

Draft Aquatic Plant and Algae Management General Permit

The Department of Ecology (Ecology) has issued a draft general permit to cover aquatic plant and algae management activities in the surface waters of the state. The Aquatic Plant and Algae General Permit (permit) covers the discharge of chemicals to control aquatic plants and algae in Washington lakes and other fresh waters. These products include aquatic herbicides, algaecides, biological clarification products, aquatic dyes, adjuvants, and nutrient inactivation products such as alum. Ecology invites the public to comment on the draft permit and fact sheet. To view or download the draft permit and fact sheet, visit http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/pesticides/final_pesticide_permits/aquatic_plants/aquatic_plant_permit_index.html

How do I comment on the draft permit?

Ecology will accept public comments on the proposed permit from September 1, 2010 until 5 p.m., October 15, 2010. All written comments must include the commenter's name and address. Where possible, refer to a specific section or text. Ecology prefers to receive comments electronically at aquaticpermitcomments@ecy.wa.gov. However, you may also send written comments to the address in the column at the right. Ecology will also accept oral comments during the public hearings on October 4 and 6.

Ecology expects to issue a final permit by March 2011.

For more information contact kathy.hamel@ecy.wa.gov

What are some of the changes in draft permit?

The draft permit requires a Discharge Management Plan (DMP) for all permit coverages. Existing permittees have one year to prepare their plans. Existing plans are acceptable as long as they contain all the elements outlined in the DMP.

The proposed permit requires additional notification to affected parties when a new applicant applies for permit coverage.

Public Hearing & Workshop Dates and Locations

LACEY

October 4, 2010
1 p.m.
Lacey Community Center
6729 Pacific Ave SE

SPOKANE VALLEY

October 6, 2010
1 p.m.
CenterPlace
2426 N. Discovery Place

Contact information

Submit written comments to:
Kathy Hamel
Water Quality Program –
Comments
PO Box 47600
Olympia, WA 98504
360-407-6562
aquaticpermitcomments@ecy.wa.gov

Special accommodations

To ask about the availability of this document in a version for the visually impaired, call the Water Quality Program at 360-407-6401.

Persons with hearing loss, call 711 for Washington Relay Service. Persons with a speech disability, call 877-833-6341.

Applicants must notify all waterfront residences and businesses within 400 feet of a proposed treatment area.

The Department of Fish and Wildlife updated the treatment timing windows to protect salmon, steelhead, bull trout, other aquatic sensitive species, waterfowl nesting areas, and critical habitats. The revised timing windows are more comprehensive and protective than the current permit tables.

Permittees may apply nutrient inactivation products not listed in the permit on a limited basis if they operate under an Ecology-approved plan for this activity.

The revised permit is more protective of drinking water.

Ecology added imazamox to the list of allowed chemicals. It is one of the new classes of reduced risk products on the market.

Why does the Aquatic Plant and Algae Management General Permit matter?

This permit allows for the eradication of state-listed noxious weeds such as Eurasian watermilfoil and Brazilian elodea. These non-native plants can reduce habitat for salmon and other aquatic species. They can out-compete native plants to form single species stands, eliminating the diversity in a healthy ecosystem. Landowners may be legally obligated to eradicate or control noxious weeds, depending on their classification and distribution within the state.

The permit allows treatment of blue-green algae (cyanobacteria). Some cyanobacteria species produce potent liver and nerve toxins, and exposure to toxic algae has resulted in the deaths of pets and livestock in Washington as well as contributed to human illness. Cyanobacterial blooms and their decomposition also produce extremely unhealthy conditions for fish and wildlife. To protect human health, some local health districts may close lakes to contact recreation when blooms test toxic.

Lake groups may also control the growth of nuisance native plants that can interfere with some beneficial uses such as swimming, fishing, and boating. The permit allows people to remove some native plants that interfere with recreation, while protecting the rest. Ecology tries to balance the sometimes-competing needs for habitat and recreation by limiting the amount of the lake that can be treated at any one time.

The Aquatic Plant and Algae Management Permit helps Ecology mitigate and condition the use of chemicals in water; track pesticide rates and use locations; and ensure that public notifications and postings occur when waters are treated.