

The Salt Lake Tribune

Utah inmates to get unique chance at public service
Salt Lake County • Council OK's money to develop pond for lesser-chub breeding.

BY MIKE GORRELL

THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

PUBLISHED: OCTOBER 3, 2014 02:36PM

UPDATED: OCTOBER 3, 2014 02:36PM

Salt Lake County Jail inmates will get a chance to help save the lesser chub from extinction.

Sheriff Jim Winder convinced the County Council this week to let him take \$150,000 out of a prisoner-services account to develop a pond next to the jail that would be used to breed the endangered fish.

“Once we do the ground work and get this thing moving along, all the labor will be inmate labor,” Winder said. “They’ll learn science, math and the biology of the lesser chub. It is a very cool project.”

The idea for the lesser-chub program came from the Sustainability in Prisons Project operated by the Washington Department of Corrections and Evergreen State College.

“They’ve done dozens of projects,” the sheriff noted, citing one in which Washington inmates were involved extensively in the reintroduction of native mosses.

Money for this venture will come from a fund inmates contribute to. “Whenever they buy anything from our commissary, a portion goes into a dedicated account for inmates services, like our horticulture program,” Winder said, referring to a successful gardening program the jail has run the past four years.

This chub project would extend that green-thumb effort.

Winder intends to develop the pond on 2.5 acres north of the jail at 3365 S. 900 West. Set aside initially as the site of a future wing in an expanded jail, the parcel was an eyesore until last year, when the sheriff’s office attacked its flourishing crop of weeds, he said.

Now Winder wants to grade the parcel to create a pond, which the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources would stock with lesser chub, a native species of the Colorado River system, in hopes of increasing its numbers.

“If we get [the regrading] done by Dec. 1, we can get fish in it,” said Matt Dumont, head of jail programs in the sheriff’s office.

Winder has doubts about whether a new jail wing will be built at the site because criminal-justice officials are looking more to smaller corrections facilities spread around the community rather than large ones.

Councilmen Max Burdick and Richard Snelgrove expressed support for the proposal, especially after the sheriff said Washington officials have empirical evidence that the approach improves inmate behavior and reduces recidivism.

The council voted unanimously for the project.

mikeg@sltrib.com

Twitter: @sltribmikeg

<http://www.sltrib.com/sltrib/politics/58433464-90/chub-inmates-jail-lesser.html.csp>