



Snohomish County Council

## **NEWS RELEASE**

For Release: January 18, 2006

Contact: Councilmember (425) 388-3494

### **County Council Boosts Off Road Vehicle Use**

The growing use of off-road vehicles as a recreational activity got a big boost today from the Snohomish County Council. The Council approved changes in its development regulations that would allow for the development of off road vehicle areas on designated private lands zoned for forest and recreation.

Currently there are no lands in Snohomish County that allow for the development of ORV parks, but there is quite a bit of demand for that type of recreation. Owners of 4 x 4's, motorcycles, and All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) must go to the Walker Valley ORV Park in Skagit County or the Tahuya Park in Mason County. In other cases, ORV owners are using unsanctioned land often leading to complaints by neighbors.

The county council says the forest and recreation zoned lands in the county are well suited to development of a private ORV park. They are long distances from developed areas, have the topography that ORV users like, and are compatible with other forest uses. The ordinance requires that a new park go through a conditional use permit process to make certain the environment is protected and the use is compatible with other nearby uses. The ordinance imposes a 250-foot buffer to minimize the impacts to nearby areas.

One of the more popular unauthorized sites is on state Department of Natural Resources land at Reiter Pit outside Gold Bar. The ordinance clarifies that DNR may develop an off road vehicle use area within a public park as a permitted use.

The ordinance was approved by a 4-0 vote of the county council. Following passage of the ordinance, Councilmember Gary Nelson observed, "Snohomish County has officially created new access areas for off-road vehicle users. Thankfully, county residents can now enjoy these recreational areas instead of going to other parks located outside the county."

- END -