

# Corrections Briefings

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## DOC Inmates to Live and Work in National Forest

One of Oregon's national forests will soon have new temporary residents... inmates.

Because there are no prisons in the area, the U.S. Forest Service asked the Oregon Department of Corrections to bring inmates to the Deschutes National Forest to test the concept of a mobile work camp that might be replicated in other locations throughout Oregon.

The "Deschutes Conservation Camp" will house more than 80 minimum-custody inmates in the Deschutes National Forest during an eight-week pilot project to use inmate labor to accomplish work that otherwise would go undone.

"This is a unique partnership between the Oregon Department of Corrections, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Oregon National Guard," says Inmate Work Programs Administrator Michael Taaffe. "Eight 10-man work crews — each supervised by a correctional officer — will work 10-hour days, six days a week."

Inmates' work will include such labor-intensive projects as noxious weed removal, riparian zone restoration, excess fuel reduction, and tree thinning. Additionally, 20 inmates will be trained in chain saw operations and become certified sawyers.

The inmates will live in insulated federal surplus tents, and will be supervised round-the-clock by correctional officers. Camp support will include a mobile kitchen and food service provided by the Oregon National Guard as part of their training exercises.

"We are excited to be part of this partnership to create solutions on so many levels," says Sally Collins, Forest Supervisor of the Deschutes National Forest. "This is a great example of community-based commitment to corrections. The U.S. Forest Service accomplishes much-needed labor-intensive natural resource work. The inmates get to work to repay their debts to society in tangible, meaningful ways. They will gain a greater understanding of not only the work they are doing but the importance of this work to the larger public land management goals."

The camp area, approximately 30-miles from Bend, will be posted as an inmate work camp and will be off-limits to visitors unless approved in advance by Camp Commander Captain Jeff Forbes. The eight-week pilot is scheduled to begin May 24 and run through July 16.

OREGON DEPARTMENT  
OF CORRECTIONS

DAVID S. COOK  
DIRECTOR

The mission of the Oregon Department of Corrections is to promote public safety by holding offenders accountable for their actions and reducing the risk of future criminal behavior.

JOHN A. KITZHABER, M.D.  
GOVERNOR



## Inmate Clean-up Crew Tackles Ton of Trash

Saturday, March 13, a ten-man inmate work crew from Two Rivers Correctional Institution experienced their most fulfilling work assignment since their arrival in Umatilla. The job was to clean up an illegal dump site near Umatilla High School.

Two months ago the school district discovered a large area of garbage dumped on the banks of the Umatilla River. The garbage included numerous appliances, tires, wheels, and old furniture. To make matters worse, the garbage was in thick undergrowth along a steep bank with no access. All of the debris was pulled out of the brush, hauled up the bank and down a path the inmates built.

What was planned to be a multi-weekend job was halted after eight hours due to limited space to remove the mess. In the first hour the sole 20-yard dumpster was filled. The rest of the day was spent piling enough garbage to fill about 10 more dumpsters. The next few weekends were spent removing those piles.

The work was extremely difficult, yet all ten inmates asked to be included on future work details.

### Feature Article

## New Transition Program Shows Promise for African American Inmates

The African American Program of Multnomah County's Adult Community Justice Department, now in its second year, was created by parole officers and corrections counselors who recognized a need for a culturally based transition program and curriculum.

In Oregon, African American males have continuously been over-represented in corrections, presently comprising approximately 25 percent of

the inmate population while only about three percent of the community. The likelihood that a member of this group will be returned to prison for a parole violation has been equally disproportionate. Traditional methods of parole supervision have shown no particular success in reducing these numbers, so AAP was established to examine whether a specific alternative approach could impact the numbers.

AAP promotes its program in institutions statewide, and maintains a regular schedule at all facilities, where interested inmates are screened for participation. Those selected for the program are transferred to Columbia River Correctional Institution (CRCI) approximately four months prior to their release date, and begin attending regular classroom sessions according to an established curriculum.

Candidates are screened for personal commitment to making a change in their cycle of imprisonment and a willingness to work with AAP to end destructive cycles. Their behavior within prison must be indicative of this commitment, and they must meet fairly strict transfer eligibility criteria which would allow them to be transferred to the minimum custody setting at CRCI.

AAP screening staff works closely with institution counselors to determine which candidates will be considered for the program. If they pass the initial screening, they are then evaluated jointly by the full AAP staff and Chuck Seeley, Program Services manager at CRCI. If accepted at this point, inmates are transferred to CRCI and begin participation. This DOC and community corrections linkage has led to better communications and a more seamless process for the inmate.

