



**Snohomish County  
County Executive's Office**

*For immediate release – Thursday, August 18, 2005*

**Aaron Reardon**

*County Executive*

M/S #407

3000 Rockefeller Avenue

Everett, WA 98201

(425) 388-3460

FAX (425) 388-3434

county.executive@co.snohomish.wa.us

[www.co.snohomish.wa.us](http://www.co.snohomish.wa.us)

## Executive Reardon to honor 100-year old farms and their owners at Evergreen State Fair

--

*Hereth family of Snohomish and Hillis family of Arlington  
to receive awards for more than a century of farming*

MONROE – Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon will open the 2005 Evergreen State Fair by presenting awards to two Snohomish County farm families who have worked their lands for more than a century.

The Hereth and Hillis families will receive awards from Executive Reardon on Thursday, August 25, at 2 p.m. for their part in maintaining farms that have been owned by their original families for at least 100 years.

The two families join twenty-five award winning farms honored since the annual Snohomish County Centennial Farm program began in 2000.

“Agriculture is an important part of Snohomish County’s history – and its future,” Executive Reardon said. “My administration is focused on improving the local farming economy so families like the Hereths and the Hillis’ have the opportunity to successfully farm their land.”

The Hereth farm, on Springhetti Road, south of Snohomish, was homesteaded in 1904 by George Hereth’s father-in-law, Phillip Rohsnagel. When Rohsnagel’s eldest son died in the flu epidemic of 1918, the farm passed to daughter Frieda, George Hereth’s wife. The grandparents of present owner Mark Hereth raised dairy cows and producing oats, potatoes, and eggs for local sale.

Mark Hereth and his wife Lynne continue to celebrate the farm’s heritage, raising dairy replacement heifers and growing “haylage,” a dryer, sweeter form of silage.

The Hillis farm is marked by the Hillis Road northeast of Arlington. The lane remains flanked by huge black walnut trees planted as sprigs in 1898 by Charles Hillis, Sr., who lived in a small log cabin when he acquired the dairy farm. After entrepreneurial adventures which took Hillis to Raymond, where he founded log and shingle mills, he settled down to a life of farming along the Stillaguamish River with his wife, Florence.

Hillis built a substantial two-story frame home which still survives. His son, John Sr., with his wife, Madonna, now raise cattle and look forward to the day when, through the efforts of their sons, the restored family home will prosper in the shade of aged walnut trees.

“The Hereths and the Hillis’ represent the past, the present and the future of Snohomish County agriculture,” Executive Reardon said. “They are why my administration is working with our farm community to increase opportunities for economic expansion. Farming is a \$126 million-a-year industry in Snohomish County that we must continue to grow.”

There are approximately 1,600 farms in Snohomish County today, but there has been a 26 percent decline in farmland over the past two decades. Nonetheless, the total market value of Snohomish County agricultural products sold was \$126 million in 2002, the most recent year measured.

Executive Reardon has partnered with local farmers in a far-reaching effort to improve the business prospects of local agriculture during the past 20 months. In March 2004 Executive Reardon appointed the County’s first Agriculture Coordinator, John Roney, fulfilling a promise he made to local farmers during his 2003 election campaign. He committed County government to produce an Agriculture Action Plan after sponsoring last November’s highly successful “Focus on Farming Conference,” where more than 350 local farmers, ranchers and growers met to discuss obstacles and opportunities for local agriculture.

Areas addressed in the Agriculture Action Plan, released in March, include farm regulation reform, economic development, cultural heritage, and outreach and education. Snohomish County agencies have already developed a work plan to carry out aspects of the Agriculture Action Plan following an Executive Order issued by the County Executive.

A second Focus on Farming Conference will be held Thursday, November 10 at the Evergreen State Fairgrounds in Monroe.

##

For additional information please contact:

Mark Funk  
Executive Management Analyst  
Snohomish County  
(425) 388-3623  
[mark.funk@co.snohomish.wa.us](mailto:mark.funk@co.snohomish.wa.us)

# A profile of Snohomish County agriculture

Agriculture has been the dominant feature of Snohomish County's fertile landscape since the county was founded in 1861. In recognition of the history and importance of commercial agriculture to the county's quality of life and economic health, County Executive Aaron Reardon is taking steps to raise the profile of agriculture within county government. The following Focus on Farming web pages have been created to make it easier for farmers to access county services and to improve the County's responsiveness to growers' questions, needs and concerns.

## In Snohomish County:

- Agriculture is a \$126.9 million dollar industry
- 6,500 people are directly employed in jobs created and supported by agriculture
- Agriculture holds 69,153 acres in production
- Over 1,000 acres of seed crops are raised, most of which are for overseas markets

## Snohomish County Farms

- Number 1,600
- 1,105 of those farms are family or individually owned
- 1,010 of those farms have sales of less than \$25 thousand per year
- 597 farms are between 10 and 49 acres in size
- 226 farms are between 50 and 179 acres in size
- Average farm has \$32,562 worth of machinery and equipment
- Average age of farmer is 52.9 years
- 230 farmers are women

## Snohomish County is Ranked:

- #1 in the state in major dairy counties in annual milk production per cow
- #3 in state in total pounds of all milk produced and number of dairy cows
- #2 in state in broiler production and #5 in egg production.
- #3 in state in strawberry production