



Washington State Legislature

January 12, 2010

The Honorable Christine Gregoire
PO Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Governor Gregoire,

The purpose of this letter is to formally request that Larch Corrections Center be removed from consideration for closure in this year's supplemental budget. While it may save money for the Department of Corrections in the short term, it will increase costs for other state agencies, decrease the state's fire suppression capabilities in Southwest Washington, and has the potential for increased costs long term.

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) currently utilizes inmates from Larch Corrections Center for much of its silviculture work in Southwest Washington. This work includes pre-commercial thinning of timber lands, weed management, and tree planting. The cheaper labor saves DNR hundreds of thousands of dollars compared to privately contracted crews.

Fire suppression crews from Larch Corrections Center also serve as the primary fire suppression units in Southwest Washington. The inmate crews offer a significant savings when fighting forest fires compared to private crews or the National Guard, and as the only crews regularly in the Southwest Washington area, they are able to respond in a timelier manner, often preventing fires from escalating. This timely response saves even more in undamaged timberlands and decreased days of work crews on the fires.

Finally, Larch Corrections Center has been demonstrated to have a lower recidivism rate than average due to the exceptional work training programs offered at the center. Moving the inmates to another facility with a normal recidivism rate could lead to increased costs down the road for the Department of Corrections as well as local law enforcement agencies.

We understand that there will be painful cuts in many areas of state government this year. However, closing Larch Corrections Center would be penny-wise and pound-foolish.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We would be happy to answer any questions you may have about Larch Corrections Center.

Jaime Herrera
State Representative

Ed Orcutt
State Representative

Joseph Zarelli
State Senator

Cc: Representative Kelli Linville, Chair, House Ways and Means Committee
Senator Margarita Prentice, Chair, Senate Ways and Means Committee