

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS AND REHABILITATION  
DELTA CONSERVATION CAMP  
2009-2010 Solano Grand Jury Report

## REASON FOR INSPECTION

California Penal Code Section §919, Subsection (b) provides: "The Grand Jury shall inquire into the condition and management of the public prisons within the county." Pursuant to the statute, the 2009-2010 Grand Jury inspected the Delta Conservation Camp on August 18, 2009.

## GRAND JURY ACTIONS

- Interviewed Delta Conservation Camp management and staff
- Interviewed Delta Conservation Camp inmates
- Inspected and toured the Delta Conservation Camp
- Reviewed maintenance procedures

## BACKGROUND / SUMMARY

The Delta Conservation Camp CC#8 was opened in June of 1988 and is located on 22 acres in the rural area of Solano County on Lambie Road. The camp is jointly operated by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) and CAL FIRE (formerly California Department of Forestry [CDF]). The camp is one of 42 camps in the State of California. There are 18 camps in Northern California. The inmates are classified as Level I and Level II (minimum security risk).

Inmates who participate in the camp program, must be physically fit, cannot have more than 7 years remaining on their sentence, nor convicted of any capital crimes, sex crimes or domestic violence. After meeting these requirements, each inmate must meet CAL FIRE's requirement of 67 hours of training; the same training that an entry-level firefighter receives. Delta Conservation Camp is an all male camp. The main mission of the camp is to provide inmate fire crews for fire suppression in the Sonoma, Lake, Napa and the Solano County areas. However, crews are also dispatched throughout other counties in the State. In addition to fire suppression, when not assigned to emergency response or pre-fire project work, crews conduct hazardous fuel reduction projects in support of the State and fire plan. Fire crews also repair and maintain levees for flood prevention, perform maintenance of local, state and federal park infrastructure, clear debris from streams, remove roadside litter, construct hiking trails and provide many other important community services. In 2008, Delta Conservation Camp crews logged 645,390 man-hours, saving \$6,453,900 for California taxpayers. In the first nine months of 2009, Delta Conservation Camp crews logged 648,360 man-hours, saving \$6,483,600 for California taxpayers. These amounts are calculated at the rate of \$10.00/hour. This valuable service has saved California taxpayers a total of \$12,937,500 during 2008 and the first nine months of 2009.

CDCR is responsible for the security, supervision, care and discipline of the inmates. CAL FIRE maintains the camp, supervises work of the inmate fire crews and is responsible for the custody of the inmates on their daily projects. CDCR staff members accompany inmate crews while assigned to emergencies to assist in the care and security of the inmates. Inmates must have 24/7 direct supervision while on work projects and while assigned to emergency incidents.

At the time of the Grand Jury visit, there were no fire crews at Delta Conservation Camp, as the fire crews had been dispatched to fight fires in various areas of the State. Normally, there are 132 inmates at Delta Conservation Camp. There are six 17 man fire crews. The remaining inmates serve as cooks, porters, landscapers, launderers, clerks, maintenance. Additionally, the inmates provide vehicle decals and road signage for public agencies. The inmates are paid for their work. The majority of laborers receive \$1.45 per day. Skilled inmates (mechanics, clerks, plumbers, welders, carpenters and electricians) earn up to \$2.56 per day. The lead cook earns up to \$3.90 per day. When assigned to an emergency incident such as fire and flood, inmates earn an additional \$1.00 per hour.

Each inmate is responsible for maintaining his clothing. Inmates understand that their clothing is the property of the State and it is their responsibility to take care of the clothing issued to them. If any article of clothing appears to have been intentionally damaged, the cost of that article is deducted from the inmate's earnings upon parole or release.

Inmates at the camp live in an open dormitory setting and are integrated in housing assignment. CDCR staff provides constant supervision of the inmates. The kitchen and housing areas must meet the minimum standards established by the State Department of Health Services. Routine environmental and health inspections are conducted to ensure health standards are met.

At the time of the visit, the Grand Jury found the camp to be in good condition. The grounds were well-groomed and buildings were well-maintained.

During their stay at the camp, inmates must undergo continuous training, in addition to their other duties. Continuous training helps to maintain the high standards of safety for the inmates and CAL FIRE personnel.

