



Focus on Freshwater Weeds

from Washington State Department of Ecology's Water Quality Program

The problem

Washington has many freshwater invasive plants in our lakes and rivers. These non-native invaders come from Africa, South America, Asia, Europe, and even the east coast of North America. Introduced without the checks and balances that keep their numbers under control in their native lands, they grow rampantly in Washington waters. The Columbia River, Lake Washington, and even pristine Lake Chelan suffer from invasive weeds. Many of Washington's 7,000 lakes have some level of invasion by species such as:



- Hydrilla - Washington has the only infestation in the Pacific Northwest.
- Eurasian milfoil - widespread in Washington's lakes.
- Brazilian elodea - choking the Chehalis River and obstructing salmon passage.
- Purple loosestrife - a major invader of Washington's wetlands and lake shores.

Excessive growth of these species displaces native plants and harms Washington's lakes and rivers. Non-native invasive plants:

- Interfere with recreational uses (swimming, fishing, water skiing, kayaking).
- Degrade water quality and threaten public health and safety.
- Reduce diversity of native species and increase risks to endangered species.
- Degrade habitat for fish and wildlife.
- Impede navigation.
- Increase flooding and flood storage capacity.
- Interrupt hydropower generation.
- Clog irrigation canals and irrigation water intakes.

Funding needs fall short

Washington has a state-funded Aquatic Weeds Grant Program, but it does not meet demand. Each year, Washington receives grant requests for about a half million dollars more than is available. We need federal help. A few years ago, Washington received about \$500,000 per year from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineer's Aquatic Plant Control (ACP) program. This was under a cooperative cost-share program between the states and federal government to control invasive aquatic plants. Funding appropriations fell, and as a result, Washington has not received federal funding from the ACP for over ten years.

How can you help?

Support efforts to appropriate funding for the APC program at its authorized level of \$15 million. This would ensure that the Corps of Engineers could reinstate its cost-share program.

For more information

Contact Kathy Hamel, Washington Department of Ecology, at 360-407-6562 or kham461@ecy.wa.gov. Web site: www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/links/plants.html





Purple Loosestrife in the Winchester Wasteway in Grant County, Washington



Eurasian milfoil and Brazilian elodea in Loomis Lake in Pacific County, Washington



Brazilian elodea in the Chehalis River, Lewis County, Washington

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