

TRINITY COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY

2023

FILED

DEC 21 2023

Solid Waste Report

CLERK OF THE SUPERIOR COURT
COUNTY OF TRINITY
BY: STACI HOLLIDAY



Renewed 12/13/23 Gmally
Judge Michael B. Hanger

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the course of our investigation there was a constant thread of the same issues that have plagued Trinity County Solid Waste for many years but have never been addressed. The solutions seem so simple but there seems to be a lack of will to prioritize and implement these solutions. Some of the same issues from the 2007-2008 Grand Jury report still exist: mismanagement, employees not doing their duties, and low morale. One would conclude that after 16 years of the same issues that this has become a culture, and a way to do business in Trinity County. It is very clear most of the transfer site issues can be remedied by having more direct supervision and oversight by the transfer site management. It is the hope of the Trinity County Civil Grand Jury that this report will help to advance the improvement needed to create a safer, more productive environment for both Trinity County residents and transfer site employees.

BACKGROUND

March third of 2023, during a full grand jury session and discussion, Trinity County Solid Waste issues arose, and a committee was authorized for the purpose of an inquiry. In addition, on May 09, 2023, the Trinity County Civil Grand Jury received a complaint from a Trinity County citizen regarding inconsistent hours at their Solid Waste transfer site. The Trinity County Civil Grand Jury Complaint Committee reviewed the complaint and brought it to the entire Trinity County Civil Grand Jury for acceptance. It was then forwarded to the Solid Waste Committee. After the initial inquiry was complete, it was brought back to the full grand jury and an investigation was approved.

METHODOLOGY

The 2023 Trinity County Civil Grand Jury Solid Waste Committee used the following information to create the final report.

- Interviewed the initial complainant
- Reviewed Trinity County 2023 Illness & Injury Prevention Program
- Reviewed Trindel Insurance Form (walk thru Inspection Reports)
- Reviewed Trinity County Solid Waste Technician II Job Description (Revised 2005)
- Reviewed Trinity County Solid Waste Gate Attendant Job Description 1-3(Revised 2002)
- Interviews were conducted with Trinity County Solid Waste staff
- Interview Trinity County Risk Management Department staff
- In person field inspections of all 9 transfer sites
- Review of documents provided by Trinity County Solid Waste
- Review of 2007-2008 Trinity County Civil Grand Jury report on Trinity County Solid Waste
- Reviewed CalRecycle website: <https://calrecycle.ca.gov>
- Reviewed Trinity County Solid Waste website: <https://trinitycounty.org/Solid-Waste>
- Reviewed California Department of Fish and Wildlife Bulletin 2022-01, Black Bear Policy in California: Public Safety, Depredation, Conflict and Animal Welfare.

DISCUSSION

The Solid Waste committee would like to acknowledge that some of the facts we report on in our investigation have been addressed since our investigation began.

The Solid Waste committee's inquiry into Trinity County Solid Waste discovered many facts. The following is a matrix of the facts that were discovered. They are broken into 4 categories:

- Safety
- Signage
- Cleanliness
- Management

SAFETY

Trinity County Solid Waste transfer site employees work in remote areas of our county and deserve to feel safe at work. All the staff interviewed are committed to their jobs to the best of their ability. The most concerning fact the Solid Waste committee found is the overall safety for transfer site employees. From the lack of proper housing and safety supplies to the lack of management, there appears to be little concern for the overall well-being of the employees, i.e., out of sight, out of mind.

Trinity County Solid Waste transit site employees' jobs become harder because they have little or no communication, and inadequate first aid supplies in case of an emergency. The lack of heating, cooling, and lighting at some facilities is also a concern.

In addition, there is an ongoing danger because of the constant presence of bears in the work areas. The bear problems primarily exist due to the dumpsters not being properly maintained and secured. New bear resistant bins were ordered on October 19th, 2022, and received on December 19th, 2022, through December 28th, 2022. As of August 3, 2023, not all bins had been put in place at the transfer sites.

