

# Sustainability in Prisons Project Fiscal Year 2019 Annual Report



Toward the end of the most productive rearing season yet, partners of the Taylor's checkerspot butterfly program visited one of the butterfly's release sites and saw native Salish lowlands prairie first-hand. Butterfly technicians and Evergreen and WA Corrections staff learned more about the prairie from the Washington State Dept. of Fish and Wildlife biologist who supports the program. Just as wonderful, they got to see adult checkerspots in flight in their native habitat! Photo by Keegan Curry.



the  
**evergreen**  
state college



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## Executive Summary: Sustainability in Prisons Project, FY19

Fiscal year 2019 (FY19, July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019) was another successful year for the [Sustainability in Prisons Project](#) (SPP). The SPP partnership was founded by [Washington Department of Corrections](#) (WA Corrections) and [The Evergreen State College](#) (Evergreen) in 2003, and has grown to include many collaborators. The full SPP annual report aims to acknowledge all contributing partners and describe all science, environmental education, and sustainability programs in WA prisons. This year, SPP partners reported **212 programs and 198 partner organizations** statewide. Our executive summary highlights select FY19 programs, partnerships, and developments plus goals for FY20 (July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020).

**[Gardening curriculum](#):** In partnership with three community organizations, corrections staff and incarcerated individuals at MCC and SCCC developed a new, peer-led gardening course. A new graduate student position, funded entirely by foundation donors, coordinated the highly collaborative endeavor.

**[Butterfly program expansion](#):** With funding from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, partners constructed a second, 12' x 28' greenhouse at MCCCW. The custom-designed structure doubles capacity to breed and raise federally-endangered Taylor's checkerspot butterflies for release onto Salish lowland prairies.

**[New science and sustainability education materials](#):** To increase science education in existing programs, SPP-Evergreen staff designed and developed new learning guides to be accessible, informative, and empowering. Guides include topics such as butterfly husbandry and scientific illustration. Staff also organized all existing SPP-Evergreen education materials to maximize access and use.

**[Water Conservation Pilot](#):** WA Corrections piloted new domestic water valves and controllers at the Washington State Penitentiary. The result was an overall water savings of 81.5%. Projected project return on investment is only 1.52 years.

**[WSDOT workshop series](#):** WSDOT and SPP partners presented on education and employment pathways at multiple conferences and piloted a workshop series at MCCCW and CCCC. Workshop topics included wetland ecology, restoration, stormwater careers, and competing for state employment.

**[Reentry pathways](#):** SPP-Evergreen staff advocated for resources and helped secure an Education Navigator position at The Evergreen State College. WA Corrections and the [State Board of Community and Technical Colleges](#) fund the position, the first to be hosted by a four-year college.

**[Partnership with Pacific National Laboratory and Department of Commerce](#):** WA Corrections met with legislators and stakeholders across the agency to develop WA Corrections Facilities Energy and Water Strategy.

**[Call for writing in prison](#):** SPP partners stewarded a “call for writing” at eight WA prisons—requesting writings from incarcerated people on science in prisons—and 44 writers responded. SPP-Evergreen combined excerpts and submitted for the volume *STEM Education in US Prisons*, to be in print fall 2020.

**[Increased seed production](#):** Partners in prairie conservation programs at WCCW and WCC are making sizable contributions to regional restoration ecology. Incarcerated technicians received education and training to support their efforts to raise seeds for rare flowering plants.

**[Empowering incarcerated expertise and leadership](#):** Numerous incarcerated partners provided expertise, guidance, and leadership; they contributed to research projects, events, presentations, and

planning meetings. For example: co-MCing SCCC/SPP [Reentry event](#), presenting MCC's compost program at an [international conference](#), and co-authoring chapters for the [new gardening course](#).

**Energy Efficiency and Solar Grants:** WA Corrections was awarded grant funds to assist with an energy conservation project at the Coyote Ridge Corrections Center.

**Evergreen Coalition Building:** SPP-Evergreen staff continued to support development of the Evergreen Education Coalition for Justice Involved Students, which includes faculty, students, and staff from Tacoma and Olympia campuses. SPP supported several events over the past year: first annual Coalition meeting, numerous planning meetings, the SCCC/SPP Reentry event, and conference presentations.

