

EAST COUNTY

Juvenile detention camp gets a reprieve

By Anne Krueger

STAFF WRITER

The county Probation Department has abandoned plans to shut down a center for delinquent boys in Campo, with officials saying a second look at the finances showed the move was too costly.

Chief Probation Officer Mack Jenkins said he decided it didn't make financial sense to close the East County camp next month and move the boys to another probation camp at Barrett Lake. Up to 168 boys housed at Camp Barrett were then to be moved to a former medium-security jail at Descanso.

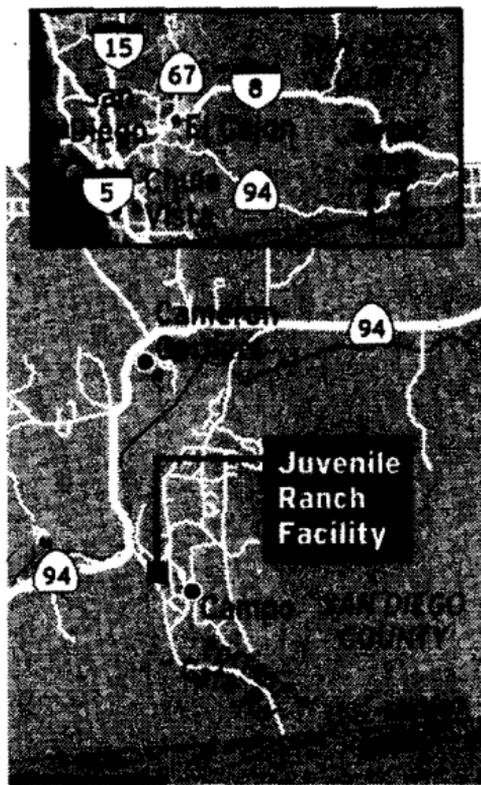
Jenkins said seven new showers would need to be built at the Descanso facility to meet the requirements of the state Corrections Standards Authority, which oversees juvenile detention facilities. The cost of building the showers turned out to be more than expected, and the Probation Department learned it would be getting \$5.7 million less from the state than it anticipated.

"The move became cost-prohibitive," Jenkins said. A financial breakdown wasn't immediately available from the Probation Department.

When the plan was announced, Jenkins said closing the Campo facility would save the county about \$7.9 million over five years in maintenance costs, and \$300,000 annually in operating costs. He said the Probation Department will be looking for ways to save on maintenance costs at the Campo facility, housed in buildings originally constructed for a World War II Army base.

The Sheriff's Department closed the 440-bed Descanso jail in May. Sheriff's officials said it was too expensive to operate because it relied on a septic system and has higher transportation costs for the 30-mile trip from Descanso to courts in San Diego.

The Campo facility is made up of two camps, Rancho del Rayo and Rancho Del Campo, which offer programs for drug and alcohol abuse and to address behavioral issues. Most boys at the camp are 16 or younger, while boys at Camp Barrett are generally 16 or 17 years old. Youths are committed to the camps for up to a year.



SOURCE: SanGIS

AARON STECKELBERG / Union-Tribune