

Snohomish County Executive
AARON REARDON



Priorities in Action



Latest News & Upcoming Events

Friday, April 11, 2008

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 **Wild Sky Wilderness one step closer to federal approval**

The Wild Sky Wilderness area moved one step closer to being approved on Friday when it was passed by the US Senate.

Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon lauded the work of Washington State's federal delegation for their continued efforts to protect the Wild Sky Wilderness area.

"This is a great recreational opportunity for residents in Snohomish County and again highlights how vast and beautiful this county really is," said Reardon. "Our representatives in Congress should be proud of their work to leave this legacy for future generations in Snohomish County."

Reardon testified before Congress in 2004 in support of the Wild Sky Wilderness bill. The legislation includes 62 proposals for public lands nationwide. Locally, more than 106,000 acres would be designated in the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest as the nation's newest wilderness area.

The measure is expected to be voted on – and hopefully passed – by the House of Representatives next week.

The measure has been repeatedly sponsored by Sen. Patty Murray and Rep. Rick Larsen.

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How are we doing?

Did you know that you can track how well the County is meeting its performance goals?

The SnoStat system tracks how well the County is delivering services, the costs of those services, and the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery.

Simply visit our [SnoStat website](http://www.snoco.org/SnoStat).

Reardon proposes changes to farm-protection program

Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon today proposed a series of changes to the county's Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program.

Under the proposed changes, the county would have more flexibility to create areas set aside for farm preservation. Specifically, TDR protects farmland from economic pressures to convert to non-farm uses and focuses development in designated urban areas.

The new policy would begin with a review of areas currently slated for farmland protection near Arlington, part of a Snohomish County TDR pilot program. In addition, the county would begin working with landowners to create optional protection and development zones without having to amend the county's Comprehensive Plan through the docketing process.

No longer reliant upon the docketing process, which only occurs once each year, the county will be better prepared to respond to market pressures in both the farming and housing industries throughout the county.

This would be a step forward in the creation of a countywide TDR program and enable the county to make the Arlington program more enticing to farmers and builders alike.

"TDR is just one component of a robust strategy to preserve farmlands and improve the economic outlook of farming in Snohomish County," Reardon said. "By preserving our valuable farmlands we help secure the future of scenic open spaces and fresh, healthy, locally grown foods."

TDR is part of the county's Focus on Farming Initiative, spearheaded by Reardon in 2004, which promotes strategies to preserve farmlands and improve the economic viability of farming in Snohomish County. The county also operates a successful purchase-of-development-rights program, where development rights are bought from landowners in the Tualco Valley — a fertile farming area near Monroe — to protect future farming there in perpetuity.

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Or, [send me an email](#).

And please be sure to [visit me on the web!](#)

Sincerely,



Aaron Reardon

“Through our efforts to transfer and purchase development rights from our farmlands we are able to reduce the economic incentive for the conversion of farmlands to other uses,” Reardon said. “This is an important goal that helps preserve our valuable farmlands and the viability of local farming for future generations.”

Snohomish County also is working with farmers to create new opportunities to return local agriculture to profitability. For several years, the county has worked with farmers to test crops that can be converted to biodiesel and then sold throughout Washington state as well as internationally. The county also has held numerous workshops and hosted programs geared toward the economics of farming, the most successful of those being the annual Focus on Farming conference held each November.

The Focus on Farming events draw participants from across the United States and have increased annually since beginning four years ago.

Executive signs biennial budget bill

Executive Aaron Reardon on Thursday signed into law an ordinance to change to a two-year budget cycle for Snohomish County. The new ordinance is the result of a recommendation by the Charter Review Commission approved by voters in 2006.

Biennial budgets in other jurisdictions have been credited with improving strategic planning within governments. Much like the Washington State Legislature’s biennial budget, the change in the county process will create an opportunity to evaluate budgetary commitments on a longer term basis before reauthorization. It will also provide more time for departments to focus on improving program effectiveness.

Snohomish County also joins Clark and Cowlitz counties, as well as the city of Lynnwood, in making the move from annual to biennial budgeting.

The first biennial budget for Snohomish County will be effective in January 2009.

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County promotes tourism through grant program

Snohomish County is currently accepting applications from public and nonprofit agencies for projects that develop and promote tourism in the county.

Funding is available for marketing only and not for capital improvements. Money is awarded from revenue collected annually from hotel and motel room rentals in Snohomish County.

As has been done in the past, the Snohomish County Lodging Tax Advisory Committee will review applications and make recommendations to the Snohomish County Executive and County Council for final approval. Funds will be available beginning in July and will be awarded on a competitive basis to applicants who can complete their proposed projects by Dec. 31, 2008.

Historically, individual project allocation has averaged about \$6,500. The county anticipates it will disperse between \$20,000 and \$25,000 total this cycle.

Details of eligibility and other program requirements are included in the application package, which must be filled out and returned to the Snohomish County Department of Economic Development by 5 p.m. Monday, May 12.
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Applications received after that time and date will not be considered.

Applications are available by contacting the Department of Economic Development at 3000 Rockefeller Avenue, M/S #411, Everett, WA, 98201. For more information on the program, contact Brent Lambert at 425-388 3263, or blambert@co.snohomish.wa.us.

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