**Beekeeping educational materials:** SPP-Evergreen and Washington State Beekeepers Association (WASBA) formalized our partnership this year, creating a strong foundation for SPP bee programs. WASBA published upgraded educational curricula for three levels of beekeepers, which Evergreen distributes. Both partners are committed to high quality bee education and certifications statewide.

## Anticipated Programs Highlights, FY20

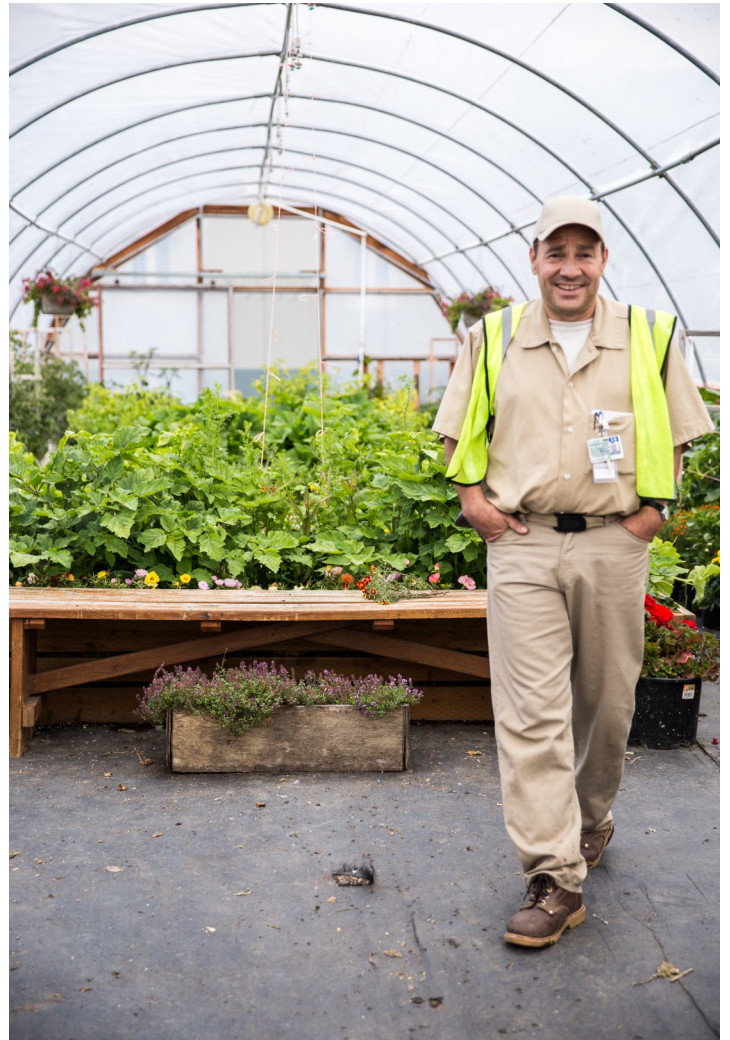
Program/Project	Partners and facility	Planned outcomes
Short film project	Formerly incarcerated SPP participants	Phase 1 of short film describing experiences in SPP programs; more interview subjects included in next phase of project
Enhanced curricula	All facilities, incarcerated students, staff sponsors and experts	Piloted <a href="#">gardening curriculum</a> ; drafted statewide compost curriculum; published more learning guides
Book and Article Publications	NASA, U of UT, AZ State U and incarcerated authors	Contributed to peer-reviewed <a href="#">journal article on astrobiology lectures</a> ; published chapter in STEM education in prisons volume
Increased operations alignment	All facilities	Shared agreements, plans, and processes adopted by WA Corrections, SPP-Evergreen, and program partners, increasing efficiency
WSDOT education, training & employment	WSDOT; all facilities	Broadened <a href="#">partner</a> participation; increased outreach to incarcerated individuals; added education and training
Increased connection to programs in other states	Network contacts (mostly national)	Presentations at Higher Ed in Prisons Conference, Ecological Prison Programs Conference; potential collaboration on national program inventory
Certifications and academic credit	All facilities and academic partners	<a href="#">Award academic credit</a> to currently incarcerated SPP certificated internship students

## Conclusion

We are grateful to the many people who have contributed to the collective accomplishments described throughout this report. Our partnerships among incarcerated people, corrections staff, scientists, students, and program partners are impactful, innovative, challenging, and successful. We are dedicated to continuous improvement. We remain committed to addressing all stakeholders' needs, fostering a culture of mutual respect, combining resources to increase capacity, and prioritizing initiatives best aligned with SPP goals. Together we are increasing access to science and sustainability education and opportunities to participate in the environmental movement.

