



The Sagebrush in Prisons Project emphasizes ecological education and horticulture for incarcerated adults while also growing native plants for restoration in the American West. SPP is a partnership between Departments of Correction (various states), the Bureau of Land Management, Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality, Sustainability in Prisons Project and the Institute for Applied Ecology.

With eleven prisons in five states, we're interested in learning about the experiences of incarcerated adults who serve as crew team members growing sagebrush. Without them, restoration of sagebrush habitat might not be possible. Incarcerated crew members shared what this project means to them - so we made a little wordcloud of their thoughts - the larger the text, the more often the word was mentioned. See page two for a sampling of quotes from the individuals who make this project possible!



# WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO GROW HALF A MILLION SAGEBRUSH PLANTS?

## DEDICATION:



"Looking forward to participating in the program next year. I like working with a diverse group of people, inmates, contractors..." (Crew member, WCCF)

"This project has [taught me] never give up, never quit, and though the team players may change I was able to adapt, adjust, and improve every day to successfully get the job done as a team." (Crew member, LCC)



## KNOWLEDGE:

"The Sagebrush Program has positively impacted my life in many ways. It has taught me how the sage grouse depends on sagebrush. Also, how climate change is affecting them because of the wildfires. Our job growing these plants is helping Nevada tremendously." (Crew member, LCC)

"We really appreciate the opportunity to learn..." (Crew member, WCCF)



## SKILLS:

"Sagebrush has given me the opportunity to learn about nature and horticulture on a hands-on level and the ability to work in a team setting to accomplish a common goal." (Crew member, LCC)

"All around great program because it is focusing on the ecology of our whole state. It is helping protect resources and animal populations for future generations. It's a good way to help the environment and the inmates can use what they learn when they are released." (Crew member, WCCF)

## HEART:



"I love sagebrush, plants, and trees! I think it is good to help our environment so birds can have somewhere to make a nest and something to eat. I love what we are doing as prisoners to take care of our planet. I [also] like to take care of the sagebrush plants to help keep myself busy." (Crew member, LCC)

"The intersection of conservation and positive social experiences in the program is what makes it so successful. The crew works really hard and you can tell by the success of the sagebrush plants grown." (Contractor to crew, WCCF)

"[It is an opportunity] to give back to an ecosystem by reclaiming the area that is affected by fires, floods, slides ect. To give a source of food for animals, to give native plants like sagebrush [the opportunity] to grow." (Crew member, LCC)

New shadecloth after severe windstorm rips off the original - SRCI



"Lots of people think sagebrush is just a weed that grows in the wild. But when you take the time to learn...everything serves a purpose for the greater good..." (Crew member WHF)



Showing off the excellent growing skills of Sagebrush Crews at WHF - what strong root development!





# In their own words...

## DEDICATION:

"The sagebrush starts as a seed, then through water and tending grows into a bush (plant)!! So is the process of being a sagebrush worker; the work along with the fellowship of the rest of the team promotes growth of the individual alongside his fellow team members." (Crew member, LCC)

"The inmates work very hard and are dedicated to the sagebrush program. I enjoy being outside everyday and working on a team!" (Contractor to crew, WCCF)

"Each cone needed to be thinned to just one healthy plant. That meant many, many hours of pulling out smaller plants from each cone until one healthy, preferably centered in the cone plant remained." (Crew member, ISCC)

"After battling several years of root rot, difficulties working as a team, COVID, the LCC crew has persevered! ...the root rot (is) running, work as a team in cohesive, communicative way (is happening), and (we) have LOTS of beautiful, happy sagebrush babies! A true testament to what can be achieved when we work as a team. (Contractor to crews, Nevada, California)

## KNOWLEDGE:

"The sagebrush project helped educate me on the consequences of our actions...(on) nature. I feel that I am doing good works..." (Crew member, ISCC)

"The sagebrush class was very helpful in understanding the importance of the program. Sagebrush prevents erosion, helps conserve the greater sage-grouse habitat and protects outdoor opportunities." (Crew member, WCCF)

## SKILLS:

"I am very thankful to join the sagebrush program. It teaches me how to care for plants and work with others. I hope that we can continue doing good not only for us, but also for our state and its wildlife. And that we can pass this experience to those who are interested in volunteering in the future. We can never lose helping our state's wildlife." (Crew member, LCC)

"Before I came to prison, I had a career as a wildland firefighter...I saw first hand...how cheatgrass destroys rangeland. Now I am learning more how to grow sagebrush and help out the sage grouse and Owyhee rangeland" (Crew member, ISCC)

"The simple fact that I am able to tell my family of the positive impact (I am making) and the possible future job opportunities of this program means A LOT." (Crew member, LCC)

## HEART:

"[It is an opportunity] to give back to an ecosystem by reclaiming the area that is affected by fires, floods, slides ect. To give a source of food for animals, to give native plants like sagebrush [the opportunity] to grow." (Crew member, LCC)

