PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

El Dorado County Waste Disposal System

Reason for the Report

The Grand Jury selected the waste disposal system of the County for a 2002/2003 general review.

Scope of the Investigation

The members of the Grand Jury:

- Interviewed the El Dorado County Director of Environmental Management;
- Visited the Diamond Springs waste disposal facility on February 18, 2003;
- Was briefed on the process of sorting recyclables;
- Inspected the buildings and grounds of the Diamond Springs facility;
- Reviewed Grand Jury reports for 2000/2001 and 2001/2002 and found no findings or recommendations pertaining to waste management.

Background

The County was mandated by the State of California to reduce, by 50 percent, the amount of waste going to landfills by 2002. An extension was allowed to July 2005, with a good faith review in July 2004. The Grand Jury investigation revealed that the County of El Dorado is not making good progress toward meeting the State mandate. The contractor is recycling about 25 percent of total waste while other waste removal companies are recycling at least 45 percent. A \$10,000 per day fine for violation of the State's mandate is possible after the July 2004 state review.

The County is reviewing the contract with the contractor to determine if the contractor is moving toward compliance with the State mandate To help meet this mandate, the contractor replaced upper management in November 2002 at the Diamond Springs facility. The new manager has stated they are now recycling at least 25 percent of the waste. New programs such as Blue Bags and Yellow Bags for recycling material are being considered.

Non-recycled trash is trucked to a landfill near Reno, Nevada. Mixed recyclables are sent to the contractor's sorting facility near Lodi, California. Some of cardboard and newspapers are baled at the Diamond Springs facility for resale to recycling companies. All measurements are tracked by incoming and outgoing weights. With County growth on the rise the Diamond Springs facility

may not be able to meet the demand. The entire facility will probably need to be replaced or modernized to increase capacity.

At present the facility, with approximately 63 employees, operates from 6:00a.m to 6:00p.m. seven days a week. It is closed only two days a year, Independence Day and Christmas Day.

Findings

- F1. The waste management contractor is currently reducing the waste to landfills by 25%.
- F2. The State of California has extended the County's required date of compliance with the State mandate to July 2005, with a good faith review to be conducted in July 2004.
- F3. The fine to the County for not meeting the mandate is \$10,000 per day.
- F4. The County is reviewing its contract with the contractor.
- F5. The contractor is trucking non-recycled waste to a landfill near Reno, Nevada, and mixed recyclables to their facility near Lodi, California.
- F6. The Diamond Springs facility has new management.
- F7. The growth of the County may exceed the capacity of waste processing at the Diamond Springs facility in three or four years.

Recommendation

The County should establish, in conjunction with the contractor, a plan that will guarantee compliance.

Responses Required for Findings

F1 through F7 El Dorado County Environmental Management Department

F2 through F4 El Dorado County Board of Supervisors

Responses Required for Recommendation

El Dorado County Environmental Management Department

El Dorado County Board of Supervisors