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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DOC Releases Preliminary County List for New Work Release Facilities

OLYMPIA – The Department of Corrections (DOC) today provided the Office of Financial Management (OFM) and county governments with a preliminary list of counties and groups of counties that analysis shows have an unmet need for additional work release facilities.

A statewide advisory committee consisting of representatives of advocacy groups, law enforcement, local governments and state agencies will review the preliminary list before efforts begin to establish work release facilities in any of the counties. The results of the committee's work could change the preliminary list released today.

“We look forward to working closely with local governments and the public in a transparent process to make work release programs available in areas of our state that need them,” said DOC Secretary Harold Clarke. “Work release makes the public safer by helping offenders successfully adjust from life in prison to life as law-abiding citizens in the community.”

The preliminary list of counties with the greatest need for work release programs includes: Chelan/Douglas/Kittitas; Clark/Skamania; Grays Harbor/Mason; Lewis; Snohomish.

Counties with a moderate need include: Clallam/Jefferson; Ferry/Stevens/Pend Oreille/Lincoln; Franklin; Grant/Adams; Island/San Juan; Klickitat; Okanogan, Pacific/Wahkiakum; Skagit; Thurston; Walla Walla/Columbia; Whitman/Garfield/Asotin.

Counties with the lowest need for more work release services include: Benton; Cowlitz; King; Kitsap; Pierce; Spokane; Whatcom and Yakima.

Work release is a form of partial confinement that allows low-risk offenders to spend the final six months of their confinement in community-based residential facilities. Offenders in work release are expected to get and keep a job and continue participating in programs that will assist their successful return to society.

Over the next 10 years, DOC plans to double its current work release capacity of more than 670 beds. The existing beds are located in 15 facilities in Yakima, King, Spokane, Whatcom, Thurston, Cowlitz, Pierce, Clark and Benton counties.

Legislation passed this year requires DOC to make substantial efforts to equitably distribute new work releases and other community-based corrections facilities. Equitable distribution means making sure that former offenders are not concentrated in particular parts of the state, but are given opportunities to succeed in their home communities.

The new law also required DOC to provide OFM and county governments with a list of potential counties (or groups of counties) under consideration for future work release facilities, community justice centers (CJCs) and other community-based correctional facilities.

The work release list is based on DOC research into the number of offenders released from prisons in fiscal 2006 and community corrections cases under active supervision. DOC compared where the crimes occurred and the number of community cases under supervision to the number of work release beds available by county.

In addition to the list of counties where new work release facilities might be located, DOC also identified counties with a need for CJCs, where offenders under supervision in the community can meet with their community corrections officers and participate in programs that will reduce their likelihood of committing new crimes. Counties with a need for CJCs are: Thurston, Kitsap, Benton/Franklin, and Chelan/Douglas/Kittitas.

The letter to OFM, a statistical analysis of work-release needs, and a map showing the work release needs by county is available on the DOC website at <http://www.doc.wa.gov/news/pressreleases/2007/0702workreleasesiting.asp>.