Superior Court of California
County of Tuolumne

By: Diana Neely Clerk



2018-2019 Tuolumne County Civil Grand Jury



Photo Credit: Courtney Rodes

SIERRA CONSERVATION CENTER AND BASELINE CONSERVATION CAMP REPORT

SIERRA CONSERVATION CENTER AND BASELINE CONSERVATION CAMP

SUMMARY

Sierra Conservation Center (SCC) and Baseline Conservation Camp (BCC) are two State prison facilities located near Jamestown. The SCC A and B facilities are showing considerable age, since the original buildings were constructed in 1965. A third, C building, was constructed in 1987. Administrative and other staff exhibited dedication and professionalism. All staff agreed to sign Admonishment forms if requested. Administration also has some charity programs in effect.

GLOSSARY

AA	Associate of Arts
AB 109	Assembly Bill 109, which transfers the responsibility of some felony prisoners from State prisons to county jails
BCC	Baseline Conservation Camp
BOR	Bureau of Reclamation
CDCR	California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation
CDPH	California Department of Public Health
EHSR	Environmental Health Survey Report
GED	General Education Development
MAC	Men's Advisory Council
PUPP	Prisoners Uniting People and Puppies
RAC	Rehabilitative Achievement Credit
SCC	Sierra Conservation Center

BACKGROUND

California Penal Code (919)b states that the Grand Jury in each county shall inquire into the condition and management of the public prisons every year. Just prior to the Grand Jury visit the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) did their bi-annual Environmental Health Survey Report (EHSR), August 20-24. Their findings were published October 22, 2018, and SCC was already in the process of addressing any deficiencies. In lieu of this report, the Grand Jury opted not to consider this visit an investigation, but rather simply a required visit as per California Penal Code (919)b.

METHODOLOGY

On November 6, 2018, the Grand Jury conducted a five hour tour of Sierra Conservation Center (SCC) with the Administrative Assistant staff. On arrival the Grand Jury was met by most department managers. The staff wanted to be sure they would be able to answer any questions. Following the meeting the jury was able to tour the recreation area, food services, medical and dental facilities, the religious facility, academic and vocational areas, and living accommodations. SCC also has American Indian yards for any Native American cultural activities.

DISCUSSION

During the tour we were able to speak with a member of the Men's Advisory Council (MAC), a spokesman for the inmates. We were also able to speak with some inmates who were in the intake process. This process includes issuance of a picture ID, a handbook of rules and regulations, clothing, bedding, dormitory assignments and an initial inmate file review. Inmates requiring medical, dental, or mental health services are referred to the appropriate clinics. Several of these inmates told us they were interested in educational and vocational training so they could leave prison with useful skills.

The Grand Jury visited all three buildings. There are approximately 2,500 inmates housed in these facilities with a capacity to house 3,433. Building A (Level I) houses the lowest security risks. Building B (Level II) houses moderate security risks. Building C (Level III) houses the highest security risks. Each dorm in Facility A and B has the capacity to house 32 inmates, however most dorms have about 20. Facility A has the possibility to house 1,215, Facility B has the possibility to house 1,219. Facility C has the capacity to house 999. Facility C is cell living and each cell has the capacity to house two inmates. Outside time for inmates in Facilities A and B is spent in a communal courtyard. There is no perimeter fencing around these two buildings. Inmates in Building C may be serving life sentences, may have mental health issues, or may be dangerous to themselves or others. Outside time for these inmates is in single person increments in a secure yard. Inside Facility C there are armed guards in a control booth watching over inmates who are in a common room. There are over 900 staff and personnel, including health care, correctional officers and office staff.

Inmates from Building A and a few from Building B can be eligible to apply for BCC. They have a two week training period to see if they will qualify.

Summer heat, mold and holes in the wall are continuing problems. Holes in the walls are often put there by inmates for varying reasons. Roofing is in a constant state of being replaced. Budgetary restraints keep it a revolving problem. Although there are continuing complaints from inmates about the inside temperature during the summer, it would be a \$27 million project to install air conditioning. Currently, inmates are evaluated as to whether they would be susceptible to extreme heat and those inmates are placed in the coolest part of the buildings. A few of last year's Grand Jury recommendations still have not been addressed. Some of these issues are because of funding limitations. Any repairs over \$5,000 need to be approved by Sacramento as a capital expenditure.

Meals for SCC are prepared by the inmates at SCC. They prepare and serve a hot meal for breakfast and dinner and a bag lunch. All meals meet State calorie and nutritional requirements. These meals also cater to medical dietary restrictions and special religious requirements. Building A and Building B share a common dining area and receive their meals at different times. Building C has its own dining area. Inmates who are in Administrative Segregation receive their meals in their cells. One current

issue with the kitchen that the EHSR reported, was the safety guard missing on one of the old mixers. This is currently being addressed.

SCC has a very well equipped on-site medical/dental facility. Maximum capacity is ten inmates. Inmates are sent here for assessments, treatments and emergencies. They are then transported to the local hospital if the need should arise.

Inmates are also responsible for the laundry and yard maintenance at SCC. This is a very essential operation for SCC.

