



**COUNTY OF LAKE  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

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September 23, 2025

The Honorable J. David Markham  
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court  
County of Lake  
255 North Forbes Street  
Lakeport, CA 95453

**RE: Response to the 2024/2025 Civil Grand Jury Final Report**

Dear Judge Markham:

Pursuant to Penal Code Section 933 et seq., the Board of Supervisors, which concurrently serves as the Board of Directors for Lake County Air Quality Management District and Lake County Watershed Protection District, submits this response to the FY 2024/2025 Civil Grand Jury's Final Report.

Our Board's responses are presented in the same sequence as the Recommendations appear in the Grand Jury's Final Report. We have provided responses to all items for which the report indicated a response was required by the Board of Supervisors.

The Lake County Board of Supervisors greatly appreciates each member of the Civil Grand Jury for their considerable efforts in preparing this report. The oversight role played by Civil Grand Juries is critical to ensuring just governance within the State of California. Thanks to the members of this Grand Jury for dutifully executing your civic role in a manner consistent with State Law.

While our Board cannot commit to implementing every Recommendation presented, we share the Civil Grand Jury's interest in ensuring all residents are well served, and continually strive to maintain and improve services within resource and other limitations.

**RESPONSE TO CIVIL GRAND JURY RECOMMENDATIONS**

**"VALLEY FIRE CONFLAGRATION: 10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY ON SEPTEMBER 12, 2025"**  
*No response was required or requested of the Board of Supervisors.*

**"A BURNING ISSUE IN LAKE COUNTY"**

*Please see Lake County Air Quality Management District's Response for further information responsive to this report.*

R1. That the Board of Supervisors change LCAQMD website RBP online application to include a link to "Hazard Reduction Burning" or "Exception" burns for residents who require necessary burns year-round through Cal Fire website "exception" burns.

DISAGREE, will not be implemented.

Explanation: Lake County's Air Pollution Control Officer, Douglas Gearhart, advises a process already exists for issuance of exemption permits in coordination with the appropriate Fire Agencies and is defined in District Rule Sections 433.5 and 1003.

R2. That the Board of Supervisors propose a Memorandum of Understanding between LCAQMD and the six separate fire districts to cooperate in the joint issuance of Residential Burn Permits.

DISAGREE, will not be implemented.

Explanation: Lake County's Air Pollution Control Officer, Douglas Gearhart, advises a process already exists for issuance of burn permits by Fire Protection Agencies and is defined in District Rule Section 1002 and Health & Safety Code Section 41853.

R3. That the Board of Supervisors diagnose and correct whatever issues there are with the LCAQMD computer system that are causing complaints about the system's not working properly when interfaced by the fire districts and used by the public.

AGREE, has been implemented. Lake County's Air Pollution Control Officer, Douglas Gearhart, advises several updates to the cloud-based permit system have been made since the District took ownership in September 2024, and additional updates will continue to be made as issues are identified.

R4. That the Board of Supervisors increase the staff of the LCAQMD office.

AGREE, has been implemented. Lake County's Air Pollution Control Officer, Douglas Gearhart, advises the District has hired 2 staff in 2025.

R5. That the Board of Supervisors supply more visible address signs outside the office of LCAQMD to make it easier for the public to locate.

AGREE, has been implemented.

R6. That the Board of Supervisors correct the information on the Residential Burn Permit under 'Alternative Vegetation Disposal Methods' that are currently incorrect.

DISAGREE, will not be implemented.

Explanation: Lake County's Air Pollution Control Officer, Douglas Gearhart, advises the specified correction is not needed. However, clarifications will be implemented, as appropriate, to promote public understanding.

R7. That the Board of Supervisors propose a Memorandum of Understanding between LCAQMD and the six separate fire districts regarding the role of the APCO in the fire districts'

monthly meetings, in order to facilitate open lines of communication between LCAQMD and the fire districts.

DISAGREE, will not be implemented.

Explanation: The Air Pollution Control Officer advises he has attended Fire District meetings as an invited guest. More regular attendance is not feasible within existing staffing and resource limitations.

R8. That the Board of Supervisors set up “satellite sites” for LCAQMD to assist County residents as needed.

DISAGREE, will not be implemented.

Explanation: This Recommendation cannot be implemented within existing staffing and resource limitations. The Air Pollution Control Officer further advises online burn permits are accessible from any computer.