# SPP's Year in Photos, 2018-2019

**Gardening curriculum:** In response to years of demand, SPP partners are creating a widely-accessible [gardening course for corrections](#) environments. This is a highly collaborative endeavor, engaging and incorporating the expertise of [Oregon Food Bank](#), [Institute for Applied Ecology](#), [University Beyond Bars](#), and SPP partners from [Washington State Department of Corrections](#) (WA Corrections) and [the Evergreen State College](#) (SPP-Evergreen). Perhaps even more crucial, the course is co-authored and reviewed by incarcerated gardeners at [Stafford Creek Corrections Center](#), [Monroe Correctional Complex](#), and one—pictured to the right—at [Coyote Ridge Corrections Center](#). Both photos on this page by [Ricky Osborne](#).



**Call for writing in prison:** SPP was invited to write a chapter on science in prisons for publication in the first volume on the topic (expected fall 2020 from [SUNY Press](#)). With amazing support from corrections staff, we distributed a call for writing to SPP incarcerated participants and the response was excellent: forty-four incarcerated writers from eight prisons submitted work. They shared moving reflections on experiences and evolution as learners and practitioners of science. Two of the writers to be published are shown in the image to the left: Ashely McElhenie (orange hat) and Ambrosia Riche (blonde hair). An excerpt from Ambrosia:

“I thought nature had nothing to do with me, aside from the fact that I could look at the sunrise or walk through a forest. I didn’t realize that humans are in fact a very large part of nature. I didn’t realize nature and science was something so tangible.”





Meeting the shifting strategies of regional restoration ecology projects, SPP's [prairie conservation nurseries](#) are producing more native seed. Participants in the nurseries at [Washington Corrections Center](#) and [Washington Corrections Center for Women](#) receive education and training to grow several species of native flowering plants; program teams have become exemplary seed collectors. Photo by Alex James.



This year the [Taylor's checkerspot butterfly program](#) hosted by [Mission Creek Corrections Center for Women](#) doubled in size. With funding from [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#), partners built a second, 12' x 28' greenhouse. The custom-designed lab has twice the capacity for breeding and raising federally-endangered Taylor's checkerspot butterflies; in spring 2019, the team broke all previous program records for number of checkerspots released onto Salish lowland prairies. Photo by Keegan Curry.



In the [sheep conservation program](#)'s second year, 9 Suffolk ewes birthed 18 lambs at [Washington State Penitentiary](#). Program technicians provided general care and feeding for the entire sheep flock, treated the animals with vaccines, installed ear tags, assisted ewe mothers in the birthing process and cared for lambs. In this photo, an adult sheep eyes sheep husbandry expert (and photographer) Gerry Glenn.



Compost program co-founder Nick Hacheney successfully submitted a proposal to present at 2019's [International Conference on Sustainability](#). SPP partners supported the technicians at [Monroe Correctional Complex](#) filming their virtual tour of the program and technicians describing its impacts; the resulting video and presentation were warmly received at the conference and by regional partners. Screen shot from the video; viewable at <http://sustainabilityinprisons.org/stories/9431/>



[Washington State Beekeepers Association](#) (WASBA) oversees nearly all beekeeping [education and certification](#) curriculum statewide. In 2018 and '19, new leadership revamped their curricula, administration, and website, with impressive results. SPP-Evergreen and WASBA formalized their partnership and commitment to prison beekeeping education. WASBA's educational lead Ellen Miller (pictured above), [West Plains Beekeepers Association](#), and Millers Homestead also helped beekeepers at [Airway Heights Corrections Center](#) write the statewide manual for Journeymen beekeepers! Photo by Kay Heinrich.



In its second year, [McNeil Island Bee Program](#) continued to thrive and served as a model of partnership and collaboration. From April to October, WASBA-certified beekeepers from [Cedar Creek Corrections Center](#) join beekeeping experts and corrections staff to tend the hives and gain hands-on education. The shared enthusiasm and appreciation for this program is infectious! Photo by Rachel Friederich.



