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### **Prairie du Chien Correctional Inmates Clean Up City Land and State Parks**

*Inmate Work Group Also Removes Debris from Vernon County Dams*

**PRAIRIE DU CHIEN, Wis.** – Local southwest Wisconsin communities are praising the work of an inmate work program from Prairie du Chien Correctional Institution (PDCI) that has helped communities and given inmates important skills needed to successfully reenter society.

For more than a decade, the project crew made up of six inmates from PDCI has been taking part in land clean-up and other services to local communities in the surrounding counties.

Since 2003, the project crew has done a variety of tasks for the city of Prairie du Chien including shoveling snow from fire hydrants, landscaping, tree/brush trimming, painting, and set up/tear down for major city events. Inmates have also performed trail maintenance and upkeep, along with the deconstruction of old buildings, at Wyalusing and Nelson Dewey state parks. Inmates regularly use chainsaws and have cleared storm debris, pulled honeysuckle and other noxious weeds in addition to laying bricks.

During the first week of March the Project Crew traveled to three remote dams in Vernon County to help clear up flood related debris and damage.

At the Seas Branch Dam, the crew trimmed seven acres of willows and removed a large beaver dam. The Jersey Valley dam holds a 52 acre reservoir that is a popular summer recreation and tourist attraction. Mark Erickson, a Vernon County resource conservationist, noted a beaver dam had been blocking the toe drains, which he said compromise the integrity of the entire structure because water can't drain properly. He stated the area is not accessible to large equipment due to its swampy nature, making the crew's labor extremely beneficial.

The Duck Egg dam on the Bad Axe River is nearly a mile from the nearest road and surrounded by hillsides 450 feet high; flood debris removal was a huge task.

"I personally cannot say enough about the quality and professionalism displayed by Sgt. Craig Revolinski and his crew," said Erikson. "Hard work is becoming a lost ethic in our society today, but the young men on this crew still have it. Getting the crew out to perform work that benefits our community and society is a 'win-win' situation. I hope that skills learned on projects like this benefit the inmates in their future endeavors."

The Project Crew was joined by similar crews to assist in flood recovery in 2007 and 2008. At one point in June 2008, PDCI provided 12 crews (144 inmates supervised by 12 staff) for clean-up efforts.

The Vernon County Land and Water Conservation Department operates and maintains 22 large flood control structures. A number of these dams were damaged during the flood events and a few still have damage and debris.

“These guys (inmates) really take this seriously, and give it their all,” said Sgt. Revolinski. “Once, after a day of really hard work at Wyalusing Park while we were loading into the van, one inmate teared up when he thanked me for allowing him the opportunity to participate on the crew. I wish we could send out a lot more crews – I think the men get so much out of doing it, and it’s really great for the community.”

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