R9. That the Board of Supervisors recommend ALL Residential Burn Permit applicants be required to view the CAL FIRE controlled burn video as part of obtaining a County burn permit, or “exception” burn permit, regardless of the [CAL FIRE Board of Forestry and Fire Protection, BFFP] special fire responsibility area they are in (LRA, SRA, or FRA).

DISAGREE, will not be implemented.

Explanation: The Air Pollution Control Officer advises the CAL FIRE video is accessible to applicants within the existing online burn permit system.

R10. That the Board of Supervisors propose a Memorandum of Understanding between LCAQMD and the six separate fire districts to cooperate in joint issuance of controlled “EXCEPTION” burns as necessary.

DISAGREE, will not be implemented.

Explanation: The Air Pollution Control Officer advises the legal process already exists for issuance of exemption permits which meet the requirements of District Rule Section 1003 and California Health and Safety Code Section 41862.

R11. That the Board of Supervisors make changes that are needed to the Residential Burn Permit Application Form as per the suggestions proposed in this report, including spaces on the form for purchasers to enter the number of actual piles to be burned, size of the piles, detailed list of contents of piles being burned, and schematic plot to mark placement of piles and burn plan for the parcel, as well as making the permit “WARNINGS” much stronger and more visible on the form.

DISAGREE, will not be implemented.

Explanation: The Air Pollution Control Officer advises updates to the online permit system are in process (*as described in response to Recommendation 3*), in accordance with legal and statutory requirements.

**“A BUILDING IN TIME”**

*No response was required or requested of the Board of Supervisors.*

**“ACCOLADE: ‘EVERY 15 MINUTES’”**

**“ACCOLADE: GEORGINA MARIE GUARDADO”**

**“ACCOLADE: THE LAKE COUNTY BOOKMOBILE”**

**“ACCOLADE FOR OPERATION TANGO MIKE: A 21-YEAR COMMITMENT TO MILITARY SUPPORT”**

**“ACCOLADE: OLGA MARTIN STEELE HOMETOWN HERO”**

*No response was required or requested of the Board of Supervisors, but this Board very much appreciates these deserving persons and organizations being recognized by the 2024-25 Lake County Civil Grand Jury. Please see the Lake County Librarian’s Response for further information responsive to reports on Georgina Marie Guardado and the Lake County Bookmobile.*

**“HIGHWAY HAVOC: FIRST RESPONDERS’ ADAPTATION DURING CATTLE TRUCK OVERTURNS”**

*Please see Lake County Sheriff-Coroner and Animal Care and Control Responses for further information responsive to this report.*

R2. That fire and law enforcement first responders be enabled to access reliable Starlink satellite communications capability throughout the county.

DISAGREE, will not be implemented.

Explanation: Lake County’s Fire Protection Districts are independent, and not under the jurisdiction of the Lake County Board of Supervisors. However, Lake County Sheriff-Coroner, Lucas Bingham, advises the Sheriff’s Office and Office of Emergency Services have Starlink devices meeting needs in areas of County responsibility.

R5. That Lake County Animal Care and Control draft a Large Animal Response Annex for the County Emergency Operations Plan to be presented to the Board of Supervisors.

AGREE, will be implemented by the end of Fiscal Year 2025-26.

R6. That Lake County Animal Care and Control develop operational procedures that address its responses to large-animal injury incidents to be presented to the Board of Supervisors. (F-9)

AGREE, will be implemented by the end of Fiscal Year 2025-26.

R7. That the Board of Supervisors raise the starting salary of a veterinarian for Animal Care and Control and/or institute a signing/relocation bonus to attract suitable candidates.

AGREE, has been implemented.

R8. That Lake County [Animal] Care and Control reactivate its LEAP program so that it can be activated by first responders during emergencies.

DISAGREE, will not be implemented.

Explanation: While Animal Care and Control personnel respond to animal-focused emergency needs during disaster events, LEAP is not a County-administered program.

*NOTE: The Lake County Board of Supervisors was likewise required to respond to “R9., R10., and R11.” However, no corresponding Recommendations are included in the Grand Jury’s Final Report.*

**“DISTRICT ATTORNEY’S OFFICE LETS POTENTIAL CASES GO UNFILED DUE TO EXPIRATION OF STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS”**

*No response was required or requested of the Board of Supervisors. Reviewers are directed to the District Attorney’s own Response.*

**“LAKE COUNTY’S DIRECTOR-LEVEL HIRING PRACTICES”**

R1. That the County’s hiring process for director-level positions include a final interview in-person that also includes department staff introduction.

