

Sustainability in Prisons Project at Washington Corrections Center for Women

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Horticultural student Candace Ralston receives certification as an apprentice beekeeper as part of the day-long Beekeeping Summit hosted by WCCW. (Photo Courtesy of Ricky Osborne)

The [Sustainability in Prisons Project \(SPP\)](#) was founded by [The Evergreen State College \(Evergreen\)](#) and Washington State Department of Corrections (DOC). The mission is to empower sustainable change by bringing nature, science, and environmental education into prisons.

In Washington State prisons, SPP aims to identify, celebrate and report on all work aligned with this mission. Programs may be initiated and operated by SPP founding partners or allied organizations. In 2017, the SPP collaboration included at least 186 programs and 117 partner organizations in all of the 12 prisons statewide. To extend

the reach and impact of environmental education and sustainability programs, the team works to bring benefits to and leverage resources of all partners. No singular organization or individual has the capacity or all the solutions needed to address complex environmental and incarceration issues.

SPP has received support from prisons across the state, and [Washington Corrections Center for Women \(WCCW\)](#) is a great example. This partnership allows both SPP and WCCW to address environmental incarceration issues. The SPP programs currently active at WCCW include [Roots of Success](#), the [Prairie Conservation Nursery](#), [beekeeping program](#), and the [Environmental Workshop Series](#). These collaborative programs provide quality environmental and sustainable living education, access to nature and opportunities for altruism. This important work couldn't take place without members of WCCW leadership and staff. Their contributions to the partnership are appreciated.



WCCW Partners in SPP's Prairie Conservation Nursery toured native prairie landscapes to learn more about the rare habitat they help to restore. (Photo Courtesy of Ricky Osborne)

SPP supports access to science, nature and environmental education for all. Education is the most effective way to reduce recidivism. Environmental and sustainability education are at the core of SPP's model. In addition to providing education and training, SPP programs aim to offer therapeutic value by providing connections with nature, care of living things, and opportunities to contribute to human well-being and ecosystem health. Thinking more broadly, success of the environmental movement depends on increasing diversity and inclusion of

incarcerated people and corrections staff. People living and working in prisons have a wealth of creative and innovative ideas and are eager to contribute.

SPP staff from both Evergreen and WA Corrections are passionate about education and environmental justice. SPP-Evergreen staff are working to educate ourselves, and maximize social and environmental benefits for all partners including incarcerated individuals, scientists, corrections staff, educators, and students.

Authors Note: We are so grateful that we get to do this work with partners at WCCW. Together we will continue to improve the quality and number of SPP programs and empower everyone involved to create positive change for people and the environment.