

# In Focus 5

## Returning Home

by Marisa Pushee, SPP Conservation Coordinator



After months of veterinary treatment and recovery, the Sustainability in Prisons Project (SPP) released the latest batch of western pond turtles. On April 10<sup>th</sup>, ten turtles scrambled back to their native ponds in Lakewood, Washington on the west coast of the United States. These turtles had been cared for by incarcerated biological technicians working in an SPP program.



The turtle named Yellow poses for a photo in the turtle house at CCCC

SPP is a partnership between The Evergreen State College and Washington State Department of Corrections that empowers sustainable change by bringing nature, science, and environmental education into prisons.



Biological Technician Rathgeber holds a turtle at the release

A state-listed endangered species, many western pond turtles in Washington struggle with shell disease. Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) biologists trap turtles that show signs of the disease and transport them for veterinary treatment. Turtles that need longer term care while they recover spend the winter at Cedar Creek Corrections Center(CCCC), a minimum custody correctional facility, with WDFW-trained biological technicians. When veterinarians and WDFW biologists

deem them ready, the team releases the turtles back to their home habitat.

In 2019, release day was extra special because of Bill Anglemeyer's presence. Bill worked as an SPP biological technician while incarcerated at Cedar Creek. Upon his release, Bill was accepted as a student at The Evergreen State College. While a student, he continues to contribute to the SPP program by delivering training to current technicians. On release day, Bill said, **"Although the turtles need treatment, they are wild and they don't like to be in a captive environment; they take to the murky pond like a prisoner to freedom."**



Biological Technician McLain releases a western pond turtle