

MODOC COUNTY GRAND JURY

P.O. Box 78, Alturas, CA 96101

Telephone: (530) 233-6516

Wendy J. Dier
Presiding Judge Superior Court

Brandy Malcolm
Court Executive Officer

Scott Swasey
Foreperson

PRESS RELEASE

Modoc County Grand Jury Releases Reports to the Public

June 23, 2025

Modoc County, California – The 2024-25 Modoc County Civil Grand Jury released its reports to the public today. They can be found online at https://www.co.modoc.ca.us/grand_jury/index.php.

A Civil Grand Jury's primary duty is to act as a watchdog, ensuring that local government operates efficiently and in the best interests of the public.

Foreperson Scott Swasey explained that this year's Grand Jury did not just want to find problems and report on them, but rather look into areas of community concern – whether real or perceived -- and produce a report that would be both informative to the community and beneficial to the leaders of the organizations that were reviewed. He expressed hope that the readers of these reports find them beneficial and educational and that County and District leaders understand the Grand Jury's sense of gratitude for all of their fine work.

Modoc County Superior Court Presiding Judge, Wendy Dier, was very impressed with the sincere effort and commitment to quality demonstrated by the Grand Jury and commended them on the job they have done and the report they have prepared.

The individual report summaries follow.

Report on Elections Procedures

The Modoc County Civil Grand Jury (Grand Jury) conducted a thorough review of election procedures to ensure the security, accuracy, and efficiency of the election process for Modoc County. This investigation focused on voter records

management, ballot transportation, counting processes, the security and operation of voting machines, and staffing adequacy. Our investigation revealed commendable diligence and a high level of professionalism in handling sensitive election materials.

Voters should feel comfortable that all aspects related to elections in Modoc County are being properly and securely administered.

Nevertheless, some opportunities for improvements, particularly in ballot transportation and staffing redundancy, were identified.

Report on Likely Fire Protection District *aka* Likely Fire Department

A Civil Grand Jury's primary duty is to act as a watchdog, ensuring that local government operates efficiently and in the best interests of the public. This duty includes investigating government operations, accounts, and records and extends to the nearly 40 separate Special Districts in Modoc County. Noting that it had been five years since the Modoc County Civil Grand Jury (Grand Jury) had reviewed a Special District, we decided to enquire into one that dealt with public safety -- The Likely Fire Protection District *aka* the Likely Fire Department (LFD).

After review, it was learned that it had been over ten years since the LFD had last been reviewed by the Grand Jury. An inquiry was undertaken that included interviews with officials, and a review of documents provided.

Our investigation revealed that while the LFD robustly fulfills a critical role in providing emergency services to the Likely area, some issues related to policies, procedures, and oversight could benefit from review and clarification.

The LFD operates on a limited budget and relies heavily on volunteer efforts and fundraising to provide services to the community. Despite their dedication, the Grand Jury believes there are areas where LFD's governance and operational standards could be strengthened to better serve and protect the public.

Report on Modoc County Jail

California Civil Grand Juries have an annual statutory duty under the Penal Code to "inquire into the condition and management of prisons within the county". This year the Modoc County Civil Grand Jury's review of the Modoc County Jail focused on detailed reviews of recent inspection reports conducted by the

California Bureau of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) as well as several past Grand Jury reports, and responses from the Modoc County Board of Supervisors, County Administrative Officer and Sheriff. These reviews yielded several common issues, but the Grand Jury did note that the BSCC's latest targeted inspection found the Modoc County Jail to be in compliance with Title 24 Minimum Standards for Local Detention Facilities. The Grand Jury also conducted a facility tour and personnel interviews.

The areas of continuing concern relate to facility maintenance, staffing, and planning for future needs. The Grand Jury notes the progress of the Modoc County Sheriff's Office and its Corrections Staff in addressing these issues. As noted in the BSCC report past maintenance issues have been successfully addressed, and the County continues to pursue avenues to design, fund and build a new jail.

The Grand Jury's key concern this year is that several key areas of the jail still lack functional camera coverage. This raises safety concerns for both staff and inmates. Additional challenges include the delay in constructing a new jail facility, shortages of female deputies, and the rising costs of mental health-related hospital transports.

The Sheriff's Office reported they are actively pursuing a contract to update and replace the camera system.

The Grand Jury also noted and commends the increased collaboration between law enforcement agencies in Modoc County, which has strengthened public safety throughout the region.

Report on Social Services Staffing

The decision of the Modoc County Civil Grand Jury (Grand Jury) to investigate the Social Services office that serves our county was prompted by the high number of job advertisements regularly placed in the local newspaper, The Modoc Record.

The Grand Jury found that rural California county governments experience more challenges filling positions with qualified applicants than urban areas. This appears to be especially true for the office of Social Services in Modoc County.

The Grand Jury further learned that the application process for a Social Services position, although dictated by State requirements and systems, is complex and cumbersome.

The Grand Jury recommends that Social Services explore ways to develop more personal recruitment strategies to engage applicants and guide them through the application processes.

We note that we did not explore any other aspects of Modoc County Social Services and offer no findings or recommendations beyond recruitment and staffing.

2023-24 Grand Jury Report Responses

The 2024-2025 Modoc County Civil Grand Jury (Grand Jury) has reviewed the responses to the recommendations of the 2023-2024 Grand Jury's investigative report into the Modoc County Jail. This summary addresses the responses from the Modoc County Sheriff and Board of Supervisors. Although respondents did not adopt all recommendations, it is the Grand Jury's opinion that their responses comply with Penal Code requirements.

Ten-Year Lookback at Grand Jury Reports

This year, the Modoc County Grand Jury conducted a 10-year lookback on Grand Jury activities and found some alarming issues. First and foremost, the Grand Jury was unable to find any report written by the 2021-22 or 2022-23 Grand Juries. Further, the Grand Jury was unable to find responses to numerous Findings and Recommendations. As noted previously, State law requires responses to Findings and Recommendations.

Modoc residents interested in Modoc County Civil Grand Jury service should visit the Modoc Superior Court at 205 South East Street or telephone 530-233-6516.

To file a Citizen's Complaint, complete and mail the form available at https://www.co.modoc.ca.us/grand_jury/index.php.