Inmates are taught useful skills that are transferable to employment in the community upon release or parole. While housed at the facility, inmates are able to obtain their GED and continue their education. One inmate earned an AA degree from Lassen College by obtaining credits online.

Delta Conservation Camp staff has indicated that Camp security would be enhanced with the addition of cameras on the perimeter of the Camp. In the past, contraband from outside the Camp has been left along the Camp perimeter for pick up by inmates. The addition of cameras would also enhance security by assisting the officer assigned to the graveyard shift. This one officer is responsible for the security of the whole Camp during the graveyard shift.

The age of equipment used by CAL FIRE was discussed and concern expressed regarding trucks not being routinely replaced after being in service for long periods of time. Delta Conservation Camp crews maintain and repair all of their equipment. There are six Trucks (Crew Buggies) available at Delta Conservation Camp. There is one new Truck and five with rebuilt engines (engines are rebuilt after 300,000 miles). The rebuilt engines in the Trucks wear out during the second 300,000 miles.

The Grand Jury noted that pursuant to a previous recommendation from last year's report, work has begun to fix the dangerous condition at the intersection of Lambie Road and Highway 12. The Grand Jury applauds this work, as both the Delta Conservation Camp crews and vehicles are in jeopardy, along with citizens traveling Highway 12, until this dangerous condition is finally completed.

## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Finding 1-** The lack of security cameras around the perimeter of Delta Conservation Camp poses a serious security issue.

**Recommendation 1-** Security cameras should be installed on the perimeter for overall security and safety and to discourage the introduction of contraband.

**Finding 2-** Although work has begun on the intersection of Highway 12 and Lambie Road, the intersection is still a serious safety problem.

**Recommendation 2-** The project for correcting the design of the intersection which includes a left turn lane onto Lambie Road from East Bound Highway 12, and a right turn lane to accelerate onto and merge with West Bound Highway 12, should be expedited.

**Finding 3-** One officer on the graveyard shift with no backup is a cause for considerable concern and presents a severe security problem. The officer's safety and welfare could be in serious jeopardy, as there is a minimum 20 minute response time from California State Prison – Solano (CSP) Staff to provide help in an emergency.

**Recommendation 3-** The CDCR should make every effort to hire a second officer for graveyard shift at Delta Conservation Camp. Contact should also be made with the Solano County Sheriff's Office to ensure a procedure is negotiated to expedite prompt help for Camp personnel during the graveyard shift as needed.

**Finding 4-** Delta Conservation Camp has fire crews available to assist cities and the County in public works projects, when not involved in emergencies, for a nominal fee (currently, \$200.00/day for a 17 man crew).

**Recommendation 4-** Cities and Solano County should endeavor to utilize the Delta Conservation crews in their public works projects.

## COMMENTS

Delta Conservation Camp is well run by the combined staff of the CDCR and CAL FIRE. They have a good working relationship and are very conscientious about the welfare of each other and welfare of the inmates. More importantly, they take seriously their duty to the citizens of the State of California and County of Solano.

It should be noted that the inmate maintenance staff and the camp supervisors are very diligent and are successful in their efforts to keep the equipment in good working order. However, the Grand Jury noted more modern equipment is needed at Delta Conservation Camp.

In 2008, it should be noted, as an example of the organization and dedication of the staff and inmates, Delta Conservation Camp provided food for all the firefighters at the scene of the 2008 Paradise Fire in Butte County. An 11 man kitchen-inmate crew provided meals for 3,400 firefighters from a Mobile Kitchen Unit.

## RESPONDING AND AFFECTED AGENCIES

Commander, Delta Conservation Camp  
California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation  
CAL FIRE  
Solano Transportation Authority  
California Department of Transportation

## COURTESY COPIES

California State 8th Assembly District  
California State 5th Senatorial District  
Solano County Board of Supervisors  
Solano County Sheriff/Coroner  
Solano County Administrator  
Benicia City Council  
Dixon City Council  
Fairfield City Council  
Suisun City Council  
Rio Vista City Council  
Vacaville City Council  
Vallejo City Council  
All California County Civil Grand Juries



Entrance to Delta Conservation Camp



Visitor regulations



Tile work completed by inmates



Laundry/warehouse



Exercise room



Living quarters



Landscaping project



Maintenance bay



Decal application project

Crew Buggie



Typical sleeping area



Dining Hall