



Group inks deal with architect to design regional equestrian center

By Erik Olson

Officials of the Southwest Washington Regional Equestrian Center have inked an agreement with the architectural firm responsible for renovating the Seattle Seahawks' luxury suites, headquarters and training facility, REQ Center officials announced last week.

Kansas City-based **Crawford Architects** will take over the design of the Winlock-area facility, which is expected to cost between \$55 million and \$70 million. The project will receive about \$8 million in state public funding, and construction must start by 2011 to still qualify for state funds.

The REQ Center also announced the Los Angeles-based Sport Finance and Management Group will aid with planning the development.

After winning big kudos in Olympia in 2007, the REQ Center has struggled to find a home in Lewis County. The group originally agreed to build the horse arena on a 190-acre parcel of land on the southeast corner of Exit 63 near Winlock, owned by Chehalis developer Phil Smith.

However, Smith was fined by the state Department of Ecology and ordered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to restore wetlands he disturbed while clearing the land in preparation for development.

The REQ Center then abandoned Smith's property and made an agreement with Winlock property Gerald Corey for his 40-acre parcel west of the interchange.