



## Prisons and the Environment

*Would a new prison be good for your community?*

*"Not in my backyard," some people would say.*

But no matter whose backyard or remote farmer's field becomes a prison, these costly razor-wired enclosures damage our natural and social environments.

By law, the building of a prison first requires environmental impact assessments of many types. The federal Environmental Protection Association (EPA) gets involved frequently in studies of proposals to locate prisons on wetlands, or near bodies of water, and includes assessing traffic problems, air pollution, water supply and sewage disposal plans.

Complicating these required evaluations, law enforcement unions and building contractor associations operate as special-interest lobbyists who keep pressure on EPA officials to minimize environmental problems where found and maintain growth in new construction and prison staffing.

*Have you ever thought about plumbing and prisons?*

The most common environmental damage caused by prisons is due to improper handling and disposal of hazardous waste materials. To relieve daily stress from needless confinement, the men and women in our prisons are routinely prescribed pharmaceutical drugs, and these potent chemicals end up in urine piped through large pipes to mingle and combine in a prison's sewage lagoon or local wastewater treatment plant.



*Do you sometimes think it might be a good economic boost to your local economy if a prison was to be built nearby?*

Hard to say, but at best it's a mixed blessing for those rural areas also relying on tourists' dollars. Who wants to vacation in Prisonville? And when municipal wastewater plants cannot handle the increase in wastewater due to overcrowded prisons, who pays for the millions of dollars needed to upgrade sewage treatment plants? If you pay local utility taxes, you and your neighbors will.

*You might be thinking "out of sight, out of mind," and who cares about lawbreakers?*



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Drug War laws have caused most state and US prisons to be overpopulated, and most of those serving time aren't hardened convicts. Large, overcrowded prisons produce extreme 'social environmental problems' for incarcerated people forced to cope day after day with bitterness, fear and official indifference. We can definitely do better at ensuring community safety and restoring justice where it's broken. Remember that people are sent to prison as punishment, not for punishment.

*Now that you see how building a prison is an environmental menace, are you ready to learn more?*

The EPA offers a wide variety of compliance assistance resources and tools designed to assist concerned citizens and prison complexes in complying with federal and state environmental laws.

EPA online: [www.epa.gov/Region3/compliance\\_assistance/prisons.htm](http://www.epa.gov/Region3/compliance_assistance/prisons.htm)

To see the human faces and read the stories of those who are filling US prisons beyond capacity, go to [www.november.org/thewall](http://www.november.org/thewall).

*Organize today so you won't have a prison in your town tomorrow!*

**This Earth Day Message brought to you by:**



***Working to end drug war injustice***

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(509) 684-1550 • [www.november.org](http://www.november.org)

**and:**



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