

# Oversight of mining under jury microscope

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Calaveras County's civil grand jury in its first report of 2025 is critical of the county planning department's oversight of mining operations.

Released on Monday, the report titled "Calaveras County Planning Department- Are We Running Out of Rock?" outlines 10 findings and 16 recommendations from the jury's investigation.

Among the grand jury's findings:

- The county's planning department does not regularly report surface mine inspection results to the Board of Supervisors, which as the lead agency under the state's Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975 has ultimate authority over the operation of mining in Calaveras, including the issuing of financial penalties for violations.
- The planning department charges surface mining operators a flat fee for annual inspections that has not increased in years, meaning the county has not been compensated for the actual time and material costs of inspections.
- The county has not conducted a thorough review of its existing permitted supply of sand, gravel, and aggregate, which could impact the future availability of these minerals as the county's population and development needs increase.
- The county does not maintain a current map of abandoned mines within its jurisdiction, despite hundreds of these potentially hazardous sites located throughout Calaveras.

Among the jury's recommendations:

- The planning department should adopt a schedule for reporting the annual mine inspection results to the Board of Supervisors, including any recommendations for administrative action, on an annual basis or more frequently as deemed necessary, beginning Dec. 31 of this year.
- The planning department should issue more comprehensive inspection reports, which include scaled site maps and annual annotated photo documentation of site conditions beginning Dec. 31.
- The planning department should charge each surface mine operator reasonable reimbursement rates for time and other expenses associated with its annual inspection, rather than charging a flat rate beginning Dec. 31.
- The Board of Supervisors should establish a mineral advisory committee for recommendations related to the management of mineral reserves countywide as suggested in the General Plan by Dec. 31.
- The Board of Supervisors should designate a county geologist, who is licensed to practice in the State of California, to provide continuity on geological matters across all departments in county government by Dec. 31.
- The planning department should maintain a database of known abandoned mines in Calaveras County for internal use by all affected county and state departments, such as the sheriff's office and fire departments in the case of an emergency, to be implemented by Dec. 31.