



**Snohomish County
County Executive's Office**

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Executive Reardon announces 'no-fee' ball fields solution

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*Youth baseball, soccer players will not have to bear
fees for fields located on commercial farmlands*

Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon today announced a “no-fee” ball fields plan that won’t burden local athletic leagues with costly permits and impact fees.

“I directed that a solution be found. My plan sets fees at zero, saving leagues that use these fields potentially tens of thousands of dollars,” Executive Reardon said. “That’s money that can now be used for balls and bats, not government.”

Executive Reardon intervened after planning and public works officials projected fees of potentially thousands of dollars. The ball fields were built illegally on lands designated for agricultural purposes under the state’s Growth Management Act. The fields were grandfathered by a state measure passed by the legislature during the 2005 legislative session.

Executive Reardon was a sponsor of the legislation while a state Senator, and urged its passage last year as County Executive. Without this change, state law would have required the County to close down these fields.

Executive Reardon noted that the state law signed by Governor Christine Gregoire is unique because it applies only to a limited number of ball field complexes already sited on agricultural land. The new state law allows fields existing before July 1, 2004 to remain on commercial farmlands, but maintains the Growth Management Act’s long-

term intention of keeping commercial and recreational activities off farmers' fields currently in production.

Under the new law, local athletic organizations that originally built the fields will have until June 30, 2006 to register and have the County designate the ball fields as legal. Seven sites with as many as 50 playing fields are located on GMA-designated commercial farmlands in Snohomish County have been identified. Other fields may qualify for the program.

Under current County code, land use permits, building permits and traffic mitigation studies with attached fees are required. These could add as much as \$13,200 to a single ball field's cost. Setting impact fees at zero will require new policies and changes to existing codes. The Executive Office will send the County Council an ordinance at the beginning of next week to make the necessary changes to existing code.

Even though fees will be set at zero, organizations must register with the County and apply for permits. The County must ensure that each playing field meets public safety requirements and has the necessary land use and building requirements. County staff will work with each field owner to make necessary upgrades and site changes, and to meet all permit requirements, Reardon said.

Executive Reardon said that at the end of last May's ceremony marking the new state law's signing, the president of the South Snohomish Little League Association gave him a prized baseball bat. The president told the County Executive he should return it when all the permits for the ball fields are issued.

"I am very close to returning that bat," Executive Reardon said. "This is an example of a new Snohomish County."

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