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## **County preserves Heybrook Ridge, other parcels**

Snohomish County will assist the Cascade Land Conservancy and a grassroots group of east Snohomish County residents in finalizing their purchase of 130 acres of sensitive forestland near the recently established Wild Sky Wilderness Area known as Heybrook Ridge.

Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon and members of the County Council have said they will approve the use of conservation futures funding following Tuesday's proposal from the Snohomish County Conservation Futures Program Advisory Board. The board recommends preservation-related property acquisitions with conservation futures money.

The county will contribute up to \$700,000 of funding from the Snohomish County Conservation Futures Program – collected as part of the annual property tax levy to conserve open space, forest lands or agricultural properties – to the \$1.21 million purchase. Friends of Heybrook Ridge – made up of local residents and outdoor enthusiasts – will donate \$550,000, including a \$500,000 anonymous gift.

Snohomish County will be the eventual owner of the property with its parks department as the designated custodian, after the Conservancy, which secured an option on the property last year, completes the purchase in coming weeks.

The Conservancy had until July 31 to finish raising funds for the Heybrook Ridge parcel, which was logged long ago but has now grown back to provide a forested setting for the town of Index.

“This purchase, with help from the CLC and local residents, allows us to provide a legacy to the people who live in Index and the region,” Reardon said. “Under the county’s protection, Heybrook Ridge will continue to provide opportunities for hiking and climbing, as well as contribute to the natural beauty of the area.”

“This is a great example of a community coming together to preserve a local jewel that is central to both its charm and character,” said Council Chairman Dave Somers, who sits on the advisory board. “I’m thrilled the gateway to the Wild Sky Wilderness Area will be preserved for present and future generations.”

The advisory board agreed unanimously to present the Heybrook Ridge project to the Executive and Council for final approval as well as six other projects. Total expenditures recommended by the board Tuesday were nearly \$7.7 million.

“These seven projects approved today make significant strides in protecting wetland, forestland and wildlife habitat,” said Councilman Mike Cooper, who also sits on the advisory board. “We especially took steps today to preserve habitat in urban areas.”

Additional projects include:

- \$450,000 for the preservation of more than seven acres adjacent to the county’s Lord Hill Regional Park. This will provide improved access to the park for equestrian uses.
- \$1.215 million toward the purchase of nearly 10 acres of sensitive wetlands and shoreline bordering Lake Stickney, where future development is imminent. This purchase will require an additional \$1 million in state grant funding for which an application has been submitted.
- \$1.520 million toward the purchase of more than eight acres of land in the Lake Serene watershed. This purchase will require an additional \$980,000 in state grant funding for which an application has been submitted.
- \$2.975 million for the preservation of 40 acres near the county’s Cathcart property. The purchase will transfer ownership to the county’s Parks and Recreation Department, preserving the land.
- \$750,000 for the purchase of remaining parcels at Sky View Tracts along the Skykomish River near Sultan. The county plans to construct a river park at the site.
- \$75,000 for nearly an acre near the county’s River Meadows Park. The purchase will allow the parks department to complete an addition to its new Yurt Village camping facility.

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