

EXECUTIVE ORDER 05-43

**ESTABLISHING A POLICY FOR PRESERVING AND ENHANCING THE
AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY IN SNOHOMISH COUNTY**

PURPOSE:

To implement the action items in the Snohomish County Agriculture Action Plan related to Farm Regulation Reform, Economic Development, Outreach and Education, and Cultural Heritage in order to promote policies that remove barriers to economic expansion into new markets, while also increasing the opportunities for farmers to seek out their own economic goals within our community.

DISCUSSION:

Snohomish County government recognizes that agriculture is a vital industry in Snohomish County that must be preserved and enhanced. Our role should be as a collaborative partner with farmers to continuously work through issues and challenges as they are identified.

The County is dedicated to find ways to reduce and eliminate regulatory redundancies which increase costs and impair predictability. Regulatory reform must focus on achieving outcomes, not bureaucratic processes. The County must also ensure that agriculture is included in every economic development plan and that economic incentives are identified and pursued for the industry's health and prosperity.

Further, Snohomish County government must improve outreach and education assistance to increase the level of public understanding and appreciation of local agriculture. Agriculture is part of the social, economic, and environmental fabric of Snohomish County. County government must communicate the value of the cultural heritage of the industry, both verbally and through its policies.

ACTIONS:

Snohomish County will adhere to the following policies to ensure maximum responsiveness to farmers, ranchers and growers. These actions will be completed and maintained as required to ensure service delivery thereafter.

1. Establish a permit assistance center for staff to work directly with farmers at the front end of the application process in order to simplify the permitting process and eliminate redundancies.

2. Create an alternative way to process agricultural permits separate and unique from residential and commercial permits.
3. Educate county staff and department heads about critical agricultural issues through a series of comprehensive workshops. These issues include, but are not limited to current and future infrastructure needs; transportation; and flood protection.
4. Maintain an agricultural website with information on regulatory issues that could affect the agricultural community, dates for public input and County contacts. The website will also keep current Agricultural Advisory Board agendas and minutes from past meetings.
5. Provide adequate communications to farmers and landowners who may be affected when the County proposes changes and designations to land use zoning.
6. Review internal processes between County departments to clarify and streamline items such as traffic safety requirements for permits.
7. Provide customer service comment opportunities to farm-permit applicants to generate feedback on the County's quality of service.
8. Create a task force with farmers, local, state and federal agencies to discuss permitting obstacles and opportunities and report options for discussion at the next Focus on Farming Conference.
9. Establish an internal implementation team to monitor the progress of the agriculture action plan.
10. Name an advisory group to propose agricultural economic recovery and expansion strategies. The advisory group will be comprised of a wide variety of agricultural disciplines, members of the financial community, operators of infrastructure businesses and appropriate agencies and shall make reports to the County Executive.
11. Seek grant funding to support outreach and educational efforts by agricultural organizations in the county.
12. Convene an annual "Focus on Farming Conference" to bring agricultural groups, farm organizations and farmers together to provide educational forums on emerging topics, discuss issues and formulate policy recommendations to local and state government.
13. Direct the Agriculture Coordinator to assemble industry groups together, within the next six months, to discuss and identify challenges and opportunities.


On or before May 1, 2005, the Directors of the Planning and Development Services, Public Works, Parks and Finance Departments will collectively issue a report setting forth a detailed work program to implement the actions specified above or alternatives achieving the same outcomes.

CANCELLATION:

This Executive Order will remain in effect until cancelled or superseded.

Dated this 17 day of March 2005.

APPROVED:



Aaron G. Reardon
Snohomish County Executive