

Sustainability in Prisons Project Newsletter



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Directions

If viewing online, click on a title to read the article as a blog. PDF of the newsletter available:

<http://sustainabilityinprisons.org/resources/spp-publications/>.

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New directions for SPP-Evergreen team

By SPP Co-Director Kelli Bush

Following six years of dedicated leadership from Dr. Carri LeRoy, Evergreen's team for the Sustainability in Prisons Project (SPP) enters a [new era](#). We are so pleased that Carri will continue to support and influence SPP as our [Senior Science Advisor](#). SPP is also now a [Public Service Center](#) for The Evergreen State College, playing a greater role in Evergreen's campus community and receiving increased recognition and support. Together we are continually improving and growing SPP, and we know there's still so much more to do!

SPP partners from Evergreen and Washington State Department of Corrections have completed updates to SPP's mission and vision statements. The new text represents greater emphases on education and change, acknowledgement of current environmental and justice system challenges, values shared by SPP partners, and a more succinct, stand-alone mission statement.

Mission Statement:

We empower sustainable change by bringing nature, science, and environmental education into prisons.

Vision:

In response to the dual crises of ecological degradation and mass incarceration, we aim to reduce recidivism while improving human well-being and ecosystem health. SPP brings together incarcerated individuals, scientists, corrections staff, students, and program partners to promote education, conserve biodiversity, practice sustainability, and help build healthy communities. Together, we reduce the environmental, economic, and human costs of prisons.

Going forward, our top priority is identifying mechanisms to award college credit to incarcerated participants in SPP certificate programs. Education is the most effective way to reduce recidivism. These certificate programs serve as high quality apprenticeships where participants receive extensive training, education, and experience addressing complex conservation issues, delivering environmental



Butterfly technician Kristina Faires receives a certificate for her academic and technical accomplishments in the program program coordinator Seth Dorman poses with her to recognize her achievements. Photo by Keegan Curry.

education, or participating in our workshop series. Recently, Dr. Carri LeRoy provided valuable review that informed significant improvements to SPP certifications. We are so grateful she plans to continue providing certification oversight to ensure program quality and consistency. SPP's certificate recipients are clearly worthy of academic recognition; they demonstrate advanced environmental knowledge and application on a daily basis.

Our programs are unconventional, and retrofitting accreditation to existing practices is a challenge, but this long-time effort seems to be gaining momentum. Acknowledging SPP certificate completion with college

credit could serve to complement post-secondary education with allied prison education programs and/or inspire continued education post-release.

As always, thanks for your partnership and support of SPP. We're so pleased to be offering these programs with you!

Turtles plus woodpeckers plus...

Text by Jessica Brown, SPP Turtle Program Coordinator, Philip Fischer, U.S. Forest Service volunteer and Adam Mlady, Biological Science Technician.

Photos by Jessica Brown

[Cedar Creek Corrections Center](#) (Cedar Creek) was home to the very first endangered animal program in a prison: they raised and released hundreds of [Oregon spotted frogs](#) from 2009-2015. In 2018, ecological conservation at Cedar Creek is thriving and evolving to encompass a small array of conservation and sustainability programs. Offering an array of programs allows us to partner with a larger group of incarcerated technicians; there are five at this time, and we plan to add a few more. All participants will have a new position title of Biological Science Technicians, and will receive education and training in the turtle, beekeeping and woodpecker programs, and—later on—a new aquaponics program.

Turtles

Cedar Creek hosts [endangered pond turtles](#) that need daily attention; from Technician Adam Mlady's [writing](#) last month, "currently we have two females, one male, and are expecting seven more to be dropped



Biological Science Technician Adam Mlady holding two of the Western Pond Turtles currently housed at Cedar Creek Correctional Center.

off later today...Taking care of them is very rewarding. I get a sense of unity and accomplishment in ensuring they are clean and fed, and working them back to health. It's even a sustainable project to feed them! They eat a mix of goodies, but one of the days the pond turtles get mealworms, which we grow and harvest ourselves. Eggs to larva to pupae to beetle, we are hands-on (gloved of course!) the whole way through."



USFS trainers, SPP coordinator, and participants of the Woodpecker Nest Monitoring program training pose with bird specimens.



Biological Science Technician Modesto Silva reviewing video footage of a Northern Flicker cavity nest. This video station sits atop the mealworm rearing bins for the western pond turtle program.

