

Media Advisory – July 28, 2009

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New ag report will spur regional farming opportunities

Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon released Tuesday the community developed Agriculture Sustainability Project (ASP) report, which is expected to be the driving force behind the expansion of the region's agricultural opportunities.

The 325-page report is the result of farmers, agricultural agencies, advocates and local government coming together for the preservation and economic prosperity of Snohomish County's rapidly changing farm industry. Its completion marks an important point for county efforts toward positive and far-reaching efforts that support local agriculture.

“Though the latest agriculture census showed a growth in the total acreage being farmed in Snohomish County, we know we must continue to do more,” Reardon said. “The true measure of the report will come in its implementation and results.”

Among new ideas included in the report are:

- The creation of a year-round public farmers' market;
- A no-net-loss farmland initiative;
- The processing and distribution of locally produced foods;
- An expansion of current biofuel production and use.

Reardon also will organize a working group to analyze the agricultural land mapping contained in the ASP report, the mapping of salmon habitat restoration priority areas as well as a review of local, state and federal regulations that deal with farmland protection and restoration projects.

From the group will come policy recommendations designed to ensure valuable farmland remains available and that salmon habitat projects continue increasing. This will include expanded farmland preservation efforts, a working “no-net-loss” policy and contributions to the rural element section of the Snohomish County Comprehensive Plan.

The county's Economic Development Division, Public Works and Planning and Development Services already are working to create new opportunities for farmers by finding creative solutions to permitting and other land-use concerns.

The ASP got its start in 2007 when Reardon convened the Snohomish Agriculture Economic Development Action Team, which recommended the creation of a concerted and comprehensive Agriculture Sustainability Project.

“We have worked diligently – always with input from local farmers – to protect farmland,” Reardon said. “The completion of the ASP report is the result of that successful cooperation between the county and those equally interested in the prosperous future of local farming.”

The report, which now goes to the county’s agriculture review board for implementation, can be viewed at www.snoco.org/County_Services/Focus_on_Farming.

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