DISAGREE, will not be implemented.

Explanation: The intent of the Grand Jury’s Recommendation is well appreciated. Existing County policy allows needed flexibility in the hiring process. Retaining the ability to use remote interviews geographically broadens candidate pools, helping to attract qualified professionals who may not yet be local. Candidates are likewise not introduced to staff until successful completion of background checks, at which point a final offer is made; these existing practices protect the privacy of all involved and the integrity of the recruiting process.

R2. That the Board of Supervisors consider providing newly-hired department heads with a property it owns for temporary use or contract with area rentals for interim housing.

DISAGREE, will not be implemented.

Explanation: At present, the County does not own residential housing units, and budgetary constraints prohibit implementation the Grand Jury’s Recommendation at this time.

R3. That the Board of Supervisors increase the relocation assistance to at least \$7,000.

DISAGREE, will not be implemented.

Explanation: Budgetary limitations preclude implementation the Grand Jury’s Recommendation at this time. The existing \$3,500 relocation reimbursement is intended to offset moving-related costs in accordance with IRS guidelines, and does not cover temporary housing or rental expenses.

R4. That the Board of Supervisors require the Human Resources to assemble a list of “approved” local realtors for new hires from out of the area who are seeking housing.

DISAGREE, will not be implemented.

Explanation: Administration and Human Resources have no regulatory authority over local realtors. Vetting required to assemble an “approved” list, as contemplated by the Grand Jury, would therefore be outside of the scope of Departmental responsibility. Further, resource limitations preclude implementation of this Recommendation.

R5. That the Board of Supervisors conduct an exit interview with any departing department director.

DISAGREE, will not be implemented.

Explanation: Staff have found exit interviews often fail to produce meaningful or actionable insights; the existing voluntary process likewise reflects existing staffing and resource constraints.

R6. That the Board of Supervisors direct Human Resources to conduct an exit interview with all terminating employees.

DISAGREE, will not be implemented.

Explanation: See response to R5.

R7. That the Board of Supervisors direct Human Resources to include demographic data for new hires from out-of-state in its Employee Moving Resource Guide.

DISAGREE, will not be implemented.

Explanation: The Employee Moving Resource Guide is intended to serve solely as a general resource to assist new County employees. The Civil Grand Jury's own report references highly accessible US Census Bureau data.

**“THE STATUS OF THE CYANOBACTERIA BLOOM IN CLEAR LAKE”**

R1. That the Board of Supervisors direct their department heads to post warnings on websites and Facebook pages regarding the location of the Buoys and their potential hazards to boaters.

AGREE, will be implemented.

Explanation: County Water Resources Director, Pawan Upadhyay has affirmed his Department's intent to post appropriate warnings to digital resources and signage at public ramps once buoys are installed. The timeline for installation is not precisely known, at this time.

R2. That the Board of Supervisors have Public Works Department post signs at public ramps warning of the Buoy's location and potential collision hazard.

AGREE, will be implemented.

Explanation: See R1, above.

**“DOES LAKE PILLSBURY HAVE A FUTURE?”**

*Please see the Lake County Sheriff-Coroner Response for further information responsive to this report.*

R3. That the Board of Supervisors develop a plan to prepare for alternative water resources and supplies for Lake Pillsbury upon the decommissioning of the Scott Dam.

DISAGREE, will not be implemented.

Explanation: This matter is not fully within the authority and jurisdiction of the County of Lake. As members of the Grand Jury will be aware, the Board of Supervisors contracted with SLR International Corporation to analyze the potential effects of removal of Scott Dam, and this Board has consistently expressed concern over regional water supply security, should Decommissioning be allowed to proceed, and advocated for the needs of residents in the Lake Pillsbury area. The Board of Supervisors opposes PG&E's proposed Decommissioning of Scott Dam.

R4. That the Board of Supervisors provide funding of road paving or repavement of essential roads into and out of the Lake Pillsbury area.

DISAGREE, will not be implemented.