Woodpeckers

In November, the Woodpecker Nest Monitoring Project was launched with a two-day training for all five turtle technicians, four greenhouse workers, and two other interested individuals. The purpose of the Woodpecker Nest Monitoring Video Review is to support a [multi-year research project](#) through the [U.S. Forest Service \(USFS\)](#) focused on identification of nest predators.

Woodpeckers are a keystone species that provide cavities not only for their own nesting use, but also for a broad spectrum of secondary cavity users including small mammals and other birds. [Video footage](#) comes from cameras operating 24/7 at cavity nests. This is the only sure way to document nest depredation, however, reviewing the enormous amount of video footage requires an equally enormous amount of reviewer time. In order to accurately monitor video footage, correctly identify species, and describe animal behaviors, reviewers need considerable training.

Participants at Cedar Creek received six hours of education and training from [Teresa Lorenz, USFS biologist](#) and [Phil Fischer, USFS volunteer](#), covering woodpecker, raptor, song bird, and small mammal identification; background information relating to the project, including project protocol and species behavior descriptions; and monitoring and data recording techniques. In the past, video monitoring

has only been performed by undergraduate students, however, collaboration between USFS and [SPP](#) has made it possible to also bring this type of education and experience into prison.

And coming soon...



Partners in endangered species conservation for Cedar Creek Corrections Center, from left to right: Technician, John Fitzpatrick, Superintendent Douglas Cole, Loretta Adams (SPP Liaison), Philip Fischer (U.S. Forest Service), Kelli Bush (SPP Co-Director, Teresa Lorenz (U.S. Forest Service), Technician William Anglemyer)

Cedar Creek has long had a productive greenhouse, including a small aquaponics system. The old aquaponics will be replaced with a more productive system designed by [Symbiotic Cycles LLC](#), an Olympia-based company dedicated to the application of regenerative food production through aquaponics. The new design will support production of fresh greens year round for use in the kitchen.

Technician Mlady has said, "I'm really excited about the upcoming aquaponics pond we will be building. It is huge, and

tucked away safely up in our camp's greenhouse. Once we get the plumbing correctly set up, the koi fish will be able to fertilize our selected plants and vegetables. Brilliant system." Aquaponics training will start sometime this March, and the system should be up and running soon after.

Climate Change Symposium in Prison: Incarcerated people creating solutions

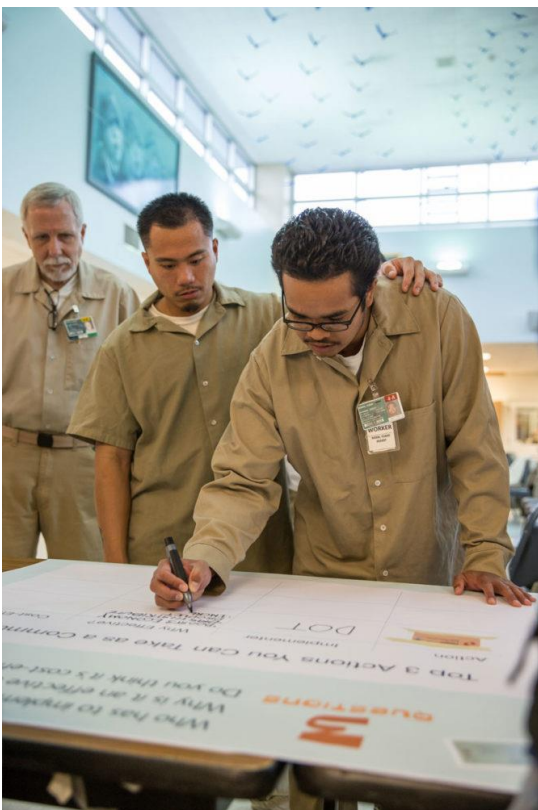
Text by Erin Lynam, SPP Workshop Series Coordinator



*On October 18th at Stafford Creek Corrections Center, we held the **first ever Climate Change Symposium in a prison**. The five hour event brought together 91 environmental students, eight SPP-Evergreen staff members, five guest speakers, and five DOC staff.*



[Thurston Regional Planning Council \(TRPC\)](#) presented on region-wide planning and action for climate change resilience. Then they asked participants to break into small groups to play their board game, Resilience Road. Each group collectively selected and prioritized responses to a climate change challenge for a hypothetical community. This small group included SPP Co-Director Kelli Bush. Photo by Ricky Osborne.