As noted in the Fact Matrix, there are no fire breaks around the yard waste of Hobel and Van Duzen. Hayfork has installed a fire break, but in the action of doing so, the yard waste and woody debris has been pushed into standing trees. Hayfork, Hobel and Van Duzen do not have a fire break around the transfer site, creating a hazard during the fire season.

SOLID WASTE FACT MATRIX

**KEY = z (in person field inspection)
x (concerns)**

FACT	TRANSFER SITE								
	Big Bar	Burnt Ranch	Hayfork	Hobel (Trinity Center)	Hyampom	Junction City	Ruth	Van Duzen	Weaverville
SAFETY	z	z	z	z	z	z	z	z	z
1. No shade cover (Figure 1a & 1b)	x			x	x				
2. No warning about approaching cross traffic to dump road		x		x	x				
3. No emergency communication ability	x	x		x	x		x	x	
4. No safety gear, except for vest	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
5. Lack of First Aid Supplies	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
6. Attendant kiosk has no Air Conditioning or heating	x	x		x	x			x	
7. Bears scatter trash	x	x		x	x			x	
8. Employees fear for their lives because of bears	x	x		x	x			x	
9. No fire break near yard waste		x			x			x	
10. No fire break around facility	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
11. Abandoned inground bin pockets blocked by traffic cones (Figure 2)					x				
12. No bins for all inground spaces	x			x	x		x	x	
13. Bin are hazardous to attendants		x	x	x			x	x	

Figure 1a. Big Bar Transfer Site. Standard kiosk, no shade cover



Figure 1b. Hobel Transfer Site. Standard kiosk, customer provided temporary shade cover

