

## **2010 Innovations Award Application**

**The Council of State Governments**

**Deadline:** March 1, 2010

ID # (assigned by CSG): **10-W-20WA**

Please provide the following information, adding space as necessary:

**State:** Washington

**Assign Program Category:** Corrections, Environment

**1. Program Name:** Sustainable Prisons Project

**2. Administering Agency:** Washington State Department of Corrections

**3. Contact Person:** Dan Pacholke, Deputy Prisons Director

**4. Address:** 7345 Linderson Way, Tumwater, WA 98501

**5. Telephone Number:** (360) 725-8779

**6. FAX Number:** (360) 664-4056

**7. E-mail Address:** dan.pacholke@doc.wa.gov

**8. Web site Address:** [www.sustainableprisons.org](http://www.sustainableprisons.org)

**9. Please provide a two-sentence description of the program.**

The project mission is to reduce the environmental, economic and human costs of prisons by training offenders and correctional staff in sustainable practices. Equally important, the program brings science into prisons by helping scientists conduct ecological research and conserve biodiversity through projects with offenders, college students and community partners.

**10. How long has this program been operational (month and year)? Note: the program must be between 9 months and 5 years old on March 1, 2010 to be considered.**

Initiated on July 1, 2008 (1 year, 8 months)

**11. Why was the program created? What problems or issues was it designed to address?**

Initially the goal was to reduce wastewater at a minimum-security prison to allow for an expansion. The staff and offenders found innovative ways to reduce wastewater and immediately began to look for other ways to reduce waste and make the facility more resource efficient, including worm composting, organic gardens, beekeeping, water catchment and more. In 2008 DOC created a partnership with The Evergreen State College to develop ways to make prisons across the state more sustainable and to provide research opportunities for the university.

**12. Describe the specific activities and operations of the program in chronological order.**

The Sustainable Prisons Project makes DOC facilities more energy efficient, reduces waste, reduces water usage, reduces fuel consumption and reduces the agency's impact on the environment. It also connects inmates to nature by exposing them to organic gardening, beekeeping, recycling and species rehabilitation.

The activities focus on three areas:

**Education and training:** We inspire and train inmates and correctional staff through programs designed to improve prison sustainability and connect participants to the larger world of science and conservation. Instructors range from biologists and farmers to business entrepreneurs and green energy experts.

**Sustainable operation of prisons:** We help correctional staff develop cost-effective, environmentally sound practices for operating prisons and engage offenders with direct responsibility for these activities where security is in place. Activities include recycling, composting, and organic gardening.

**Scientific research and conservation:** With support from visiting scientists, the program carry out ecological research and conservation projects involving inmates, college students and community partners. Current projects include rearing endangered frogs, propagating native prairie plants and a beekeeping training program.

The project's current activities focus on prisons that represent a broad spectrum of population size, gender, infrastructure, and security levels, which maximizes the extensibility of this project to other locations. Working with professional evaluators, the program documents the knowledge, behavior and attitudes of all participants and serves as a model for other prisons and residential institutions such as military bases, assisted living centers and summer camps.

**13. Why is the program a new and creative approach or method?**

Although a number of prison projects across the country have involved some of the elements of the program – raising food from prison gardens, recycling shoes and clothing solar panels – no other state DOC has developed a comprehensive sustainability program that has this scope or scale. The program has formed partnerships with DOC, The Evergreen State College, nonprofit organizations and other state agencies to make prisons more sustainable and provide research opportunities for academia.

The project reduced operational costs at prisons, including food, water, electricity, wastewater, landfill and clothing. The project also helps The Evergreen State College study the impact of sustainability on inmates and prison staffs. DOC also is participating in conservation efforts

outside the prisons by helping reintroduce the endangered Oregon spotted frog and helping restore wetlands at an Army base near Tacoma. The program take dogs that are considered unfit for adoption from local animal shelters and have inmates train them to be either pets or service animals.

The project encourages educational opportunities for the inmates, who can now receive academic credit by participating in some sustainable projects. Organic gardening, beekeeping and dog training provide low-cost and productive therapy to inmates.

Finally, the sustainability program connects prisons with their local communities by making the facility a resource for colleges, nonprofit organizations like The Nature Conservancy, Fort Lewis, and the state Department of Fish and Wildlife and local animal shelters.

**14. What were the program's start-up costs? (Provide details about specific purchases for this program, staffing needs and other financial expenditures, as well as existing materials, technology and staff already in place.)**

The startup costs for the operation of this program were minimal. The scientist involved with the first sustainability and conservation project (learning how to grow moss for the horticulture trade to decrease collecting pressure on wild moss populations) carried out this work with federal research funds. Subsequent efforts to implement sustainability operations within that prison (organic garden, worm composting, recycling shed) came from existing inmate labor and recycled materials. Staffing needs were fulfilled by existing administrators, officers, and scientists outside the Department of Corrections. Technology was minimal, and records were archived in existing systems of outside scientists.

