



Siskiyou County **SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

Jeremiah LaRue
Sheriff-Coroner

305 Butte Street
Yreka, CA 96097
(530) 842-8300

October 24, 2024

The Honorable JoAnn Bicego
Presiding Judge, Siskiyou County Superior Court
411 Fourth Street
Yreka, CA 96097

Subject: Response from Siskiyou County Sheriff to 2023-2024 Grand Jury Reports: "Jail Overcrowding the County has an Option" and "Siskiyou County Jail Inspection Report."

Dear Honorable Judge Bicego:

Below you will find the Siskiyou County Sheriff responses to the 2023-2024 Grand Jury Reports listed above. We appreciate the detailed work and energies invested by the members of the Grand Jury to complete their interviews and reports.

JAIL OVERCROWDING THE COUNTY HAS AN OPTION

FINDINGS:

F1: The Siskiyou County jail does not have sufficient bed space for adult felony offenders.

Siskiyou County Sheriff Response: Fully agrees.

The current capacity of the Siskiyou County Jail is inadequate to house all felony offenders, which may lead to the daily release of suspected felons back into the community due to overcrowding. This has been a persistent issue for years, and despite efforts to address it, the lack of sufficient bed space remains a significant challenge.

F2: The County leadership has not addressed jail overcrowding since 2020.

Siskiyou County Sheriff Response: Partially disagrees.

County leadership has discussed the overcrowding issue on many occasions both formally and informally. Resolving this issue requires collaboration between the Sheriff's Office, the Board of Supervisors, and the community to identify solutions and secure appropriate funding. Unfortunately, the lack of available funding is the ultimate roadblock.

CC: PJ & Foreperson



Siskiyou County **SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

Jeremiah LaRue
Sheriff-Coroner

305 Butte Street
Yreka, CA 96097
(530) 842-8300

F3: Siskiyou County owns a modern multi-million-dollar 40-bed jail available to house adult offenders.

Siskiyou County Sheriff Response: Agrees.

The Charlie Byrd correctional facility is a valuable resource that could be certified to house adult incarcerated persons and alleviate the overcrowding crisis. With the County's support, the Sheriff's Office is supportive of utilizing this facility.

F4: The County failed to keep the Charlie Byrd correctional facility certified as a correctional facility.

Siskiyou County Sheriff Response:

The facility is not currently certified to house incarcerated persons, which limits its current use for alleviating jail overcrowding. However, with the County's support, the Sheriff's Office supports efforts to re-certify the facility if funding for staffing and operational costs is secured.

F5: The Charlie Byrd correctional facility is being converted to office space, eliminating its ability to operate as a correctional facility.

Siskiyou County Sheriff Response: Agrees.

The Sheriff's Office supports reevaluating this use and restoring the facility for its original purpose of housing incarcerated persons to provide much-needed relief to the County jail.

F6: Office space options exist within the County to accommodate the Probation Department elsewhere.

Siskiyou County Sheriff Response:

While utilizing the Charlie Byrd facility would be beneficial for the Sheriff's Office, it would create an additional burden on the County to find an alternative location for the Probation Department.



Siskiyou County **SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

Jeremiah LaRue
Sheriff-Coroner

305 Butte Street
Yreka, CA 96097
(530) 842-8300

F7: The County did not get documented required inspections by certified building inspectors for work completed on the Charlie Byrd correctional facility by County staff.

Siskiyou County Sheriff Response:

The Sheriff's Office supports conducting all necessary inspections as part of any future use of the facility as a correctional space, ensuring it meets all legal and safety standards.

JAIL OVERCROWDING THE COUNTY HAS AN OPTION

RECOMMENDATIONS:

R1: The Sheriff should present a plan to reduce/eliminate overcrowding at the Siskiyou County Jail to the Board of Supervisors by February 2025.

Siskiyou County Sheriff Response: Partially agrees.

Jail overcrowding is not a new issue for Siskiyou County, and unfortunately, it persists despite ongoing efforts by the County, Sheriff's Office, Superior Court, and District Attorney's Office to mitigate its impact. The lack of adequate space to house incarcerated persons creates a scenario where critical public safety decisions must be made daily. The release of certain felony offenders is a direct consequence of this overcrowding, as jail staff must evaluate numerous risk factors and prioritize releases based on available bed space.

It is clear that the current capacity of the jail is insufficient to meet the County's needs. A thorough, long-term plan to address overcrowding must include either the construction of a new facility or the reopening of the Charlie Byrd facility. Both options, however, are contingent upon securing substantial financial resources, which is ultimately a decision that rests with the Board of Supervisors.

While the Sheriff's Office is eager to engage in a solution, our ability to execute an effective plan depends on the availability of funds to support necessary expansions. The Sheriff's Office agrees to discuss overcrowding with the Board of Supervisors and County to reevaluate any potential avenues to secure funding. We emphasize that without significant new funding, the overcrowding issue will remain unresolved, with ongoing risks to public safety.