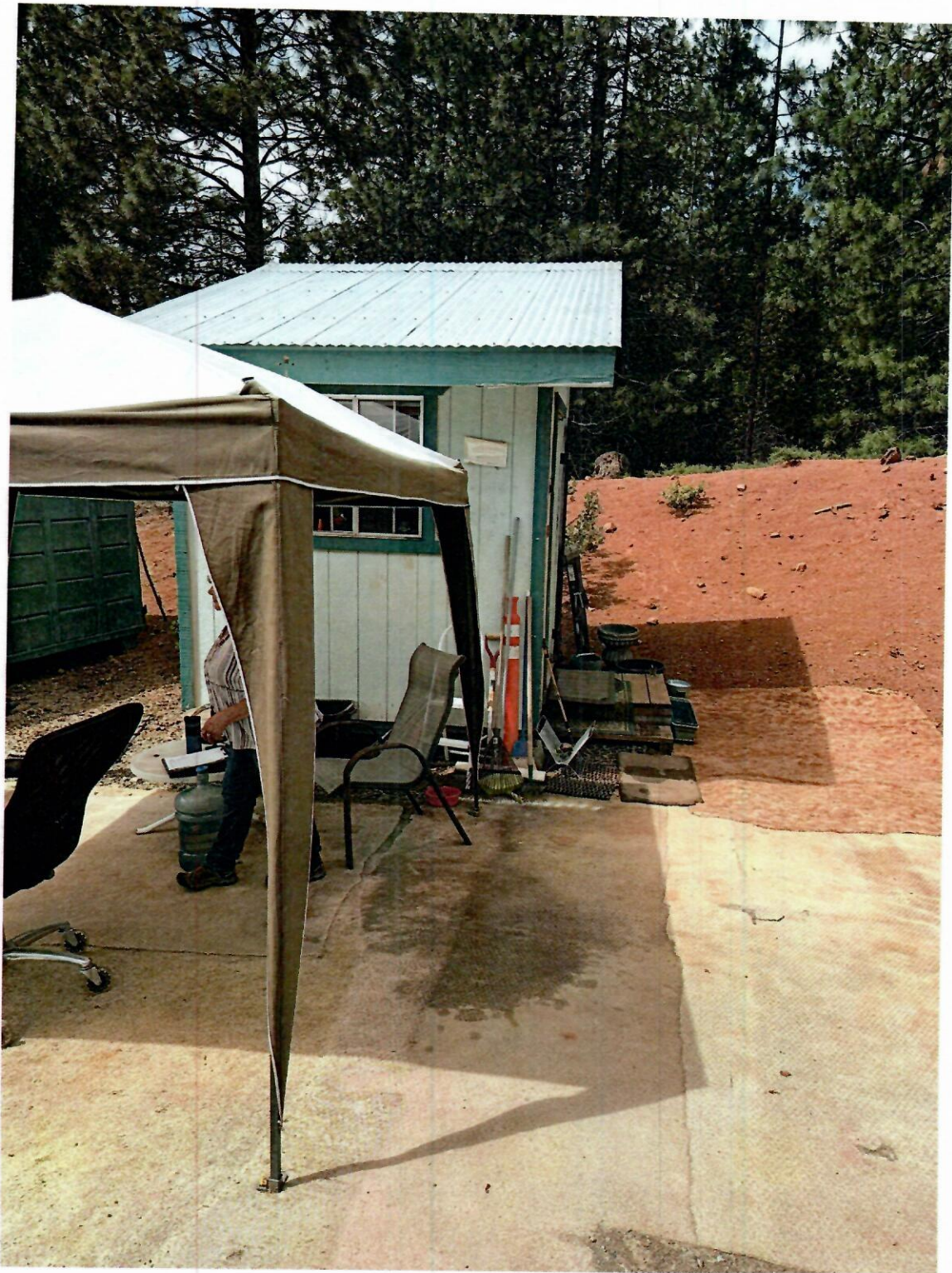


Figure 2. Hyampom Transfer Site. Abandoned inground bin pockets



SIGNAGE

Signage at all sites is outdated, inconsistent or non-existent (Figure 3). It appears as if Trinity County Solid Waste relies completely on the internet to let Trinity County residents know not only hours of operation, but also what material each transfer site will take. In addition, signage indicating access to Burnt Ranch and Hyampom transfer sites from their respective roads is inadequate. For example, if you don't know where the access to the Burnt Ranch site off Highway 299 is, you will miss it because of poor signage. Because Highway 299 is the major access in Northern California from the Valley to the Coast, missing your turnoff is not only irritating, but dangerous.

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FACT	TRANSFER SITE								
	Big Bar	Burnt Ranch	Hayfork	Hobel (Trinity Center)	Hyampom	Junction City	Ruth	Van Duzen	Weaverville
SIGNAGE	z	z	z	z	z	z	z	z	z
1. Entrance signposts incorrect info (days open).		x		x			x	x	
2. Signage inconsistent/non-existent	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	

Figure 3. Hobel Transfer Site signage



CLEANLINESS

While the working area of most of the sites were clean, many of the bin pockets were full of trash. The trash has been present for a long period of time. In April of 2022, Trinity County Solid Waste purchased a new Branson Tractor Model 315CH, complete with attachment at a cost of \$56,203.00 for the purpose of cleaning out the bin pockets and maintaining a firebreak around the transfer sites. Currently, the tractor has not been used for its intended purposes, as many of the bin pockets are still full of trash (see Figure 6) and there are no maintained firebreaks around Hayfork, Van Duzen and Hobel.

In June of 2021, Trinity County Solid Waste also purchased a used 2017 Morbark Tub Grinder at a cost of \$407,000.00 for the purpose of managing the woody debris and slash brought to the solid waste transfer sites. Since the purchase of this equipment, it has had approximately 52.6 hours of use, which averages to .025 hours of usage per week. At the time of our investigation, large piles of yard waste still exist in Hayfork and Hobel creating a serious fire hazard.

