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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
October 20, 2022

CONVICTED CHILD MOLESTER SENTENCED TO STATE HOSPITAL FOR INDETERMINATE PERIOD

An Oroville man, serving time in state prison for a child pornography criminal conviction, was in court yesterday where a judge declared him to be a Sexually Violent Predator and civilly committed him to a state hospital to serve an indeterminate, possibly life, term.

Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey said **Jeffery Kuehl, age 51**, of Oroville, was convicted in Butte County Superior Court of a lewd act with a child under the age of 14 in December 1995. He was sentenced to eight years of probation at the time. As part of his probation, Kuehl received mandated sex offender treatment and was required to abide by a lifetime sex offender registration.

Ramsey said in February 2017, Kuehl was convicted of possession of child pornography and was ultimately sentenced to state prison for 3 years. Kuehl was scheduled to be released from prison and put on parole in 2020. However, because of his molest conviction from 1995, California law required Kuehl to be evaluated by two psychologists from the California Department of State Hospitals to determine if he had a mental disorder and was therefore a danger to children.

Ramsey said his office received copies of the doctors' reports and filed a petition in March 2020 with the local court to have the defendant declared a Sexually Violent Predator (SVP) and committed to the Department of State Hospitals for an indeterminate period of time.

Ramsey said Kuehl was entitled to a jury trial and a determination of proof beyond a reasonable doubt as to a determination of his status as an SVP who would be a danger to the public. Kuehl decided to waive a jury trial and instead proceeded with a court trial, where a judge would make the determination of the defendant's status.

During the four-day court trial, Butte County Deputy District Attorney Judith Stark-Modlin put on the state hospital psychologists, who said Kuehl admitted to them he had not only molested the one victim in 1995, but he had actually molested 18 other previously unknown victims.

Kuehl testified on his behalf at the trial and admitted to molesting 19 girls, ages 4-10, with his most recent victim molestation when he was 38 years old.

Superior Court Judge Jesus Rodriguez found Kuehl qualified as an SVP and committed him to the Department of State Hospitals for an indeterminate period.

Ramsey said, "Kuehl did not name his previous victims and therefore prosecution of those crimes may not be possible. However, Kuehl will be held in the state hospital indeterminately, allowing those unnamed victims some modicum of justice."

Ramsey said that Kuehl would not be subject to release until doctors from the state hospital determine that he is safe to release and a judge agrees.

Ramsey also noted any persons who believe they were victims of Kuehl may have the right to access victim assistance counseling funds. Ramsey encouraged those victims to call the District Attorney Victim Witness Bureau at (530) 538-7340.