Explanation: Again, this matter is not fully within the authority and jurisdiction of the County of Lake. Roads into and out of the Lake Pillsbury area are maintained by a network of entities including Lake and Mendocino Counties' respective Public Works Departments, Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E), and the United States Forest Service. All County responsibility roads are maintained in accordance with priority and within resource limitations. The Board of Supervisors has consistently stated PG&E should be expected to improve roads in the area of Lake Pillsbury, should Decommissioning of Scott Dam proceed.

R7. That the Board of Supervisors conduct an official study to explore the benefits and costs of increasing the height of Scott Dam by ten feet.

DISAGREE, will not be implemented.

Explanation: The County of Lake does not own or operate Scott Dam. Five alternatives scenarios to PG&E proposed Decommissioning of Scott Dam were presented by SLR International Corporation in their report accessible here, and referenced in recent Protest and Comments submitted to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC): <https://www.lakecountyca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/14812/Protest-and-Comments-of-the-County-of-Lake>

R8. That the Board of Supervisors obtain grants to pay for water storage for Lake Pillsbury and Tule Lake.

DISAGREE, will not be implemented.

Explanation: This Grand Jury Recommendation stems from a Finding that "Raising the level of Scott Dam could solve a myriad of issues." The County of Lake does not own or operate Scott Dam. Lake Pillsbury provides critical water storage that affects areas throughout Northern California, and the Board of Supervisors has consistently argued PG&E's proposed Decommissioning should not be allowed to proceed, as it constitutes a gamble with the water supply of 600,000 Californians.

**"MEDICAL SERVICES AT THE LAKE COUNTY JAIL"**

*Please additionally see the Response from Lake County Health Services.*

R1. That the Board of Supervisors direct the Health Services Director to establish a formal protocol for emergency access to critical medications through local pharmacies when Omnicare delivery is unavailable.

AGREE, will be implemented by February 28, 2026. Lake County's Health Services Director, Anthony Arton, concurs with this direction and timeline.

R2. That the Board of Supervisors direct the Health Services Director to amend the Wellpath contract to include telehealth for medication approvals when in-person staff are unavailable.

AGREE, will be implemented by February 28, 2026. Lake County's Health Services Director, Anthony Arton, concurs with this direction and timeline.

R3. That the Board of Supervisors direct the Health Services Director to negotiate the next Wellpath contract to add the psychiatric technician classification, or offer psychiatric technician training to existing LVN staff.

AGREE, will be implemented by February 28, 2026. Lake County's Health Services Director, Anthony Arton, concurs with this direction and timeline.

R4. That the Board of Supervisors compel the Health Services Director to report yearly the dollar value of unstaffed RN hours and associated reimbursements as required by contract.

AGREE, will be implemented by February 28, 2026. Lake County's Health Services Director, Anthony Arton, concurs with this direction and timeline.

R5. That the Board of Supervisors establish penalties in future Wellpath contracts when the auditing of RN hours has not been completed on time.

DISAGREE, will not be implemented.

Explanation: Financial penalties for unfilled RN shifts are already incorporated into the existing contract as reimbursement provisions. Implementing additional penalties would not only result in increased costs to the County but could also jeopardize the collaborative and effective working relationship with the current jail medical contractor.

R6. The Board of Supervisors invoke a penalty for the current delay in processing audit of the RN hours.

DISAGREE, will not be implemented.

Explanation: The existing Agreement will be appropriately enforced, in accordance with its defined terms.

**“‘DON'T MOVE A MUSSEL,’ AN ALARMING NEW THREAT TO LAKE COUNTY WATERWAYS”**

*Please additionally see the Response from the Sheriff-Coroner.*

R1. That the Board of Supervisors include the Golden Mussel in Ordinance 2936.

AGREE, will be implemented by the end of Fiscal Year 2025-26.

R2. That the Board of Supervisors increase fines from \$1000 to \$5000.

DISAGREE, will not be implemented.

Explanation: As members of the Grand Jury will be aware, adjustments were made to the Article IX of Chapter 15 of the Lake County Code April 15, 2025, in consideration of threats posed by Golden Mussels and resource limitations. At this time, Lake County's Water Resources Director, Pawan Upadhyay, PhD, does not recommend an increase in fines.

R3. That the Board of Supervisors include all watercrafts that can be transported by a vehicle's roof be included in the Lake County inspection program.

