

For Immediate Release — June 30, 2005

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County Commissioners pass resolution regulating open burning

Port Townsend, WA—On Tuesday, June 28, 2005, the Board of County Commissioners unanimously passed a resolution establishing an open burning program in compliance with the Washington Clean Air Act.

“This is the first time Jefferson County has had an open burning regulatory program to provide consistency with state agencies and our local fire districts,” said Al Scalf, director of the Department of Community Development. “This new program is geared more for debris and disposal burning, such as landing clearing, and not to be confused with recreational burning, which is defined as a fire 3 feet in diameter and 2 feet in height.”

The program reinforces the authority of local fire districts, establishing field response and enforcement provisions for violations of open burning, including response and control action when violations occur.

The Jefferson County Enforcement Officer and Code Compliance Coordinator are also authorized to provide field response and enforcement and may call upon the respective fire districts for additional assistance.

Open burning permits are currently issued by the Olympic Region Clean Air Agency, otherwise known as ORCAA, and are in compliance with the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) fire danger index levels. With the new program open burning will be curtailed during periods of closure as monitored and defined by these state agencies.

On Tuesday, July 5, 2005, the County Commissioners will consider another resolution that will tie in to the DNR Fire Danger Rating System. DNR establishes a fire danger rating system on a daily basis across the state. If passed, this will establish the nexus between the DNR rating system and a Jefferson County burning ban. This system is based upon the determined safety of open burning for any given period of time. As an example, if the rating is “low,” it’s OK to burn, however, if the rating is “moderate” or higher, burning will be banned. All proposed burning in excess of the levels established for recreational fires requires a permit from ORCAA and communication to the local fire district.

For more information about the new open burning program, contact the Department of Community Development at 360.379.4450 or go to the County’s Web site at www.co.jefferson.wa.us.

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