

## **FARM WORKER HOUSING IN WASHINGTON STATE PROGRESS TO DATE (December 16, 2004)**

Since the summer of 1998, when Governor Locke declared farm worker housing to be the top housing priority in the state, the State of Washington has made significant investments to increase the availability of safe, decent and affordable housing for migrant and seasonal farm workers. In 1999, a cabinet level task force was created and a legislative proviso established funding for a Farm Worker Housing program within the Housing Trust Fund. Honoring Governor Locke's ten-year commitment of \$40 million, the Legislature has appropriated \$8 million per biennium for the program, or a total of \$24 million to date.

The state has applied a three-pronged strategy to addressing farm worker housing needs that includes:

- Capital investments in permanent (year-round) housing for farm workers;
- Capital and operating investments in seasonal housing for migrant workers; and
- Emergency assistance for homeless migrant workers with no income immediately available.

Since 1999, CTED has committed \$30.9 million in state and federal resources to farm worker housing, including \$22.8 million for the development of permanent housing and \$8.1 million for seasonal housing for migrant workers. These investments have resulted in the creation of 1,074 units of permanent housing and 3,919 seasonal beds for migrant and seasonal farm workers. In addition, 2,188 bednights of shelter have been provided through the use of emergency housing vouchers. Funds have also been used to provide technical assistance on the development of on-farm housing for migrant workers.

Some of the significant accomplishments of the past several years are highlighted below:

### **One Stop Clearinghouse**

A One Stop Clearinghouse was established in 1999 to provide technical assistance on planning and design, building codes, temporary worker housing regulations, financing options, and management to growers and nonprofit organizations interested in developing farm worker housing. In addition, the Clearinghouse provides educational materials and services to local governments on Washington State laws concerning farm worker housing.

### **Infrastructure Loan Program**

In 1999, CTED applied for and received a federal grant from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development to provide loans to growers for the development of infrastructure in support of on-farm housing for migrant workers. Operated in conjunction with the One Stop Clearinghouse, the program distributed over \$2 million to support the preservation or creation of 2,662 seasonal beds on farms and leveraged \$5.5 million in private investments. Funds for this program are now exhausted and no longer available; however, CTED is exploring options to provide continued funding to leverage additional private investments in on-farm housing.

### **Esperanza**

Esperanza is a 40-unit, 240 bed, seasonal camp that was developed in 1999 in partnership with the Housing Authority of Grant County. Under this pilot project, 40-foot cargo containers were

converted to housing units with windows, heating and air conditioning, bathroom and kitchen facilities. The camp is owned and operated by the Housing Authority.

### **Rent-a-Tent**

The Rent-a-Tent program was created in 2000 as an innovative approach to increasing the availability of on-farm housing during the cherry harvest season. Under the program, growers lease OSHA-approved tents and cots to provide on-farm housing for their workers. Growers must provide the infrastructure and amenities required under state licensing standards. In 2004, the program rented 134 tents to 12 growers, providing 804 on-farm seasonal beds. The program is operated by the Washington Growers League under a contract with CTED.

### **Pangborn Cherry Harvest Camp**

The cherry harvest camp at Pangborn Field in East Wenatchee was first established in 2000 as a pilot project to use public lands for temporary housing during the cherry harvest. Fifty specially designed tents, each housing up to six persons, as well as bathroom, kitchen, shower, and laundry facilities made up the camp, which was licensed to operate under the newly established state standards for temporary worker housing in cherry harvest camps. The camp operated for two years, with the facilities being relocated to Monitor Park in 2001.

In 2004, Pangborn was reestablished in response to a locally identified need for emergency housing during the cherry harvest. Increasing numbers of cherry harvest workers and a shortage of housing had resulted in illegal camping and unsafe conditions in the previous year. A local consortium of growers, housing organizations, social service providers, advocates and state and local officials identified reopening Pangborn as a key strategy to addressing the seasonal housing shortage until more permanent solutions can be implemented. The 300-bed camp is currently operated by Douglas County under a five-year agreement with CTED.

### **Monitor Park**

Monitor Park is a seasonal camp located on the Wenatchee River that began operation in 2001. It operates from June, when cherry harvest begins, through November, when apple and pear harvests end. The camp includes 25 bunkhouse trailers and 30 cherry harvest tents, providing 380 beds during cherry harvest and 200 beds for the remainder of the season. The park property is leased from Chelan County, who currently operates the camp under a contractual agreement with CTED. The contract will expire in 2007.

### **East Oroville Harvest Park**

Established in 2001, this 90-bed seasonal facility near the Canadian border is operated by the Oroville Housing Authority. The camp operates from June through November.

### **Emergency Housing Voucher Assistance**

In 2003, CTED entered into an agreement with the Department of Health to provide emergency housing vouchers to migrant workers that are displaced due to health and safety reasons and who don't have sufficient income to pay for housing. Vouchers are used to provide up to 10 days of emergency shelter at migrant camps, community-based shelters, and motels.

## **Permanent Housing**

Since 1999, the Housing Trust Fund has invested \$22.8 million in the development of permanent housing for agricultural workers that remain in the area year-round. Capital investments in rental and homeownership projects targeted to farm workers have resulted in the creation of 1,074 housing units.

## **Other Successes**

- In July 2000, the Governor's Affordable Housing Advisory Board (AHAB) created a Farmworker Housing Subcommittee to develop and recommend to AHAB a comprehensive, statewide policy on farm worker housing and a strategy for putting that policy into effect. The subcommittee developed a set of goals, objectives and strategy recommendations for addressing farmworker housing issues.
- Numerous partnerships have been established at the state and local level to address the complex issues surrounding the development of farm worker housing. Increased collaboration among the Departments of Health, Labor and Industries, Employment Security, and the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development has resulted in streamlined processes and improved service delivery at the local level. Partnerships with local governments, nonprofit developers, and service providers have resulted in the development of innovative models that are responsive to local needs.

## **Current Efforts**

- CTED is working directly with organizations such as the Washington Growers League and the Office of Rural and Farmworker Housing to create new models for increasing grower investments in seasonal housing. It continues to be a top priority to make progress in creating partnerships with growers that result in increased on-farm seasonal housing for agricultural workers.
- In conjunction with the Washington State Association of Counties and the Washington Growers League, CTED recently initiated a series of "roundtable" discussions to discuss the need for seasonal farm worker housing in agricultural regions of the state and to identify local strategies to address those needs. Nine meetings are currently planned over the next three months.