SOLID WASTE FACT MATRIX

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FACT	TRANSFER SITE								
	Big Bar	Burnt Ranch	Hayfork	Hobel (Trinity Center)	Hyampom	Junction City	Ruth	Van Duzen	Weaverville
CLEANLINESS	z	z	z	z	z	z	z	z	z
1. Trash on ground around gate and over the bank (Figure 4)		x					x	x	
2. Metal scattered on ground (Figure 5)		x	x					x	
3. Garbage in unused bin pockets (Figure 6)		x			x			x	

Figure 4. Burnt Ranch Transfer Site approach. Trash over the bank to the Trinity River



Figure 5. Hayfork Transfer Site. Metal scattered on ground



Figure 6. Van Duzen Transfer Site. Garbage in unused bin pockets



MANAGEMENT

Trinity County Solid Waste suffers from a culture of complacency and very reactionary behavior. There appears to be no master plan for not only addressing daily problems, like employees not showing up for work, but also no plan to address long term issues, growth, emerging technology or changing issues. The 2007-2008 Trinity County Civil Grand Jury report in Finding #2 refers to mismanagement, "Management needs to refocus", this still applies today. In the 16 years since the last report, many of the same issues still exist and the same answers to solve the problems are still applicable. Management needs to be more focused on solving problems long term, not short-term solutions.

At the time of our investigation there appears to still be an abnormal number of break-ins at numerous transfer site kiosks and the storage containers in Hayfork. There is a lack of security screen doors on kiosk entrances and security screens on the windows making it easier to gain unlawful entrance.

Trinity County Solid Waste management has not provided adequate accommodations for recycling at all transfer sites. Trinity County residents have very few options to dispose of the recycling.

SOLID WASTE FACT MATRIX

**KEY = z (in person field inspection)
x (concerns)**

FACT	TRANSFER SITE								
	Big Bar	Burnt Ranch	Hayfork	Hobel (Trinity Center)	Hyampom	Junction City	Ruth	Van Duzen	Weaverville
MANAGEMENT	z	z	z	z	z	z	z	z	z
1. Tub Grinder used 52.6 hours in last 2 years to dispose of yard waste									x
2. One of the front loader truck drivers is also responsible for operating the Tub Grinder									x
3. Bear Resistant bins ordered and delivered in 2022, but not delivered to transfer sites as of 9/1/2023 (Figure 9)	x		x	x	x		x		
4. Transfer site supervisor has not visited sites in the last 2 years as of 8/16/2023	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
5. Recycle paper & cardboard contract expired over 2 years ago and has not been renewed									x
6. Storage containers are not secured			x						

