



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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Answering the call to reduce the budget while still providing best transitional services for prisoners, the Department of Corrections is implementing a plan to close and repurpose Palmer Correctional Center. Commissioner Dean Williams says “this plan will increase staffing and safety at other facilities.”

The plan to close the facility will be conducted in phases: Palmer Correctional Center’s minimum-security side (176 hard beds and 25 staff members) will shut down first. Many of the minimum-security prisoners will be moved to Pt. Mackenzie Correctional Farm, which is more conducive to transitional living. Inmates will learn valuable life skills, working with their hands, producing useful products, engaging with community volunteers and creating a better, peer-level environment to transition back to civilian society. A fully operational Pt. Mackenzie Correctional Farm will not only help the Department produce its own food, but will also provide a venue for local farmers to sell their excess produce every season to DOC for processing.

Thirteen staff members from Palmer Correctional Center minimum will also be transferred to the Pt. Mackenzie Correctional Farm and the remaining 12 will go to various other facilities in Southcentral Alaska.

The plan to close the Palmer Correctional Center medium security side will take four to five months. Inmates will be dispersed between primarily Goose Creek Correctional Center and Wildwood Correctional Complex. Phase Two is not scheduled to be implemented until sometime in November.

Currently, Palmer Correctional Center’s annual budget is \$10.6 million. The PCC closure is expected to save \$5.6 million. The remaining \$5 million will be reallocated to other facilities to bring staffing levels closer to recommended levels. Overtime costs at three of those cost the state \$1.85 million last year alone. The closure and reassignment of staff will reduce overtime pay by about 50 percent.

Inmate placement will be based on the custody levels accommodated by the destination facility. While the Department expects to reduce at least 30 positions, the actual loss of jobs should be minimal, given the time frame to transition.

The Mt. McKinley Meat and Sausage Plant, which is operated by the Department of Natural Resources, will still be staffed by minimum-custody inmates.

The Department of Corrections will work with the Mat-Su community to repurpose the Palmer Correctional Center facilities for future use. Commissioner Dean Williams says “the plan to repurpose Palmer Correctional Center will bolster operations throughout the institutions by increasing safety while also lowering costs.”

For any questions or interviews please call Corey Allen-Young at 907-500-4663.