



Snohomish County
County Executive's Office
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NEWS ADVISORY

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County advances farmland preservation in Tualco Valley

*County's purchase development rights (PDR) program to pursue over
\$850,000 from state and federal programs to protect local farmland*

Snohomish County today was given the nod to pursue over \$850,000 in grants to boost their Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program to protect fertile County farmland.

“Today we are taking an important step to ensure that prime farmlands are protected for future generations of farmers,” said Executive Reardon.

In a 3-2 vote, the County Council approved a recommendation for the County to sign a cooperative agreement with the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to receive a \$435,153 grant to support PDR. In the same motion, Council expressed support for the Executive's proposal to pursue matching dollars through the Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation (IAC). Both grants will go to help finance the County's Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program for the Tualco Valley, just south of Monroe, without use of local tax dollars.

The agreement to receive the NRCS grant was signed by the Executive Wednesday afternoon.

“This is an important step to support long-term agricultural sustainability in Snohomish County,” Council Chairman Kirke Sievers said. “Matching these grants together will preserve agriculture and save local tax dollars.”

“Preserving our agricultural heritage is important for our rural farming communities and the ongoing access for all of us to a diverse and wholesome food supply,” said Executive Reardon.

PDR works by purchasing the right to develop land from the landowner. A conservation easement is placed on the property to permanently protect the property from development.

The preservation program was a recommendation of Executive Reardon's *Agriculture Action Plan* which was written in concert with local farmers in 2005. The *Agriculture Action Plan* focuses on a broad range of policy goals to ensure the long-term success of local farmers, including: regulatory reform, economic development, outreach and education.

The Tualco Valley, just south of Monroe is approximately 3,400 acres, and is a key agricultural resource with easy access to the markets in Snohomish and King Counties. However, it's proximity to those markets also puts a great deal of pressure on landowners in the valley to develop these fertile farmlands into housing or other uses.

PDR applications representing just over 500 acres in the Tualco Valley have been received by County staff. These applications are being evaluated and scored with criteria established by county staff and local farm agencies. Recommendations for PDR purchases will be made to County Council for approval.

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