Figure 7. Ruth Transfer Site. Various images

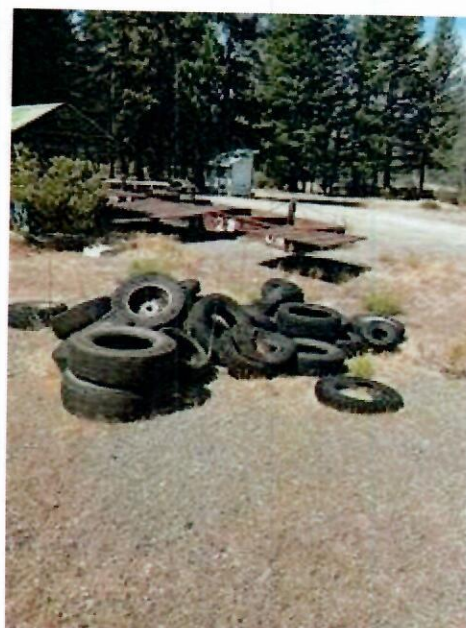
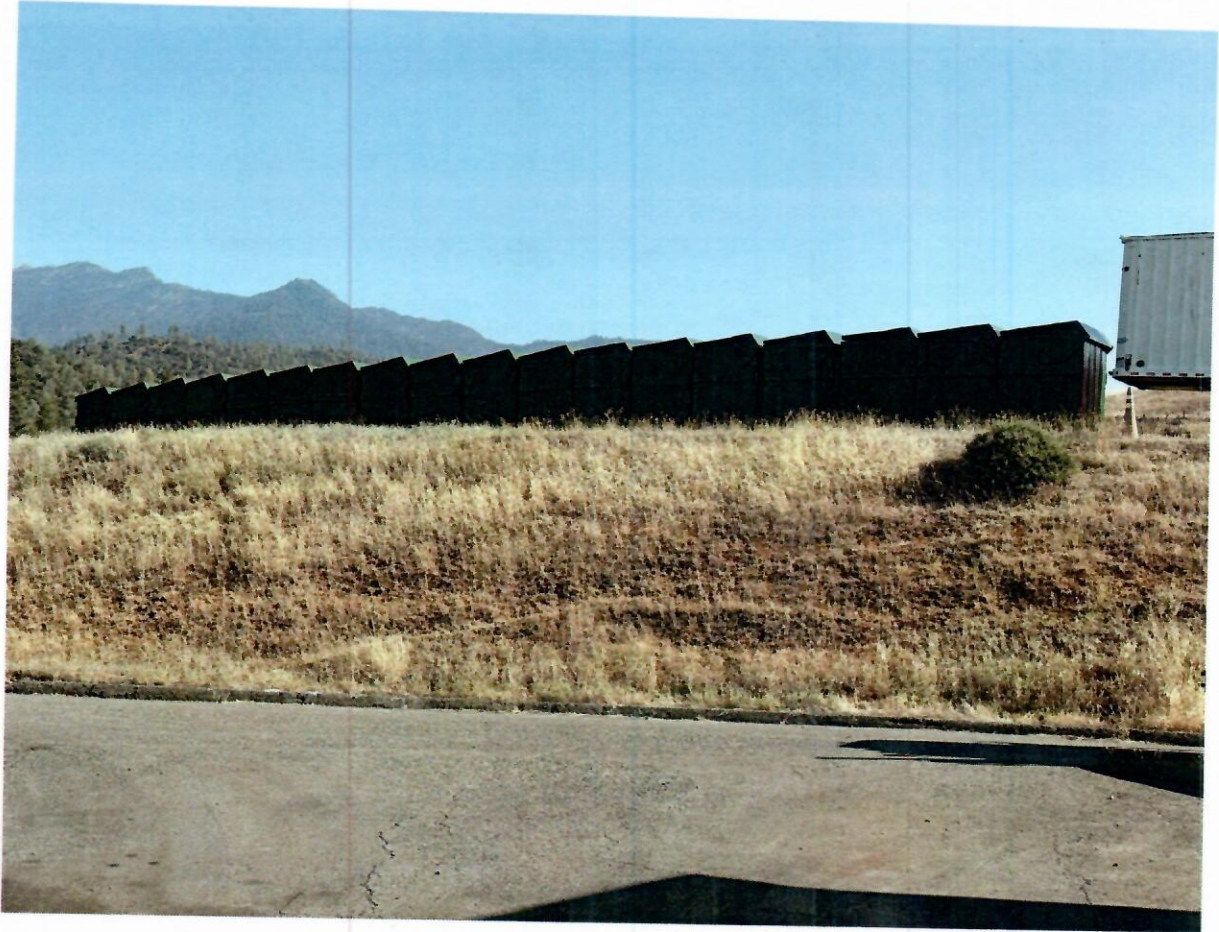


Figure 8. Van Duzen Transfer Site. Kiosk window broken



Figure 9. Weaverville Transfer Site. Undelivered new Bear Resistant Bins



Findings and Recommendations

F1. Not all the old bins that need to be replaced have been switched out. There is no coordinated time of delivery and no notification to the gate attendants of the date of delivery.

R1. A) Develop a master plan to have all new dumpsters placed in their appropriate locations.

B) As part of the master plan, communicate with each gate attendant as to when and where their dumpsters will be installed.

C) Make sure that all bin pockets are cleaned thoroughly before placement as part of the master plan.

F2. A lack of fire breaks around some of the transfer sites with a large accumulation of slash and yard debris creates a fire hazard. The Morbark tub grinder is underutilized because of a lack of qualified personnel.