Part of the SCC visit included the educational facility. This is a very essential part of trying to rehabilitate inmates before being released. Prop 57 has enabled inmates to receive credits for time off their sentences by participating in rehabilitative and educational programs. They will then be assessed as to their criminal history, institutional behavior and rehabilitative efforts. The Rehabilitative Achievement Credit (RAC) program is one of these programs. They have a very well equipped library. Inmates have access to fiction, non-fiction and law books. They also have computers at their disposal with limited internet access. GED, AA and Bachelor's Degrees can be obtained at SCC. Substance abuse and anger management are other courses available and can even be made mandatory per sentencing conditions.

Another aspect of education is the technical educational programs available. SCC offers welding, automotive, auto body, masonry and carpentry programs. Currently some of these programs are unavailable due to teachers resignations, but SCC is actively seeking new instructors.

Another program is the Wastewater Treatment Plant. This program is operated by licensed professionals. This is a high demand job if an inmate can complete the program. SCC has had an inmate complete this program and find a well paying job when he was released back into society.

Textile manufacturing is a huge program at SCC. For example, uniforms for CalTrans and CAL FIRE, are manufactured in this facility. This program provides a work opportunity for inmates, and also generates over \$3 million dollars of revenue for SCC.

One other relatively new program is the Prisoners Uniting People and Puppies (PUPP) program. This is a twelve week dog training program in Building C. Inmates who are serving at least a one year sentence are

eligible to apply for the program. There are eight dogs in training at one time. The dogs actually live with inmates in their cells. This program has been working well, as it is giving the inmates an opportunity to be responsible, and do something constructive. This program is therapeutic for these inmates; some haven't touched a dog in several years. These dogs are trained to detect contraband and are also used at BCC for searches.

BASELINE CONSERVATION CAMP

On December 4, 2018 the Grand Jury conducted a two hour tour of BCC with the Camp Commander. While BCC is a separate entity from SCC, and on Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) property, inmates at this facility are selected from low risk inmates at SCC who have at least six months left on their sentences. If they qualify, they are moved to BCC to train to fight wildfires. This saves the community about \$11 million a year. Because of AB109, the inmate population is currently down. A lot of low risk inmates are being detained at the Tuolumne County Jail instead of being sent to SCC.

BCC is comprised of six housing units, five of which contain up to twenty inmates who assist CAL FIRE, fighting fires. Each of these units has two inmates, called Swampers, who are responsible for getting the team together when they are called out onto a fire. The sixth unit contains inmates that may be having health or other issues. These inmates are responsible for maintenance of the Baseline Camp. This would include making meals, doing laundry, and yard work. The fire fighting inmates are paid \$1/hr to fight fires during summer months. In the off season they clear and make fire breaks to keep fire risk to a minimum. While working on a fire, the inmates are supervised by CAL FIRE. While at BCC they are supervised by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) personnel.

Security at BCC is somewhat relaxed. There are however, random drug testing and disciplinary consequences for bad behavior. If the bad behavior continues, they can be sent back to SCC. The inmates have their own barber shop and are allowed scissors to cut hair. They also have a wood shop with various tools. All tools need to be accounted for after use

though. One issue at the wood shop was that there was no first aid and the shop had not been cleaned up.

Meals at BCC, and while they are on fires, are very good. BCC receives \$3/day from their own budget and also \$3/day from CAL FIRE to feed inmates. This allows for very good, high calorie meals that the inmates require while fighting fires. The Grand Jury was asked to join them for lunch and were quite impressed.

PROGRAMS

Being at BCC is a great opportunity for these inmates. They have an opportunity to get an education and learn a trade to be able to transition back into society while performing a great service for the community. One former inmate is now a Captain for CAL FIRE. This is a win/win situation for everyone.

FINDINGS

F1 No first aid kit at wood shop.

RECOMMENDATIONS

R1 Install a first aid kit in wood shop area.

REQUEST FOR RESPONSES

According to California Penal Code §933(c), no later than 90 days after the grand jury submits a final report on the operations of any public agency subject to the reviewing authority, the governing body of the public agency shall comment to the presiding judge of the superior court on the findings and recommendations pertaining to matters under the control of the governing body and every elected county office or agency head for which the grand jury has jurisdiction pursuant to §914 shall comment within 60 days to the presiding judge of the superior court.

The BCC Commander is requested to respond to: R1

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Prop 57: <https://cdcr.ca.gov/proposition57/>

FILED

MAY 20 2019

Superior Court of California
County of Tuolumne

By: Diana Feeley Clerk

SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

IN AND FOR THE COUNTY OF TUOLUMNE

IN RE:

GENERAL ORDER

2018-2019 Grand Jury

I certify that the 2018-2019 Tuolumne County Grand Jury
Final report section on Sierra Conservation Center and Baseline
Conservation Camp complies with Title Four of the California
Penal Code and direct the County Clerk to accept and file this
section of the final report as a public document.

Dated this 20th day of May, 2019

Kate Powell-Segerstrom

Kate Powell-Segerstrom
Judge of the Superior Court

GENERAL ORDER