

Proposed California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) / California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) Magalia Conservation Camp
“Frequently Asked Questions”

1. What is a “conservation camp”?

A conservation camp is a facility jointly run by CDCR and CDF that houses low risk inmate crews that are trained to fight fires, floods and other emergencies. There are 37 CDCR/CDF conservation camps in California that provide a ready workforce of nearly 4,000 inmate firefighters. CDCR and CDF Fire have operated conservation camps together for 60 years.

2. Are the inmates dangerous?

They are “low end” minimum custody inmates. The program automatically excludes inmates who are kidnappers or child molesters. Those inmates with any arson on their record are also automatically disqualified. The majority of the inmates are serving time for drug related and property crimes. Throughout their stay at a conservation camp, inmate firefighters are constantly evaluated by CDCR and CDF staff. Any infractions that indicate an inmate firefighter is no longer suitable for the program immediately lead to their expulsion.

3. What kind of supervision will the inmates have?

A conservation camp has its own law enforcement unit comprised of CDCR correctional officers who supervise the inmates around the clock while they are “in camp”. When the crews are on emergencies or work projects, the inmates are supervised by CDF Fire Captains.

4. Why is there a need for a conservation camp in Butte County?

Currently, there is a fire protection hole in Butte County and Northern California where conservation camp fire crew response is prolonged due to travel distance and time. Crews from areas outside Butte County have a minimum response time of an hour and a half to the center of the county.

5. What is being done now to meet the shortfall?

CDF uses out of area fire crews in Butte County on work projects but, due to travel time and distance, they are limited to about a 4-hour workday. This causes delays and holes in the areas the cover crews are normally assigned to.

6. Why is the Magalia Nursery (old Butte Fire Center) location on Stieffer Rd. being considered?

Though the facility would need updating and improvements, some new and useable infrastructure already exists. Having to locate to another site would be considerably more expensive and take significantly longer to staff.

7. Where did the \$20 million figure come from?

This figure is an *estimate* for the amount of one-time expenditures needed to update pre-existing facilities and add some new facilities that would allow CDF’s Stieffer Rd. site to work as low-risk inmate firefighter housing. The fact that there are new facilities that can be utilized on site already, such as a kitchen/dining hall

and crew bus garages, greatly decreases costs as compared to a new site which will require not only expenditure of funds for all new construction but the cost of land acquisition as well. The actual costs may be higher or lower than this estimate. *If* it is decided the site will be used for the project, only then will the appropriate budget process be determined. The process will not occur in a vacuum and will be made public.

8. How long are the inmate firefighters assigned to a conservation camp?

The average time an inmate firefighter spends in a conservation camp is approximately 8 months. But some inmates have served up to five years in the conservation camp program.

9. Where do the inmate firefighters go when they are done serving their sentences?

The inmates are paroled back to their county of commitment and will not be released in Butte County.

10. What will the inmate firefighters do when they are not fighting fires, floods or other emergencies?

The crews work on public projects such as brush clearing, maintenance and clean up for a variety of federal, state and local agencies. After work hours inmates can participate in programs such as “Alcoholics Anonymous” and “Narcotics Anonymous” which are held on site at the camps. The inmate firefighters also spend time on hobbies such as woodworking. Bible study groups are also commonplace as are on-site libraries.

11. How are the inmate firefighters trained?

Once the inmates are classified as being suitable for the camp program, CDCR puts them through rigorous fitness training. Once they complete the fitness training, CDF Fire provides fire specific training. If the inmates pass this training, they are assigned to a fire crew at a conservation camp and continue to receive safety and other types of training for the duration of their assignment.

12. How many crews will be at the camp?

Approx 110 inmate firefighters will be housed at the camp. This number provides for enough personnel to staff five 17-person crews. Additional inmate firefighters are assigned to the camp as cooks, mechanics and in camp maintenance workers. On day-to-day work projects and emergencies, CDF fire captains supervise the 17 person fire crews.

13. Are the inmates free to come and go as they please?

Absolutely not.

14. How many escapes occur each year?

The average number of escapes from conservation camps is 7 per year statewide. The re-arrest rate is 99.1 %.

	MALE	FEMALE
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	Grand Total		Total		Institutions		Camps*		Total	
YEAR	Number of Escapes	Escapes per 100 ADP	Number of Escapes	Escapes per 100 ADP	Number of Escapes	Escapes per 100 ADP	Number of Escapes	Escapes per 100 ADP	Number of Escapes	Escapes per 100 ADP
2000	24	0.02	24	0.02	13	0.01	11	0.29	0	0
2001	14	0.01	13	0.01	8	0.01	5	0.13	1	0.01
2002	15	0.01	15	0.01	9	0.01	6	0.16	0	0
2003	16	0.01	16	0.01	10	0.01	6	0.16	0	0
2004	20	0.01	20	0.01	11	0.01	9	0.23	0	0