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Contact: Chad Lewis, Communications Department (360) 725-8817

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DOC Receives Grant from Oregon Zoo to Rehabilitate Endangered Frogs

OLYMPIA – The Department of Corrections received a grant from the Oregon Zoo to rehabilitate an endangered species of frog that lives in the Pacific Northwest. The staff and offenders at Cedar Creek Corrections Center have had a higher success rate at rearing the Oregon spotted frog than zoos and nature centers in Washington, Oregon and British Columbia.

“It’s a remarkable achievement for a prison to receive a scientific grant,” Acting Prisons Director Dan Pacholke said. “It’s good for our staff and offenders, and it’s good for the local ecology.”

Last year the Washington state Department of Fish and Wildlife released 83 Oregon spotted frogs from Cedar Creek Corrections Center in marshes on Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Pierce County. The prison expects to release about that many again this year.

The frog rehabilitation is part of the [Sustainable Prisons Project](#), a partnership between the Department of Corrections and The Evergreen State College. The project is designed to reduce operational costs by [developing sustainable practices](#), reduce prisons’ impact on the environment and connect offenders to nature.

Part of the \$5,000 grant will be used to raise crickets for the frogs to eat. The Department of Fish and Wildlife currently has to import crickets from Southeastern states due to a local shortage.

“Raising the crickets at the prison is another way we’re reducing our carbon footprint and making the project more sustainable,” said Kelli Bush, the project manager of the Sustainable Prisons Project.

Prison administrators credit including offenders in scientific projects like frog rehabilitation as one of the reasons [prison violence has dramatically decreased](#) the past two years.

“When an offender has researchers and biologists coming up and asking them for their input on scientific projects, it gives the offender a sense of pride and accomplishment,” Pacholke said. “And when offenders have a sense of purpose they are less likely to get involved in criminal activity, whether it’s in a prison or in the community.”

Zoo officials say they are impressed with the rehabilitation effort at Cedar Creek Corrections Center.

“Everyone should be proud of the work being done by the staff and offenders at the Department of Corrections,” said Kim Smith, Oregon Zoo director. “They are truly making a difference in the recovery of this species.”