

March 30, 2015

To: Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors, Parks, Energy, and Environment Committee

From: Sherrie Tussler, Hunger Task Force

Re: Update on Farm and Fish Hatchery

Hunger Task Force continues to lease the Farm & Fish Hatchery from Milwaukee County. In exchange for 40,000 fish, 10 face cords of wood, one acre of pumpkins and \$1, Hunger Task Force leases 208 acres of farmland surrounding the Milwaukee County House of Correction.

Last year Hunger Task Force grew 27 varieties of fruit and vegetables and supplied 750,000 pounds of fresh produce free of charge to the food pantries, soup kitchens, homeless shelters and senior programs serving Milwaukee's poorest citizens.

Since approval of the long-term lease Hunger task Force has successfully raised \$630,332 to modernize The Farm. No longer a series of garden plots, The Farm is fully mechanized. The warehouse facility is home to six tractors, a corn picker, veggie veyor, transplanter and numerous other large pieces of farming equipment. Half of the warehouse has been designated as a clean room where volunteers wash and pack vegetables for delivery. Thanks to the Milwaukee County Board, the Farm remains in service to the needy!

Hunger Task Force has also added children's programming at The Farm. The old prison break room has been renovated and is now a home economics kitchen. Children from Milwaukee's poorest schools plant our 28 raised bed gardens and are taught to prepare and eat the produce they grow.

The Farm is also home to a 43 acre oak savanna that has been protected all of these years from development. Hunger Task Force employs a full-time Natural Areas Manager who works alongside Brian Russart to restore the oak savanna for enjoyment by Farm visitors.

A Visitors Center is planned for a dormant building that once housed grain. CDBG funding is being combined with private foundation and corporate funding to modernize the existing structure as a welcome and education center for the more than 5,000 volunteers who now support the Farm operation annually. Our lease requires approval of Milwaukee County and proof of funds. We are ready to begin this \$750,000 project once we gain approval from James Keegan.

The Fish Hatchery is still dormant. All remaining fish were over-wintered in outside ponds. We await installation of the new well pump and hope to rebuild our fish stock once we have a stable water supply. We anticipate reducing the number of fishing clinics from four to two as a result of the diminished fish stock and hope to get back on course soon.

Our relationship with the House of Correction has been renewed and wherever possible we support job training and volunteerism of inmates seeking to reduce their sentence through restorative justice.

Our primary operating funds for The Farm are from The Harley-Davidson Foundation. The Foundation made a three-year commitment to The Farm and provides strong volunteer support. We hope to acknowledge them, as well as the many other donors and volunteers that make The Farm a success each year.