Inmates help restore habitat through sagebrush planting program

By IDAHO PRESS STAFF newsroom@idahopress.com

Oct 14, 2018

BOISE — Incarcerated men and women participate in habitat restoration and ecology through the Sagebrush in Prisons Project, a collaboration between the Idaho Department of Correction and community and state organizations.

Offenders at South Boise Women's Correctional Center and Idaho State Correctional Center have taken part in the program in hand with the Sustainability in Prisons Project, Bureau of Land Management and Institute for Applied Ecology.

Since 2015, offenders at the two correctional centers have grown over 233,000 sagebrush and bitterbrush seedlings for habitat improvement projects on public lands, according to the Idaho Department of Correction.

https://www.idahopress.com/news/local/inmates-help-restore-habitat-through-sagebrush-planting-program/article_63c517bf-77a0-5b1b-9acc-efc1d624f45c.html

This year, the over 80,000 plants grown are designated to rehabilitate habitat that has been damaged by wildfire. The plants will benefit species that depend on them such as antelope, elk and mule deer.

According to the department, more than 60 women at South Boise Women's Correctional Center have participated in the sagebrush program, which includes not only planting but lectures about wildlife and ecology.

On October 18, members of the program propagation team will help the Idaho Department of Fish and Game plant over 700 sagebrush seedlings in an area that burned near Lucky Peak Reservoir this past summer, said the department.

"This is the first time we've been able to take the inmates out to plant their seedlings," said Nancy DeWitt from the Institute for Applied Ecology in a release. "It's wonderful that they can see their efforts come full circle, from sowing seeds and watering thousands of little sagebrush all summer, to actually putting their plants in the ground for the benefit of wildlife."

The program aims to provide offenders with a sense of accomplishment and chance to give back to their community, said the department. At the end of their work, inmates will receive certificates recognizing their participation.