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***In Oregon, African American males have continuously been over-represented in the correctional system.***

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Once in the program at CRCI, inmates follow a curriculum that is culturally specific. The focus is on taking responsibility for improving the individual's situation, and away from placing blame and expecting others to bear that responsibility. Addressing alcohol and drug issues is an important part of the program.

An exit plan is developed for each inmate prior to release, and parole officers from AAP link up with the individual within a day of release. Together, these help prevent the negative distractions that frequently take place when there is an extended period between release and meeting with a parole officer. Planning is currently underway to begin to involve the inmate's family prior to release, so the transition back into a family unit is a smoother event for all the family members.

Upon release, AAP intensifies the interaction with the parolee, maintaining regular group sessions and establishing housing and meaningful employment. AAP holds women's groups for spouses and significant others, and facilitates family participation in the parolee's progress toward successful completion of supervision and establishment of a crime-free lifestyle. In support of juvenile crime prevention, the program works with schools to assist both the school and the inmate's family when children display behavioral problems, and there is a continuing effort to keep the children in school and out of gangs. The parolees and their families find AAP provides a strong peer support group, which is strengthened by participants holding each other accountable for success.

## Evaluation Encouraging Regarding SB1145 Efforts

Senate Bill 1145 has been in effect for just over two years, yet a late 1998 evaluation of its impact shows successes thanks to collaboration among state and local governments and criminal justice agencies.

### **Background**

The Community Corrections Act of 1977 created a partnership between the state and the counties to administer the community corrections system. At that time some counties chose to manage their own felony probation and parole services. Other counties opted to have the state manage or participate in the management of their community corrections activities.

An enhanced partnership between state and local governments and criminal justice agencies is the foundation of SB 1145 (1995). SB 1145 was built on the premise that offenders with shorter sentences are best managed at the local level.

SB 1145 has been in effect since January 1997. Under its provisions, all offenders serving one year or less now serve their time in local custody, including jails. Counties are responsible for the community corrections activities, including treatment and sanctioning, of all offenders on probation, parole, or post-prison supervision.

### **A Collaborative Effort**

To help the counties manage the new offender population, the state funded construction of approximately 1200 local custody beds. The state also funded operation of approximately 1700 local custody beds per day. SB 1145 also created Local Public Safety Coordinating Councils in each county.



Gov. Kitzhaber appointed a committee in 1996 to guide SB 1145 implementation during the 1997-1999 biennium. Membership of the group corresponds to the membership of local public safety coordinating councils, including county and city government, county community corrections, judges, sheriffs, chiefs of police, district attorneys, mental health directors, and DOC.

The committee makes major policy recommendations to the Department of Corrections director, including funding and allocation recommendations. The committee advised the department on the distribution and utilization of \$164 million for county programs in the 97-99 biennium.

### Results Show Success

A 1998 evaluation of SB 1145 indicated:

- Local custody and non-custody sanction options have grown dramatically.
- Local criminal justice officials see an improvement in local justice programs and coordination.
- The average number of months in the community before re-incarceration has increased from 4.5 months prior to the implementation of SB 1145 to six months post SB 1145.
- There are approximately 29,000 felony offenders supervised by the counties. Many of these offenders move between community supervision and local control status; they receive swift and sure responses to violations of their conditions of supervision or new crimes.

## Food Drive Showcases Generosity

Results of the Governor's Annual Food Drive are in, and once again the Department of Corrections helped state government exceed its annual goal. The goal for state employees this year was 1.5 million pounds of food and over 1.7 million were collected. Department of Corrections employees contributed by donating over 200,000 pounds of food and cash (every \$1 converts to 6 pounds of food). In fact, the department exceeded last year's results by quite a large margin:

#### Actual Pounds of Food Collected:

1998:	10,423
1999:	16,159

#### Cash Donations (including payroll deduction):

1998:	\$20,080
1999:	\$30,882

#### Total Pounds of Food Collected:

1998:	130,908
1999:	201,451 (!!!)

Oregon Corrections Intake Center led the department with a whopping donation of 609 pounds of food per employee. The winner of the "head start" award is Oregon Women's Correctional Center: Superintendent Sonia Hoyt is already making and selling chocolate flower bouquets for the millennium food drive.

## Inmates Test Negative for Drugs

For the second time in 11 months, in March there were no positive results on random drug tests of inmates. Over 400 inmates were tested for four major drug categories. ODOC uses this information to detect prevalence, rate changes and use patterns of illicit drugs. According to the most recent statistics available, Oregon has the best record in the nation in random drug testing.

#### Corrections Briefings

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