

Grand Jury critical of response to past winter's storms

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The 2022-2023 Calaveras County Civil Grand Jury issued a second report on Tuesday.

In addition to its report on Animal Services titled "Teaching an Old Dog New Tricks," the jury took a look at the Calaveras County Environmental Management Agency, Calaveras County Office of Emergency Services, Calaveras County Air Pollution Control District and county fire agencies in a report titled "Calaveras County Fire and Environment: Everyday is Earth Day."

"Due to recent events related to wildfires, climate change, waterway pollution, and cannabis agriculture, the Calaveras County Grand Jury chose to focus our efforts on these agencies," the summary says. "In order to help reduce the risk of wildfires and improve public safety the Grand Jury has identified several areas to improve. Our main area of focus is to increase public safety. This would be accomplished by improving the use of alert systems, identifying opportunities for more effective land use options, and increasing the effectiveness of fire control and prevention measures."

The report adds: "With the limited staff and resources available to the (Environmental Management Agency), they are only able to track and monitor individual infractions involving environmental hazards. However, from a systems standpoint, tracking, compiling, and analyzing countywide data from multiple agencies is impractical due to the lack of data for strategic planning purposes."

Two of the findings by the jury were most wildfire fuelbreaks built in the county are not routinely maintained, which reduces the effectiveness of the fuelbreaks over time and recent storms resulting in major infrastructure damage have brought to light the confusion about responsibility for maintenance, preparation, and cleanup.

The complete report can be found at the grand jury's website – <http://grandjury.calaverasgov.us/> .