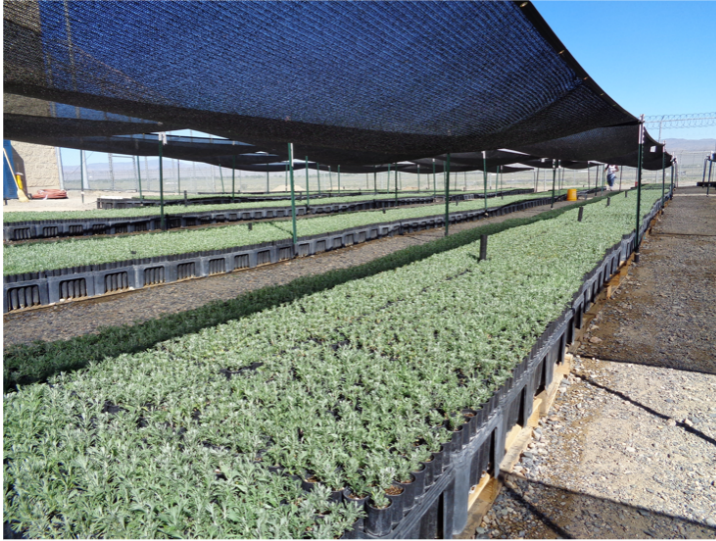
"On the surface, this program can seem odd, based on where we are...but those of us lucky enough to find it, have developed a new nickname for it... 'The Promise Land.' (Crew member, ISCC)



# Growing our Influence: Sagebrush in pictures

Long tables of green testify to the hard work and commitment of Sagebrush Crews at LCC (and *all* others)!

Photo courtesy of Cody Beckerdite



Pollinator plants added for bee observation and color!



Two ISCC Sagebrush Crew members settle in for a long day of thinning small conetainers of sagebrush



Science in action: Crew members measure seedling height in three different fertilizer treatments



# The Inside Scoop:

The Sagebrush in Prison Project wouldn't exist without the work of many Adults in Custody who choose to participate in the program. At the same time that they are growing plants, they are also learning about the ecosystem in which they grow, how to grow them better and ways to respond to the ever-evolving challenges of growing sagebrush. This is organized by our staff and contractors who work on site. We heard from many of the participants how thankful they are for their hard work, dedication and care. Here's a shout out to: Stacy, Larkin, Shannon, Holly, Nancy, Natasha, Kenda, Tina, Gina, Cody and Maggie. You **ROCK** it!



## The GREAT Sagebrush BOX-UP

The 'season' in growing Sagebrush ends early October as Adults in Custody (AIC) box-up plants they've grown to ship to locations slated for restoring Sagebrush habitat. Stacy Moore, the Institute for Applied Ecology's Sagebrush in Prison coordinator, contacts each of the prisons and puts together a massive box order with multiple delivery sites; sets up travel to pick up plants and deliver them to their forever home; and coordinates with the relevant partners involved in the out planting. Curious about the numbers?

### In Oregon:

Coffee Creek Correctional Facility (CCCF): 8,000  
Warner Creek Correctional Facility (WCCF): 38,800  
Snake River Correctional Institution (SRCI): 50,000

### In Idaho:

Idaho State Correctional Center (ISCC): 55,000  
South Boise Women's Correctional Center (SBWCC): 20,000

### In California:

Herlong Federal Correctional Institution (FCI): 40,000

### In Nevada:

Northern Nevada Correctional Center (NNCC): 100,000  
Warm Springs Correctional Center (WSCC): 85,000  
Lovelock Correctional Center (LCC): 85,000

### In Wyoming:

Wyoming Honor Farm (WHF): 25,000

TOTAL OF ALL: 506,300\* Sagebrush plants!!

\*These numbers are estimates based on the number grown and the number needed for restoration. As plants are boxed up, actual numbers will vary.

## Behind the scenes:

Bulk order of boxes is placed and shipped to prisons. Plants are watered thoroughly OR dipped in a solution that keeps the roots moist. The next day they're culled, removed from planting trays and placed in boxes that are then loaded in a truck to be delivered to their new home. From here, partners work toward getting the plants in the ground. Along with the coordination that IAE provides, the GREAT BOX-UP is only possible because of many hard working and dedicated incarcerated individuals, some of their perspectives provided here.

Thank you to our partners at the Bureau of Land Management, the Sustainability in Prisons Project, and the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality. A special thanks to our prison partners and the staff who make this possible: South Boise Women's Correctional Center, Idaho State Correctional Center, Snake River Correctional Facility, Northern Nevada Correctional Center, Warm Springs Correctional Center, Lovelock Correctional Center, Herlong Federal Correctional Institute, Warner Creek Correctional Facility, the Wyoming Honor Farm, Coffee Creek Correctional Facility and California City Correctional Facility (Desert Tortoise Program).