

Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury

Detention Facilities of Calaveras County A Model of Excellence and Innovation

June 4, 2026



Composite image by N. Smith, K. Klise, and L. Carey.

SUMMARY

Penal Code 919(b) obligates the county grand jury to “inquire into the condition and management of public prisons within the county.” There are two detention facilities located within Calaveras County: Calaveras County Adult Detention Facility and Vallecito Conservation Camp #1.

The Calaveras County Adult Detention Facility is a medium-security 240-bed jail opened in 2014. Vallecito Conservation Camp #1 is a minimum-security fire camp built in 1958 in Angels Camp.

Members of the Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury (CCCGJ) toured both facilities and met with staff and some inmates. We found both to be well run, clean, safe, and secure.

GLOSSARY

CAL FIRE	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
CCCGJ	Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury
CDCR	California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

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.

On October 2, 2025, Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury (CCCGJ) toured the county jail facility and met with the Sheriff and her command staff. We spent several hours asking questions about the operation and function of the facility. We confirmed that the policies and procedures were in line with current standards and laws.

On February 26, 2026, CCCGJ toured Vallecito Conservation Camp #1 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. We met with California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) staff and learned about the training, equipment, and work that the inmates perform.

BACKGROUND

Penal Code 919(b) obligates the county grand jury to “inquire into the condition and management of public prisons within the county.” In 2022, the California Attorney General issued an opinion (No. 18-103) stating the term “public prisons” includes “local detention facilities,” and that a county jail or regional camp used for confinement is a typical example of such a local detention facility. Calaveras County has two facilities that fall under this designation: Calaveras County Adult Detention Facility and Vallecito Conservation Camp #1.

Calaveras County Adult Detention Facility

The Calaveras County Adult Detention Facility is a 240-bed jail operated by the Calaveras County Sheriff's Office. The facility was opened in 2014 and is located in San Andreas. Custody

responsibilities include inmate incarceration, work release programs, prisoner transportation, and court security. The detention facility handles intake of arrestees from every law enforcement entity in Calaveras County.

At the Adult Detention Facility inmates are given opportunities to improve their education and work skills. Mental health services are also available, including both individual and group therapy sessions. Limited computer access gives inmates a chance to take online college courses and skills courses. For example, an inmate can complete an online welding course that would allow him or her to be a certified welder after completing skills training and assessment upon release. Inmates may also work in the kitchen, where they have a chance to learn cooking skills that could facilitate employment after release.

Vallecito Conservation Camp #1

Vallecito Conservation Camp #1 is a minimum-security correctional facility in Angels Camp that opened in 1958. The facility is part of the Conservation Fire Camp Program jointly run by the CDCR and CAL FIRE, one of the most successful vocational programs offered to inmates in the California Corrections system. In addition to receiving time off their sentences, incarcerated crews can 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 firefighters upon their release.

Inmates are housed at the facility where they are trained in various aspects of wildland fire fighting. They can respond to fires and other emergencies to assist CAL FIRE. Between emergencies, they fulfill other functions such as fuel reduction and ground maintenance at County schools, parks, and cemeteries.

During the September 2025 TCU Lightning Complex fires, and again after the devastating March 2026 snowstorm, inmate crews provided crucial assistance in clearing fallen trees so that emergency crews could access affected areas.

DISCUSSION

Calaveras County Adult Detention Facility

Members of CCCGJ toured the Calaveras County Adult Detention Facility (County jail) on October 2, 2025, and met with the Sheriff and her staff, who comprehensively answered questions relevant to policies, operations, and the handling of complaints. We were advised of the numerous activities designed to assist the inmates in improving their education and life skills to reduce recidivism upon their release, including preparing meals for the other inmates in the facility's kitchen.

The conditions were clean and orderly. Meals were prepared with both taste and nutrition in mind. The inmates were respectful and satisfied with their treatment. Detention staff were dedicated and proud of their work.

Vallecito Conservation Camp #1

Members of CCCGJ toured the Vallecito Conservation Camp #1 on February 26, 2026, and spoke to staff and inmates. Inmates have opportunities to improve their education and skills in a variety of areas, including shop classes, fire hose and chainsaw repair, and culinary courses from

Columbia College. The camp also has a garden and a flock of chickens maintained by inmates which supplements their meals.

CCCGJ found the facilities to be clean and well maintained. There was an overall feel of respect between inmates and staff.

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 site visits, CCCGJ’s findings and recommendations are as follows:

F1: Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury found the Calaveras County Adult Detention Facility to be well run, clean, and properly maintained, and was impressed by the dedication of its officers and staff. Inmates are treated in a safe and respectful manner with a goal of improving their life skills.

Required Response

None

F2: Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury found Vallecito Conservation Camp #1 to be well run, clean, and properly maintained, and was impressed by the dedication of its officers and staff. The variety of programs open to inmates in addition to firefighting demonstrates a commitment to improving opportunities for employment and improved quality of life upon inmates’ release.

Required Response

None

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.

REFERENCED SOURCES

California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. “About CDCR.” Accessed April 21, 2026. <https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/about-cdcr/>.