TRPC graciously donated a copy of Resilience Road to Stafford Creek Corrections Center so that students can continue to play and inform their work as environmental stewards. Photo by Ricky Osborne.



Incarcerated environmentalist and longtime SPP participant Toby Erhart shared what climate change means to him and what actions he's taking to address it. After staff, guests, and students had a lively discussion over a shared lunch, Johnny Mao, Johnny Fikru, and James Williams (pictured) of [Got Green](#) described social and environmental justice work in low income and communities of color. Photos by Ricky Osborne.



During Got Green's presentation, James Williams stated that even though the students may be apart from their community, they were not forgotten and he considered them part of his community. This acknowledgement of oneness is an incredibly rare moment in the prison environment and was moving to witness. Photo by Ricky Osborne.



To wrap up the symposium and reflect on everything they learned, SPP invited the students to share what they found most important and what steps to take next. Spending the day learning alongside individuals who are emphatically committed to keeping our planet healthy was inspiring. Photo by Ricky Osborne.

Liaisons are our Roots for Success

By Bethany Shepler, SPP Green Track Coordinator



A Roots of Success graduate at CRCC shows his appreciation for the program. Photo by DOC staff

[Roots of Success](#) (Roots) is an environmental education program that promotes personal, local, regional, and global awareness of environmental problems and solutions. Roots is offered by the Sustainability in Prisons Project in ten of Washington State’s prisons. The program is championed by incarcerated instructors and students, with more than 1,200 participants graduating from the program since its inception in 2013.

Roots’ unsung heroes are the DOC staff members who serve as program sponsors, or “Roots Liaisons”. The program would not be possible if not for the incredible corrections staff who it. Even though I

can't highlight all of them, I want to recognize a few extraordinary people who make Roots of Success possible: Chris McGill at [WSP](#), Gena Brock and [CRCC](#), and Kelly Peterson at [SCCC](#).



The Roots Liaisons are in charge of finding and scheduling the classroom, ensuring secure and functional multimedia equipment, responding to needs of instructors and students, and program reporting. This program would not be possible without the Liaisons' determination and hard work.

Chris McGill (top photo) is the Roots Liaison at Washington State Penitentiary (WSP). He manages the amazing Sustainable Practices Lab, where Roots serves as a prerequisite for jobs in the lab's shops. Chris first got involved with sustainable programming when he and small team of inmates decided to transform an empty space at the prison into a garden.



Gena Brock is Roots Liaison for Coyote Ridge Corrections Center (CRCC); in the photo to the left, she poses with Roots of Success Instructors at the prison. As the Roots Liaison, she has provided steadfast program support and is always thinking of ways to improve the program at CRCC.



Kelly Peterson (bottom photo) at Stafford Creek Corrections Center (SCCC) is a relative newcomer to the Roots program. Kelly recently took on the role of sustainability liaison at SCCC, and is the point of contact for everything from beekeeping to gardening to the [aquaponic "EVM" nursery](#). SCCC's Roots program has been going strong since 2013, and we fully trust her to continue that success. She is dedicated, productive, and positive—pretty much everything you would want in a partner!

Turning a new leaf with emergent vegetated mats!

Photos and text by Amanda Mintz, SPP EVM Program Coordinator



Prior to delivery, we rolled up the mats and let them drain for 24 hours. Even with reduced water, each mat weighs about 60 pounds when it is delivered—healthy roots and shoots are heavy!

In mid-October, SPP delivered our third batch of [Emergent pre-Vegetated Mats](#) (EVM) to wetlands at West Rocky Prairie, [Joint Base Lewis McChord](#) (JBLM) and Mima Creek Preserve. At these sites, the [Center for Natural Lands Management](#) (CNLM) is conducting an experiment using the mats as part of a [reed canarygrass](#) suppression strategy. Replacing the reed canarygrass with wetland plants will help restore habitat for the threatened [Oregon spotted frog](#). This project is supported with funding and resources by the [Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife](#), [United States Fish and Wildlife Service](#), CNLM, and JBLM.



