



**Institute
for
Applied
Ecology**

Press Release

For Immediate Release:

June 22, 2020

Pandemic Doesn't Stop Nevada Offenders from Sowing 300,000 Sagebrush Plugs for Habitat Restoration

By Scott Kelley, Public Information Officer, Nevada Department of Corrections; and Shannon Swim, Nevada Contractor, Institute for Applied Ecology

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Nevada Department of Corrections (NDOC), and Institute for Applied Ecology (IAE) have partnered for a 5th straight year to engage offenders in restoration of the Greater sage-grouse habitat in Nevada.

The successful Sagebrush in Prisons Project has delivered more than half a million plants since it started in 2016. This year, the challenges caused by COVID-19 have not prevented offenders at Northern Nevada Correctional Center (NNCC), Warm Springs Correctional Center (WSCC), and Lovelock Correctional Center (LCC) from growing more than 300,000 sagebrush plugs for local BLM Field Offices to restore public lands scorched by wildfire.



Sagebrush plugs at Warm Springs Correctional Center will be planted in areas in Nevada scorched by wildfire.

“The Sagebrush in Prisons Project teaches offenders teamwork in addition to knowledge about agriculture and horticulture,” said Charles Daniels, Director of NDOC. “Thanks to the strong partnership between BLM, NDOC, and IAE we were able to work through COVID-19 restrictions put in-place at our facilities while continuing to restore one of Nevada’s most important natural habitats.”

During normal times, this program is led by an IAE contractor inside the prison where hands-on instruction and monthly educational lectures take place. To ensure everyone's health and safety, however, NDOC restricted volunteer entry to reduce the chances of a carrier of COVID-19 bringing the virus inside the prison walls.

To work around this challenge, NDOC and IAE kept the program running by providing offenders printed manuals and instruction by email and phone. Monthly lectures on agriculture and horticulture were replaced with educational videos and recorded presentations.



Offenders at Lovelock Correctional Center discuss logistics at their facility's sagebrush growing center.

"It's wonderful to see how much the offenders and prison staff value this program," said Shannon Swim, IAE's NV contractor. "Even with the world being turned upside down, everyone worked really hard to ensure the program continued and the sagebrush plugs were sown. Thanks to the sagebrush crews and the prison staff at each facility, we will provide 300,000 plants to help restore Greater sage-grouse habitat in Nevada."

"The need for habitat restoration and fire rehabilitation doesn't stop just because we are in the middle of a pandemic," said J.C.

McNelly, Humboldt BLM Field Office. "The plugs we get from the Sagebrush in Prisons Project make a huge impact on our ability to rehabilitate burned lands."

This year's planting will occur in November 2020.

For more information about the Sagebrush in Prisons Project, visit www.appliedeco.org/programs/sagebrush.

For more information about the Nevada Department of Corrections, visit www.ndoc.nv.gov.

For more information about the Institute for Applied Ecology, please visit www.appliedeco.org.

###