



Focus

Lake Management Using Herbicides with IPM: Public Review and Open House Forums Planned

Issue

Aquatic plants are a valuable component of aquatic ecosystems that provide cover, habitat and food for many species of aquatic biota, fish and wildlife. However, noxious and invasive aquatic plants can harm water quality, impair certain fish populations, block intakes that supply water for domestic or agricultural purposes, and interfere with navigation, recreation and aesthetics. In addition, noxious aquatic plant species such as Eurasian watermilfoil can form dense populations that pose safety problems for swimmers and boaters, as well as degrade wildlife habitat by out-competing native species or changing water chemistry.

Various entities request permits from the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) to use herbicides and other control methods to manage excessive aquatic plant species and algae. In response to these requests and in accordance with the provisions of the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), Ecology determined that aquatic plant management by these methods may cause significant harm to the environment, therefore state law requires an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Background

The state's Water Pollution Control Act (RCW 90.48) and the State Surface Water Quality Standards (Chapter 173-201A WAC) require Ecology to establish criteria and programs necessary to protect lakes, rivers and streams. The standards articulate an intent to protect public health and maintain beneficial uses of surface waters, including recreational activities such as swimming, boating, aesthetic enjoyment, public water supply, stock watering, fish and shellfish rearing, spawning, and harvesting, wildlife habitat, commerce, and navigation. Water Quality Standards specifically allow Ecology to modify the water quality criteria on a short-term basis to accommodate essential activities, respond to emergencies, or otherwise protect the public interest.

In 1980, Ecology completed an EIS for a statewide Aquatic Plant Management Program as guidance to decide whether Ecology would approve, deny, or add conditions to permits related to aquatic plant management. The EIS was written to evaluate the harm caused by using aquatic herbicides for controlling nuisance aquatic vegetation. Ecology updated and supplemented the EIS with the *Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for the Aquatic Plant Management Program* (SEIS), dated January 1992.

New chemical control methods for aquatic plants continue to evolve, and in order to assess the use of new or improved products in Washington State the 1999 Legislature directed Ecology to expand certain chemical application sections of the 1992 SEIS. With the passage of Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5424, effective May 10, 1999, the Legislature also directed Ecology to make the SEIS more responsive for the application of new, commercially available herbicides and to evaluate their use with the most recent research available.

Current Situation

In 1999, Ecology initiated a SEPA environmental review process to update the 1992 SEIS. Ecology is the lead agency in this effort, with the state departments of Agriculture, Health, Fish and Wildlife, and Natural Resources, and the State Noxious Weed Control Board providing review and advisory support through a steering committee. Ecology also convened a technical advisory committee to provide review and technical support for the development of the risk assessments and updates to the 1992 SEIS.

A list of interested people including academics, legislators, scientists, farmers, environmental groups, tribes, federal and state natural resource agency representatives, and aquatic plant managers has been developed for a targeted review of the new draft documents. Aquatic plant managers include local governments, communities, groups or shoreline owners proposing aquatic plant control activities. If you are interested in being added to this review group, please contact the project manager listed below. The draft documents will also be available at local libraries and on Ecology's website.

The draft risk assessments, completed May 2000, evaluate the environmental and human health impacts of 2,4-D formulations registered for aquatic use by the state and endothall formulations Aquathol and Hydrothol 191. The draft documents are currently available on Ecology's website: www.wa.gov/ecology/wq/herbicides/seis/risk_assess.html

Proposed Changes to Ecology's Aquatic Herbicide Permitting Program

- Ecology is proposing to update Aquathol information and review 2,4-D and Hydrothol 191 information in the new draft *Aquatic Plant Management Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement* (draft SEIS). The proposed mitigation measures in the draft SEIS are based on the technical review provided in the risk assessment documents and the steering and technical advisory committees have reviewed the measures.
- The draft SEIS also proposes an integrated pest management (IPM) approach for the control of noxious and invasive aquatic plant species and for all native aquatic plant control applications. IPM guides the selection and combination of control methods to maximize aquatic plant control while minimizing undesirable impacts in order to protect natural aquatic systems. Control methods include the use of biological control agents, mechanical and manual methods and the use of aquatic herbicides. The use of an integrated approach allows certain levels of long-term aquatic plant management planning that may allow longer-term permits to be issued for aquatic plant control.

Public Review and Open House Forums

We want your comments on the draft SEIS. During the 30-day public review period, Ecology will host open house forums across Washington to provide information on the new draft SEIS, as well as an opportunity for public discussion and to solicit comments on the new draft SEIS. The open houses will be from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. and 4 to 7 p.m. at Ecology's Regional Offices. Please stop by and talk with Ecology lake management staff about the draft SEIS.

For more information, please contact:

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Lake Management Using Herbicides with IPM Public Review and Open House Forums 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. and 4 to 7 p.m. Ecology's Regional Offices

SPOKANE
Thursday, July 13
Eastern Regional Office
N 4601 Monroe, Suite 100
Contact: Nancy Weller
(509) 625-5194

LACEY
Monday, July 24
Southwest Regional Office
300 Desmond Drive
Contact: Margaret Hill
(360) 407-0246

BELLEVUE
Wednesday, July 26
Northwest Regional Office
3190 – 160th Avenue SE
Contact: Mary Kautz
(425) 649-7036



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