Staff and volunteers from CNLM and JBLM lay three, 1-meter by 3-meter mats side by side and anchor them with biodegradable stakes

Each mat contains a combination of native wetland plants: spreading rush (*Juncus supiniformis*), tall mannagrass (*Glyceria elata*), and creeping spike-rush (*Eleocharis palustris*). The mats were produced in Stafford Creek Corrections Center's [aquaponics greenhouse](#) by a team of corrections staff, incarcerated technicians, and SPP-Evergreen staff.

At each site, the mats are arranged in squares, three meters on each side. Staff and volunteers from JBLM and CNLM prepared the sites using a variety of combinations of herbicide, mowing, and [solarization](#) to remove the reed canarygrass; on the day of mat installation, they removed dead

grass and root material with weed cutters making it easier for the plants in the mats to make contact



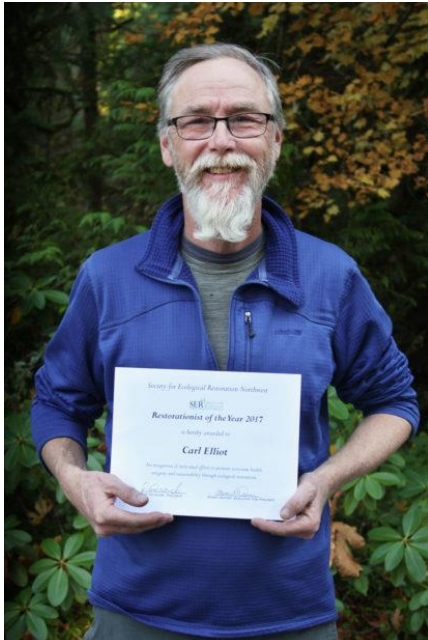
Three, 3-meter square mats in each replicate (experimental copy), three replicates per site, and three sites!

with soil and establish themselves quickly. Teams will revisit each square to determine which of the various reed canarygrass treatments best allowed the native wetland species to take hold.

Will the coconut coir mats prevent reed canarygrass from growing back? Will the native plants grow quickly enough to establish healthy populations, competing for space with the reed canarygrass? Stay tuned to find out!

SPP Manager Carl Elliott Receives Restorationist of the Year Award!

by Kelli Bush, SPP Co-Director



Carl shows off his Restorationist of the Year 2017 award. Photo by Keegan Curry

[Sustainability in Prisons Project's](#) (SPP) [Conservation Nursery Manager](#) Carl Elliott has been awarded the [Society for Ecological Restoration Northwest Chapter's](#) (SERNW) **Restorationist of the Year Award for 2017.**

The award is given “in recognition of individual efforts to promote ecosystem health, integrity and sustainability through ecological restoration.” Carl brings more than two decades of professional experience to SPP, including appearances as the “Radio Gardener” on a Seattle radio program, ecological restoration work with the Nature Conservancy, experience teaching organic gardening classes and serving as a founding board member of Seattle Youth Garden Works. During his graduate work in [The Evergreen State College, Master of Environmental Studies](#) program, Carl started SPP’s first Conservation Nursery program in a [Washington Department of Corrections](#) facility in 2009.

SERNW presented this award in recognition of Carl’s “innovative application of horticulture to the restoration field in developing a conservation nursery program that additionally improves outcomes and conditions for incarcerated people in WA State’s correctional system.” With this award they “recognize the unique challenges and creativity needed” to develop a conservation nursery program in a prison while also providing



Carl talks with incarcerated partners during a prairie nursery tour. Photo by Ricky Osborne

education and training for incarcerated partners. They also state that Carl's work has "greatly expanded capacity for native seed production needed for glacial outwash prairie restoration."

With partner support, Carl has helped grow the SPP Conservation Nursery Program from one prison to three prisons,

producing over 2 million native plants of about 60 different species. In 2016, Carl and the SPP staff he oversees, delivered more than 130 educational workshops and seminars for incarcerated program participants. More than 130 incarcerated people have participated in these programs since 2010. We are so grateful for all of Carl's contributions to SPP and pleased that he has been recognized for his excellent work!



Photo by Ricky Osborne

[Sustainability in Prisons Project](#) (SPP) empowers sustainable change by bringing nature, science, and environmental education into prisons.

To contact us email: spp@evergreen.edu

Much more information available on our website and social media:

sustainabilityinprisons.org
www.facebook.com/sustainabilityinprisons/
twitter.com/SPP_WA