Siskiyou County **SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

Jeremiah LaRue
Sheriff-Coroner

305 Butte Street
Yreka, CA 96097
(530) 842-8300

R2: The BOS, in conjunction with the Sheriff, should identify and decide on a plan for funding the operational costs for Charlie Byrd correctional facility as a branch jail facility by January 2025. This may entail new grants, new taxes, and/or shifts in funding from other priorities.

Siskiyou County Sheriff Response: Partially agrees.

The Sheriff's Office is fully supportive of any effort that enhances public safety and alleviates the significant burden of jail overcrowding. Utilizing the Charlie Byrd Youth Correctional Facility as a branch jail would undoubtedly provide much-needed relief; however, it is essential to recognize that operating such a facility would involve substantial operational costs, including staffing, training, and ongoing maintenance.

Historically, efforts to secure funding through ballot measures for a new jail facility have failed, as the public voted down two initiatives aimed at addressing this critical issue. Despite these setbacks, the Sheriff's Office remains committed to exploring all potential funding mechanisms. A fresh look at a new tax initiative may present one path forward, particularly if the community recognizes the direct connection between overcrowding and public safety risks. Additionally, the County could assist the Sheriff's Office in actively seeking grant opportunities and other state or federal funding to supplement these efforts.

It is important to stress that while the Sheriff's Office is prepared to operate the Charlie Byrd facility, this cannot be done without a significant financial commitment. We estimate that a minimum of \$3 million in annual funding will be necessary, with the bulk allocated to staffing. This commitment from both the Board of Supervisors and the public is vital to ensuring that we can fully leverage the Charlie Byrd facility as a solution to the ongoing overcrowding crisis. We further understand the significant funding challenges faced by the County.

R3: Utilize the Charlie Byrd correctional facility as a branch of the County jail operated by the Sheriff by July 2025.

Siskiyou County Sheriff Response: Partially agrees.

The prospect of utilizing the Charlie Byrd facility as a branch jail is a promising solution to our chronic jail overcrowding. However, it is critical to understand the complexity and financial implications involved in such an endeavor. While the facility itself is available, the staffing and operational costs required to run a 40-bed facility are substantial. Based on current estimates, the Sheriff's Office would need an increase of approximately \$3 million annually to operate the



Siskiyou County **SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

Jeremiah LaRue
Sheriff-Coroner

305 Butte Street
Yreka, CA 96097
(530) 842-8300

facility, with \$2.5 million dedicated solely to hiring the additional staff required, including 12-16 new deputies and one lieutenant.

Moreover, this cost estimate does not factor in the expenses necessary to reverse the current remodeling of the Charlie Byrd facility, nor does it account for the updates required to bring the facility into compliance with state regulations for housing adult offenders. These challenges, while not insurmountable, require significant time and resources.

Given these financial and logistical hurdles, it would be extremely difficult—if not impossible—to have the facility fully operational by the proposed July 2025 deadline. That said, the Sheriff's Office remains fully committed to exploring all options with the Board of Supervisors and any other stakeholders to develop a realistic and sustainable timeline for utilizing the facility. This would require a coordinated effort to secure funding, ensure compliance, and address staffing shortages, all of which must be resolved before the facility can open its doors.



Siskiyou County **SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

Jeremiah LaRue
Sheriff-Coroner

305 Butte Street
Yreka, CA 96097
(530) 842-8300

JAIL INSPECTION REPORT

RECOMMENDATIONS:

R1: Develop a policy and procedure for conducting a tool inventory at the beginning and end of each shift. The policy should include a procedure for reporting missing/lost tools.

Siskiyou County Sheriff Response: Fully agrees.

The Sheriff's Office is actively developing a comprehensive policy to ensure that a thorough tool inventory is conducted at the beginning and end of each shift. This policy will include procedures for documenting and reporting any missing or lost tools to maintain a secure facility environment. We anticipate the finalization and implementation of this policy in the coming months, ensuring that all personnel are properly trained on the new procedure.

R2: Inspect and ensure that a safety issue is not present to the public. A more permanent cover with material other than wood is recommended.

Siskiyou County Sheriff Response: Partially agrees.

A new HVAC system will be installed at the jail in Spring 2025, and as part of that process, the old wooden structure will be removed. In the interim, a site inspection will be conducted by December 2024 to assess any immediate safety concerns. Based on the findings, maintenance will make the necessary modifications to ensure public safety until the permanent fix is implemented.

R3: Make arrangements to have branches trimmed or removed.

Siskiyou County Sheriff Response: Fully agrees.