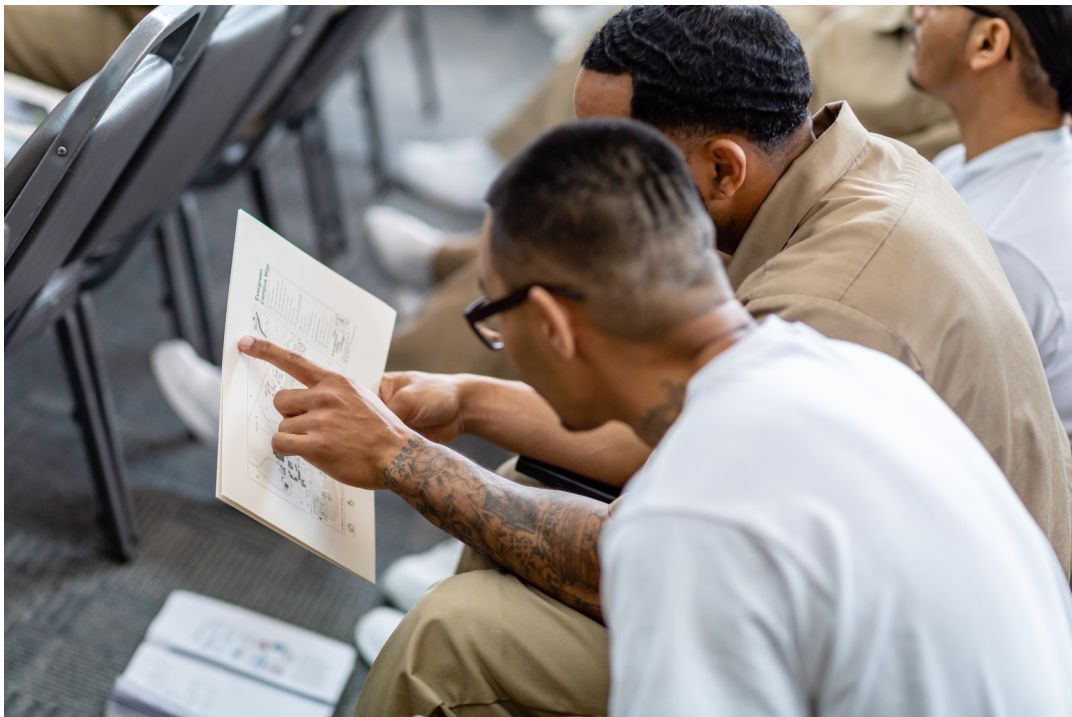
[WA State Department of Transportation](#) (WSDOT) and SPP have identified education, training, and outreach opportunities to support post-release employment for formerly incarcerated people. While several employment pathways appear promising, partners agreed to start with a focus on environmental careers. Toward this goal, WSDOT staff presented three workshops at both Cedar Creek and Mission Creek Corrections Centers. Photo of workshop attendees by Allison Campbell.



In September 2018, the new Evergreen Education Coalition for Justice Involved Students (EECJIS) met for the first time. With the shared goal of supporting justice involved students, the day-long summit united Evergreen faculty, staff, and students from [Tacoma](#) and Olympia campuses, along with Education Navigators, and corrections education leaders from WA Corrections, [WA Board of Community and Technical Colleges](#), and more. The event was sponsored by SPP-Evergreen [donation](#) funds. Photo by Keegan Curry.



This year, [Evergreen Justice Involved Student Group](#) and SPP partners co-organized and presented a reentry symposium: the [Pathways to Reentry](#) event was hosted by Stafford Creek Corrections Center and attended by nearly a hundred incarcerated residents. We were joined by sixteen education and workforce development organizations, and the program was both inspiring and practical. Previously incarcerated and other partners shared guidance on how to attain post-secondary degrees and forge successful careers. Group photo by Ricky Osborne.



At the Pathways to Reentry Event and within ongoing SPP programs, increasing numbers of incarcerated students are considering options for higher education, both during incarceration and post-release. At the same time, more incarcerated individuals are pursuing opportunities to engage as students, mentors, and experts. The insight, knowledge, and leadership they offer improves programs and expands education capacity statewide. Photo by Ricky Osborne.