**15. What are the program's annual operational costs?**

\$180,000 per year

**16. How is the program funded?**

The Washington State Department of Corrections established a Memorandum of Agreement with The Evergreen State College. These funds have been supplemented by actual and in-kind donations of nonprofits organizations (The Nature Conservancy, the International Canopy Network); federal agencies (U.S. Army), and Washington state agencies (Department of State Fish and Wildlife Service),.

**17. Did this program require the passage of legislation, executive order or regulations?**

No.

**18. What equipment, technology and software are used to operate and administer this program?**

This project has required relatively little equipment, technology, software, and infrastructure. The project purchased an audio-visual projector to use during lectures at prisons. One of the research projects – raising endangered frogs – incurred the renovation of an existing shed for the young tadpoles, and the installation of a large plastic pond for the adults. A small amount of electrical

modification was needed. Another project, the growing of 200,000 plugs of prairie plants, required the Department of Corrections to move a large existing greenhouse that was donated, and to build three hoop houses. All of this was done with existing staff and inmate help. Minor supplies were required for installation of a beekeeping operation at two prisons. A laptop computer was purchased with program funds.

**19. To the best of your knowledge, did this program originate in your state? If yes, please indicate the innovator's name, present address, telephone number and e-mail address.**

Yes, the project originated in Washington state. Co-innovators are Dan Pacholke, Deputy Director of Prisons 7345 Linderson Way, Tumwater, WA 98501, (360) 725-8779, [dan.pacholke@doc.wa.gov](mailto:dan.pacholke@doc.wa.gov); and Dr. Nalini M. Nadkarni, Member of the Faculty, The Evergreen State College, Olympia, WA, (360) 867-6621; [nadkarnn@evergreen.edu](mailto:nadkarnn@evergreen.edu)

**20. Are you aware of similar programs in other states? If yes, which ones and how does this program differ?**

No other state has a sustainability program of this scale or scope. Although corrections systems in a few other states promote gardening, composting, recycling and solar energy, the Sustainable Prisons Project is the first to involve inmates in hands-on conservation and science research projects that are coupled with efforts to reduce waste, consumption and environmental impact.

**21. Has the program been fully implemented? If no, what actions remain to be taken?**

No. Although the program has been successful in bringing science, sustainability, and conservation projects to four prisons, the next step is to develop this as a model that can be applied to other prisons in Washington and in other states. Another goal is to apply parts or the entire program at other "enforced residential institutions" such as assisted-living centers. To accomplish this model aspect, project leaders will need to enhance the evaluation and training efforts to export what has been successful with current efforts.

**22. Briefly evaluate (pro and con) the program's effectiveness in addressing the defined problems or issues. Provide tangible examples.**

The program reduced the amount of waste produced by Washington prisons, reduced water usage, and reduced DOC's impact on the environment. Examples include:

- A 10 percent reduction in gallons of water per inmate per day.
- A 35 percent reduction in pounds of solid waste generated per inmate per day.
- A 13 percent reduction in facility energy use.
- A 17 percent reduction in vehicle fuel use.

The program has developed unique partnerships – The Nature Conservancy, Department of Fish and Wildlife, the U.S. Army, animal shelters and others – that would not have developed otherwise. The project also has allowed researchers from The Evergreen State College to work side by side with inmates, a population that historically has not been involved with academic research.

One challenge is being able to determine whether sustainability has an impact on recidivism. Research shows that gardening has therapeutic benefits, and therapy is a major component of reducing recidivism. Program managers with the Sustainable Prisons Project are studying whether offenders who participate in the project have lower rates of recidivism.

**23. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?**

The program has grown both in scope and in depth. The sustainable operations projects, which began on a modest level within a single prison, are now active throughout all four of the pilot facilities in the form of gardens, composting, recycling and academic research. The educational programs have ramped up from a single set of sporadic lectures at one prison to regular, monthly lecture series in three of the pilot prisons with an average attendance of about 70 inmates and staff members. Research projects have expanded from one moss horticulture project to multiple research and conservation projects that have attracted top-level academic input involving scientists at universities and state agencies. A positive media relations strategy has resulted in national and international news coverage, with six TV news segments, five segments on National Public Radio, more than 20 articles in major magazines, and more than 100 articles in newspapers across Washington state and around the world, including Australia, Indonesia and Russia. Based on available circulation figures, the estimated readership, viewership and listenership of the project is more than 8.5 million people.

**24. What limitations or obstacles might other states expect to encounter if they attempt to adopt this program?**

Dealing with requisite aspects of corrections bureaucracy can be daunting for institutions of higher education and conservation/science agencies and organizations. In particular, security issues for bringing in equipment, supplies, technology and recording equipment can reduce the scope of scientific projects that can be included. Ignorance of protocols on the part of collaborators and fear of working in prisons and with inmates may keep some researchers and sustainability experts from participating. However, DOC and its partners have surmounted many of these issues in the corrections centers where we have worked, and can provide references and materials to guide others to overcome them in other states.

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None for The Evergreen State College; what about DOC?

Save in .doc or rtf. Return completed application electronically to [innovations@csg.org](mailto:innovations@csg.org) or mail to:

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