



EXPLORE, ENJOY AND PROTECT THE PLANET
EXPLORE, ENJOY AND PROTECT THE PLANET
EXPLORE, ENJOY AND PROTECT THE PLANET

SEARCH

About Goals News Local Outings Join, Renew, Give Take Action

homepage - sierra_magazine - may/june_2010 - act: prisoners of conscience

Share:    



IDCE www.clarku.edu/idce
Department of International Development,
Community, and Environment

SIERRA

Act | On Your Convictions

Prisoners of Conscience

"People today just seem to be interested in sustainability, and inmates are no different. They're composting, gardening, doing other green jobs--the same stuff my mom and dad do; the same stuff you do. That is just part of being a human during this century. "The Sustainable Prisons Project started in 2004 with a simple handshake. I was a superintendent at Cedar Creek Corrections Center, and Nalini Nadkarni, an ecology professor at Evergreen State College, came into the prison and enlisted some of our inmates to help with a research project on moss cultivation.



Dan Pacholke, Olympia, Washington; codirector, Sustainable Prisons Project

"Connecting scientific research to prisons is genius. You have offenders who are sober, have time, and want to contribute. They must demonstrate positive behavior to take part, and then we engage them with meaningful activity. "Nalini has incredible energy and optimism. She began bringing in scientists to give lectures and create other research projects for inmates, like restoring native prairie plants, rearing endangered Oregon spotted frogs, and raising honeybees. We're now working with four prisons in Washington State.

"We've also made the prisons themselves more sustainable. Cedar Creek used to use 132 gallons of water per person per day; now we're down to 100 gallons a day. We created a garbage-sorting center and shifted to cold-water washing. We also grew--and served--15,000 pounds of organic vegetables in one summer. Another prison, Stafford Creek, managed a 50 percent reduction in solid waste.

"It's been fun all the way around. Sustainability in prisons is not something you have to push much on people, so the project got out of the starting gate pretty easy. Nothing was strategically planned; we just kept adding projects. We're going to continue to engage more scientists and see where it takes us." --**interview by Michael Mullaley**

CROWDED HOUSE *The United States incarcerates 2.4 million of its citizens--more than any other country in the world. China, which has four times the population, has the second-largest prison population, with 1.5 million behind bars.*

ON THE WEB Learn more about the [Sustainable Prisons Project](#).

Photo by Michael Hanson

Comments

Comment below or sign in with  [TypePad](#)  [Facebook](#)  [Twitter](#) and [more...](#)

SEARCH

May/June 2010

Features

- In Thoreau's Wake
- Swimming With Canoes
- The Longest Haul
- Against the Flow
- Cattail Commute
- Above the City of Angels
- Addicts and Enablers
- Merchants of Climate Chaos

Departments

- Spout
- Create
- Enjoy
- Ask
- Survive
- Explore
- Escape
- Ponder
- Grapple
- Up to Speed
- Act
- Innovate
- Comfort Zone
- Mixed Media
- Bulletin
- Last Words
- More
- About Sierra
- Advertising Information
- Archives
- Corrections
- Internships

Get the Sierra Club *Insider*

Get the Sierra Club *Insider*, our email newsletter. News, green lifestyle tips, and ways to take action: right to your inbox, twice a month.

Email:

Zip:

SIGN UP