R2. A. Train and qualify additional personnel to operate the tub grinder.

B. If Trinity County Solid Waste is unable to train additional personnel, sell the used Morbark tub grinder and contract with a local contractor to dispose of all yard waste and slash each spring.

F3. Big Bar, Hobel and Hyampom transfer sites do not have proper shade coverings for the gate attendants as required by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

R3. Construct proper permanent shade cover for Big Bar, Hobel and Hyampom to meet OSHA standards.

F4. The entry gates at Burnt Ranch transfer site allows for illegal dumping.

R4. Relocate the gate to deny any illegal dumping.

F5. Some transfer sites have unclear signage indicating their entrances, which creates a dangerous condition especially for those on major highways or major county roads.

R5. A) All transfer sites that utilize a major highway or County Road should be clearly marked with signage from both directions.

B) All signage should meet Caltrans specifications for size and distance from the entrance.

F6. Due to the local bears having access to garbage from in ground bins, the bears have carried large amounts of trash to surrounding areas of the transfer sites. This has created not only an unsightly mess around the transfer site, but a dangerous environment for the gate attendants who fear for their safety.

R6. A) Clean up and maintain all areas that have trash that has been spread by the bears.

B) Create procedures for gate attendants and supervisors to report bear issues using Wildlife Incident Report (WIR). This will allow everyone to know about active bears in the area. It also adds the capability to create a revocable bear depredation permit from Fish and Wildlife providing for bear removal.

F7. Each transfer site has inadequate signage. There is no ability to clearly read the hours of operation or any other information that the public needs to know.

R7. Trinity County Solid Waste needs to install large easy to read informative signs indicating:

- 1) Hours of operation.
- 2) Accepted materials for disposal.
- 3) Acceptable items for recycling.
- 4) Hazardous waste information.
- 5) Contact phone numbers.
- 6) Website information.

F8. Due to the shortage of gate attendants at the Hayfork transfer sites, there is a concern about items being properly disposed of in the metal, and yard waste areas.

R8. A) Assign a dedicated gate attendant to oversee the placement of all metal and yard waste to their correct locations.

B) All metals should be removed every 90 to 120 days.

F9. There is an issue with securing the transfer sites and containers from ongoing theft and vandalism problems.

R9. A) Install security doors and screens using proper security hardware.

B) Broken windows in any kiosk should be repaired or replaced and install a commercial security film.

F10. There is a lack of first aid supplies at all transfer site kiosks.

R10. A) Trinity County Solid Waste contract with a medical supply company to fully stock each kiosk with proper eyewash stations, bandages, etc. to be able to take care of any unforeseen medical emergencies.

B) The transfer site supervisor should be required to visit each site monthly to make sure safety practices are being adhered to and that safety supplies and security equipment are stocked and not expired. A record of these visits should be kept on site.

F11. Most kiosk sites have an inability to communicate with first responders or emergency crews in case of unforeseen events. The Trinity County Grand Jury recognizes that Burnt Ranch has received a satellite phone, based on reporting from the Trinity Journal.

R11. Where cell service is unavailable, issue all kiosk gate attendants a satellite phone and train them on the proper use of the satellite phone.

F12. When a gate attendant is unable to show up for their shift the transfer site closes to the public creating a hardship on the community it serves.

R12. A) Update Trinity County Solid Waste process to reflect what happens when transfer sites are not covered. Include the following:

1. When an attendant is unable to work their shift, provide an alternate gate attendant.
2. If the alternate gate attendant is unavailable, the transfer site supervisor should cover the shift so that the site is open to the public.

B) keep the website up to date with current pertinent information for the community.

REQUEST FOR RESPONSE

In accordance with Penal Code 933 and 933.05, the Trinity County Civil Grand Jury requires a response from the Trinity County Board of Supervisors within 90 days of receipt of this report.

In addition, the Trinity County Civil Grand Jury invites a response from the Trinity County Chief Administrative Officer within ~~90~~⁶⁰ days of receipt of this report.