Eighth annual Focus on Farming Conference scheduled for Nov. 3

Snohomish County’s eighth annual Focus on Farming Conference will be held Thursday, Nov. 3, and I hope to see you there.

Bringing the ideas, the people and the products together for one day is a great way to advance the dialogue we started in 2004 on how to improve agriculture in Snohomish County. This annual conference is nationally recognized because it offers the chance to learn something new that in the end can make farming in our region more economically viable.

As always, our goal is to inspire new and seasoned farmers alike with a look at the latest in agriculture across the Northwest.

Hosted at the Comcast Arena in Everett, this year’s conference will continue the exchange of ideas during workshop sessions with top-rated keynote speakers interspersed throughout the day. New this year is a 17,000-square-foot trade show, offering farmers the chance to look at and shop for everything from a new tractor to greenhouse supplies, from farm insurance to feed and fertilizer.

Now a tradition, the day is also filled with a gourmet lunch prepared by local chefs with locally grown and raised food while the evening offers a wine-and-cheese tasting featuring wineries and artisan cheese makers from Western Washington.

To register for the conference or to view a list of keynote speakers and breakout sessions, go to www.focusonfarming.org.

Sincerely,

Bond refinancing saves county money with lower interest rate

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And please be
lower interest rate

Snohomish County has approved a bond refinancing package that takes advantage of historically low interest rates, saving funds that can now be used to complete the purchase of property near Cathcart without increasing current county expenditures.

County Executive Aaron Reardon signed the refinancing package earlier this week after it was passed by the County Council. The new package covers bonds issued in 2003 to pay capital needs for the county campus redevelopment project, airport improvements, solid-waste transfer stations, electronic voting equipment and the Sheriff’s shooting range.

“We must always find ways to lessen our financial burdens,” Reardon said. “This cooperative effort will pay off for the county and its residents.”

Snohomish County’s balanced budgets and strong financial position make the refinancing possible. The county has worked since early this summer to develop a financing alternative to pay off the existing bonds that had higher interest rates. The refinance package will be finalized by the end of November.

The refinancing provides substantial savings that the county plans to use to strengthen cash flow reserves at Paine Field and for expedited debt repayment on 206 acres of county-owned property located on the northern side of Cathcart Way just west of Highway 9.

Reardon: Make flood preparations a priority

With the 2011-2012 fall and winter flood season nearing, Snohomish County is urging residents to plan ahead now to protect and insure their property from potentially damaging floods.

Earlier this week, Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon declared October 23-29 “Flood Preparedness Week” as a reminder to residents to take time now to plan for property protection and safety.

“These steps can be as simple purchasing flood insurance or keeping storm drains near homes and businesses clear of debris,” Reardon said. “With the National Weather Service forecasting a wet winter this year, it is also important for citizens to have a family plan and emergency supplies for extreme weather conditions.”

Snohomish County makes available an annual publication, called the Flood Guide, which provides information that can be used for flood protection and preparedness. The Flood Guide covers a range of topics,
including:

- Information to help prevent flooding and to protect individual properties;
- Actions that property owners can take to avoid flood disaster – before, during and after a flood;
- The county’s Flood Warning System and how it works;
- Emergency phone numbers and contact information;
- Flood insurance facts and how to purchase flood insurance.

The Guide was mailed to all households within designated floodplains, and is also available online here.

Six presidential disaster declarations have been issued for Snohomish County since 2006 – four for flooding, one for a severe winter storm, and another for a severe winter storm with near record snow – with damage estimates of nearly $60 million.

There are currently more than 9,000 households located in just more than 5,000 single-family or low-density, multifamily structures within the county’s 222 square miles of floodplain. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) data indicate that only one-third of those structures are insured.

For more information on flooding, flood safety, and flood insurance, click here.

Online survey to gauge Centennial Trail uses, interests
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The Snohomish County Parks Department is seeking input on its trail plan for the Centennial Trail through an online survey.

The short survey will help the Parks Department plan future improvements and to develop other funding sources for future trail connections to other parts of the community.

The goals of the survey are to develop a trail-user profile, look for ways to improve safety, discover specific ways people use the trail, and determine how the Centennial Trail benefits the communities it serves.

The online survey will be available until the end of December. Community members and community organizations that use the Centennial, Interurban and other trails in Snohomish County are encouraged to respond.

Click here to take the survey.

For more information on the county’s parks system, go to www.snocoparks.org.

County solicits applications for tourism funds

Snohomish County is currently accepting applications from public and nonprofit agencies for projects that develop and promote tourism in the county.

Lodging tax resources are an important tool to strengthen and promote the County’s tourism assets. To achieve maximum benefit and provide the
greatest return on investment, Snohomish County’s lodging tax resources will be awarded to applicants who can best illustrate how their projects will advance the 2011 Snohomish County Strategic Tourism Plan.

Examples of potential funding approaches include: creation of itineraries, maps and packaging between arts and heritage organizations; promotion of outdoor recreation assets; and establishing and promoting Snohomish County’s diverse shopping experiences.

Money is awarded from revenue collected annually from hotel and motel room rentals in Snohomish County. The Snohomish County Lodging Tax Advisory Committee reviews applications and make recommendations to the Snohomish County Executive and County Council for final approval.

Funds will be available beginning in January and will be awarded on a competitive basis to applicants who can complete their proposed projects by Dec. 15, 2012. Historically, individual project allocations have averaged about $10,000.

Details of eligibility and other program requirements are included in the application package, which must be filled out and returned to the Snohomish County’s Office of Economic Development by 5 p.m. Monday, Nov 21. Applications received after that time and date will not be considered.

Applications are available by contacting the Office of Economic Development at 3000 Rockefeller Avenue, M/S #411, Everett, WA, 98201. For more information on the program, contact Wendy Becker at 425-388-3186 or wendy.becker@snoco.org.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read my electronic newsletter.

If you would like to send me your comments and feedback, or if you would like to unsubscribe, simply reply to this message.

You may also contact me directly by phone at 425.388.3460.