Since the tree in question is located on private property, the Sheriff's Office is in the process of contacting the property owner to discuss a collaborative solution for trimming or removing the branches to ensure that the jail's perimeter remains secure. We are committed to resolving this issue as promptly as possible.



Siskiyou County **SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

Jeremiah LaRue
Sheriff-Coroner

305 Butte Street
Yreka, CA 96097
(530) 842-8300

R4: Install a walk-through metal detector/body scanner for use in the booking area. Develop a policy and procedure for use of such.

Siskiyou County Sheriff Response: Fully agrees.

The Sheriff's Office submitted a request in October 2024 to use non-General Fund monies for the acquisition of a body scanner. This equipment will significantly improve our security measures during the booking process. We anticipate the acquisition and installation of the body scanner by early 2025, and a comprehensive policy for its use will be developed and implemented alongside the installation.

R5: Update any pertinent policy and procedures for Food Services to ensure the 'three-day mainline sample tray' is being practiced.

Siskiyou County Sheriff Response: Fully agrees.

The Sheriff's Office is in the process of acquiring new equipment to properly store and maintain food samples under refrigeration. Our current policy, 900 "Food Safety," already contains the necessary procedures for maintaining a three-day sample of each meal, and it does not require any updates. Compliance with this policy will be fully enforced once the new equipment is in place.

R6: Purchase a rescue litter for the jail.

Siskiyou County Sheriff Response: Fully agrees.

The Sheriff's Office is currently obtaining quotes for the purchase of a rescue litter, a vital piece of equipment for emergency medical situations within the jail. We anticipate acquiring and deploying the rescue litter by early 2025 to ensure the safety and well-being of both staff and incarcerated individuals.

R7: Purchase Bloodborne Pathogen kits. Develop a policy and procedure for use of such kits and provide training to staff.

Siskiyou County Sheriff Response: Fully agrees.



Siskiyou County **SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

Jeremiah LaRue
Sheriff-Coroner

305 Butte Street
Yreka, CA 96097
(530) 842-8300

The Sheriff's Office is in the process of purchasing additional Bloodborne Pathogen kits to supplement our current supplies. Policy 227 "Illness and Injury Prevention," already contains detailed procedures for the use of such kits, so no updates to the policy are necessary. Staff will receive refresher training on the use of the kits to ensure readiness and safety.

R8: The jail has indicated the eye wash station has been purchased. Confirm that the eye wash station has been installed.

Siskiyou County Sheriff Response: Fully agrees.

Despite previous indications, the eye wash station could not be located. As a result, the Sheriff's Office is researching a new eye wash station, which we anticipate purchasing and installing by early 2025. This essential piece of equipment will be available to ensure immediate first aid in the event of chemical exposure.

R9: Develop a policy for identification and documentation of persons entering the jail, including arrival and departure dates/times.

Siskiyou County Sheriff Response: Fully agrees.

The Sheriff's Office recognizes the importance of clear and consistent documentation of individuals entering and exiting the jail. We currently keep a log in our record management system (RIMS). We will continue to review our existing procedures to ensure they meet best practices for security and accountability.

R9b: Post documentation of items not allowed within the jail by all persons.

Siskiyou County Sheriff Response: Fully agrees.

Although the facility already has signage in place regarding prohibited items, we recognize the need to expand this list to ensure it covers all potential contraband. Updated signage will be posted in key areas throughout the facility, and we anticipate completing this project by February 2025.



Siskiyou County **SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

Jeremiah LaRue
Sheriff-Coroner

305 Butte Street
Yreka, CA 96097
(530) 842-8300

R9c: Post a notice of the “No Hostage” policy for all persons entering the jail.

Siskiyou County Sheriff Response: Fully agrees.

The Sheriff's Office will ensure that “No Hostage” signage is prominently displayed in the facility to inform all staff, visitors, and contractors of this critical policy. In accordance with our current Policy 400.8 “Hostages,” all persons entering the facility for the first time will be required to sign an acknowledgment of the policy, which will be retained by the facility.

R10: Develop a specific procedure manual relevant for the daily operations of the jail.

Siskiyou County Sheriff Response: Partially agrees.

The Sheriff's Office will explore the feasibility of creating a detailed day-to-day operations manual tailored to the specific needs of our jail. Given the complexity of such a project, it is expected that this task will require extensive time and resources, with a tentative completion date of September 2025.

R11: Update the website to include information about individual bookings, and releases including reason for release.

Siskiyou County Sheriff Response: Fully agrees.

The Sheriff's Office has already updated the website to include comprehensive information about individual bookings, releases, and the reasons for release. This will provide the public with greater transparency and improve communication between the jail and the community.

Citizen RIMS Portal:

<https://siskiyou.crimegraphics.com/2013/default.aspx>

Respectfully submitted,

Jeremiah LaRue
Sheriff-Coroner