

## HTF Position Statement on HOC Farm and Fish Hatchery



County Executive Scott Walker's 2010 budget recommends that the Milwaukee County House of Correction Farm and Fish Hatchery be closed. Hunger Task Force urges the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors to overturn this decision and restore funding for

the Farm. The House of Correction farm and fish hatchery in Franklin is one of the last of its kind in the nation, benefitting the citizens of Milwaukee County.

### Background

Each year since 2003, the County Executive has recommended closure of the Farm. Each year the County Board of Supervisors has overturned this decision. In January 2007, the 150 acre parcel was leased to Hunger Task Force in order to create a partnership for continuing operation of the farm. Milwaukee County would provide inmate labor and three Correctional Officers to supervise the inmates. According to 2006 County Board Resolution Res. File. No. 04-414(a)(c), all costs to employ the Correctional Officers would be met through fees charged to inmates and not tax levy, meaning the inmates, not the citizens, bear the cost of operating the farm. In turn, Hunger Task Force would fundraise, add staff and mechanize the operation in order to grow food for the needy.



To date, Milwaukee County and Hunger Task Force have kept this agreement. As a result, more than 300,000 pounds of produce are grown annually and 40,000 fish grown at the hatchery have been placed in 19 Milwaukee County Park lagoons. The crops grown and harvested on the farm are distributed free of charge by Hunger Task Force to a safety net of 80 qualified charities: food pantries, soup kitchens and homeless shelters.



### What is the value of the farm and fish hatchery?

The farmland surrounding the House of Correction is one of Milwaukee's last urban farms. The farm operation is one of 50 work farms remaining in the United States. The farm serves as an effective buffer between the jail and the City of Franklin. Milwaukee County has made significant investments in building and maintaining a jail and Sheriff's Training Center on this County owned land.

The farm grows food for the needy. The recession has created tough times for many. Adding healthy produce to emergency food supplies is important when the jobless rely on food pantries as a primary source of food. Non-violent offenders nearing release volunteer to work on the farm. This work provides restitution for past crimes and teaches work skills. In fact, throughout the year inmates pack boxes of food for 5,000 local low-income seniors each month. Through the Warehouse Forklift Training Program, inmates learn to operate a fork truck and pallet jack, qualifying them for skilled work that pays a decent wage after release.



The farm supports the Milwaukee County Parks. A one of a kind fish hatchery is operated at the farm. Each year, 40,000 fish are dropped at Milwaukee County Parks for fishing clinics and citizen anglers alike. Felled trees are chopped by inmates and the wood is returned to the County Park lodge fireplaces. Acres of sapling trees are grown on site at the farm, home to the County Park's tree nursery. Pumpkins grown at the farm decorate the Zoo each October.



The proposed costs to maintain the Farm are budgeted at \$325,000. These costs include three Correctional Officer salaries, hatchery supplies and utilities. These costs are to be met by inmate electronic surveillance fees, but the County Executive's Proposed Budget states that these fees will fall woefully short in 2010.

Hunger Task Force has invested over \$175,000 in equipment alone for the Farm since the 2007 lease signing. Among the items we have purchased are tractors, seeders, planters, crop diggers and pickers, an orchard sprayer, a vegetable washer, and new bins and containers. Hunger Task Force also pays for two full-time employees at the HOC farm and fish hatchery.

What can an average citizen do? Call or write your County Supervisor. Hold them accountable for maintaining the Farm and Fish Hatchery as a citizen-controlled investment.

To find out who your County Board member is, call 414-278-4222 or visit [milwaukee.gov/FindDistrictSupervisor](http://milwaukee.gov/FindDistrictSupervisor). After you fill in your address, you will get a list of public officials who represent you. You will find your County Board member under the heading "New 19 Sup Districts." Click on the highlighted number (1 through 19) and you will get the name, phone and e-mail address of your county board member.