

Media Advisory – May 13, 2008

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County cleanup of Skyview area continues

Snohomish County began removing trash and debris Tuesday from an illegal junkyard that has become a safety and environmental hazard south of Sultan in an area known as Skyview Tracts.

Crews will spend the next two days removing nearly a dozen junk cars, a school bus and other trash in accordance with Snohomish County's strict enforcement against illegal junkyards.

"Illegal junkyards create an environmental hazard, a neighborhood eyesore and a breeding ground for crime," said Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon.

Skyview Tracts is located across the Skykomish River at the southern edge of the city of Sultan. The area has been the subject of concern for city residents due to squatters and illegal activity.

More than a year ago, Reardon ordered a massive cleanup effort at the site. Since that time county crews have removed more than 400 tons of junk and debris and aggressively enforced health and safety regulations targeted toward illegal junkyards. In addition, Snohomish County has purchased nearly 75 percent of the lots making up the Sky View Tracts area with plans to turn the area into a riverfront park.

This cleanup is part of the county's junkyard abatement program. Reardon proposed a junkyard abatement pilot project in 2006. Under the program the cost of the property cleanup is assessed to the property owner.

Snohomish County only pursues abatement on those sites that have gone through the entire Code Enforcement process and have a judgment from the courts authorizing the county to abate. When the County Code Enforcement Division receives a complaint, the first approach is to resolve the issues through voluntary compliance.

If voluntary compliance fails, code enforcement pursues a court order from Superior Court to require abatement by the violator. After failure to comply with the court order, the county may pursue a warrant of abatement which allows the county to clean up the site and charge the costs to the property owner.

Snohomish County Fire Marshal Tom Maloney, who oversees the code enforcement division, said, "We're here to help property owners that want help, but we're ready to take action when necessary to prevent junkyards from eroding neighborhood safety and property values."