DISAGREE, will not be implemented. Adjustments were made to the Article IX of Chapter 15 of the Lake County Code April 15, 2025, in consideration of threats posed by



Golden Mussels and resource limitations. At this time, Lake County's Water Resources Director, Pawan Upadhyay, PhD, does not recommend a change to the definition of "Water vessel."

R4. That the Lake County Sheriff's Office add another floating officer on Clearlake from May thru September.

AGREE has been implemented. Per Lake County Sheriff, Lucas Bingham, a part-time Deputy has been hired and assigned to the boat patrol unit during the boating season, May through September

R5. That the Lake County Board of Supervisors create a Memorandum of Understanding with the Yolo County Board of Supervisors for financial support to prevent possible mussel infestation in Clear Lake.

NEUTRAL, requires further analysis, to be completed by December 16, 2025.

R6. That the Lake County Board of Supervisors create a Memorandum of Understanding with the seventeen Lake County water districts to focus on the prevention of a mussel infestation in Clear Lake.

NEUTRAL, requires further analysis, to be completed by December 16, 2025.

**"THE STATE OF GROUNDWATER IN LAKE COUNTY"**

*Please additionally see detailed Responses to the Grand Jury's Findings and Recommendations from the Water Resources Director.*

R1. That the Board of Supervisors designate flood-managed aquifer recharge areas in the Big Valley water basin.

AGREE, will be implemented by December 31, 2027.

Explanation: Please see the detailed Response from Lake County's Water Resources Director, Pawan Upadhyay, PhD.

R2. That the Board of Supervisors conduct a comprehensive review of agricultural water use in the Big Valley Basin.

DISAGREE, will not be implemented.

Explanation: See Response to R1.

R3. The Board of Supervisors evaluate the feasibility of implementing hydro filtration technologies in the Big Valley Basin.

DISAGREE, will not be implemented.

Explanation: Lake County's Water Resources Director, Pawan Upadhyay, PhD, agrees, in concept, that hydro filtration is one option to increase the amount of water available for residents and agricultural interests, and is supportive of a related Feasibility Study. At this time, no related budget request has been submitted. This Board would consider a request from the Water Resources Director, if submitted pursuant to the normative budget process. As no timeline is available at this time, "Disagree, will not be implemented" is the most appropriate available response. Please also see R1.

**“GRAND JURY REPORT ON SITE VISIT TO MENDOCINO COUNTY JUVENILE HALL:  
APRIL 9, 2025”**

*No response was required or requested of the Board of Supervisors.*

**“GRAND JURY SITE VISIT TO KONOCTI CONSERVATION CAMP #27: APRIL 10, 2025”**

*No response was required or requested of the Board of Supervisors.*

**“LITHIUM-ION BATTERY FIRES: LEARNING TO MANAGE THE RISK”**

*Please additionally see the Response from the Sheriff-Coroner.*

R1. That the Board of Supervisors authorize OES to prepare educational materials on lithium-ion batteries and fires for distribution to all County employees.

DISAGREE, will not be implemented.

Explanation: The Lake County Sheriff, as Emergency Services Director for the County of Lake, is authorized to prepare and distribute educational materials on threats to Lake County, and residents are encouraged to visit [Ready.LakeCountyCA.gov](https://Ready.LakeCountyCA.gov). No further authorization is needed from the Board of Supervisors to enact this Recommendation.

AGREE will be implemented within six months for the Sheriff's Office. The Sheriff/Director of the Office of Emergency Services does not have the authority to dictate the policies, procedures, or training of the Lakeport, Clearlake Police Departments. The Office of Emergency Services will coordinate with and assist the Police Departments in obtaining educational materials when and if requested.

R-4 That the fire and law enforcement agencies within the County collect and disseminate data on the ignition source of lithium-ion battery fires to support accurate statistics and thus risk reduction.

DISAGREE will not be implemented. The Lake County Sheriff's Office does not investigate or determine the cause of fires.

**“ACCOLADE: BEVERLY BENEDICT HILL”**

*No response was required or requested of the Board of Supervisors. Our Board is deeply appreciative of the tremendous contributions Beverly Benedict Hill has made to Lake County's Civil Grand Jury.*

This concludes the Board of Supervisors' Response to the 2024/2025 Civil Grand Jury Final Report.

Sincerely,

**LAKE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

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Eddie Crandell  
Chair, Lake County Board of Supervisors

cc: 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury Foreperson  
2025-2026 Civil Grand Jury Foreperson