

## Control of non-native eelgrass (*Zostera japonica*) on commercial shellfish beds in Willapa Bay

Shellfish growers have asked the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) to develop a new general permit to allow the use of the herbicide imazamox to control non-native eelgrass (*Zostera japonica*) that is harming commercial clam beds in Willapa Bay.

Shellfish growers seek this permit to help them cultivate and harvest clams in the tidflats of Willapa Bay only.

The Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board classifies non-native eelgrass as a Class C noxious weed. Class C noxious weeds are either already widespread in Washington or are of special interest to the agricultural industry. The Class C status does not require control but does allow a county to select the noxious weed for control if it is beneficial to that county (for example: to protect crops).

### New permit would limit chemical use

The permit would set limits on the chemical application and allow this activity in Willapa Bay only, to protect Washington waters.

The use of imazamox requires a water quality discharge (NPDES) permit. Ecology expects to issue a general permit in place of a series of individual permits for this activity.

### Draft EIS and draft permit now available for review

Ecology has determined that this proposal is likely to have significant adverse impacts on the environment, particularly the native eelgrass *Zostera marina*. As required by RCW 43.21C.030 (2)(c), Ecology has prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and a draft permit that are now available for review and comment.

The permit would regulate the use of imazamox and marker dyes to manage *Zostera japonica* on commercial clam beds.

### WHY IT MATTERS

Willapa Bay commercial shellfish beds were historically sand/mud flats. *Zostera japonica* has colonized these beds making it difficult to grow and harvest clams.



*Zostera japonica*. Photo by Kim Patton.

### Website

[www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/pesticides/](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/pesticides/)

### Contact information

Nathan Lubliner  
360-407-6563  
nathan.lubliner@ecy.wa.gov

### Special accommodations

If you need this document in a format for the visually impaired, call the Water Quality Program at 360-407-6600.

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

Commercial clam growers would need to apply for coverage under this permit prior to implementing chemical control activities for non-native eelgrass.

The new permit would exclude geoduck culture from treatment with imazamox.

Ecology is seeking public comments through Feb. 15, 2014, on the draft EIS and the draft permit to allow the use of imazamox in Willapa Bay. See Ecology’s website ([www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/pesticides/eelgrass.html](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/pesticides/eelgrass.html)) for ways to submit comments.

**Two separate but aligned permitting processes**

The environmental review and permitting processes to control burrowing shrimp are separate from the environmental review and permitting processes to control non-native eelgrass in Willapa Bay. However, the public comment periods for each proposal are the same: Jan. 2 to Feb. 15, 2014.

**Public process**

Ecology will consider all comments in developing the final permit, expected in spring 2014.

Ecology will hold a public workshop and public hearing about the draft permit at 10 a.m., Saturday, February 1, 2014, at Willapa Harbor Community Center, 916 W First Street, South Bend, WA 98586.

The workshop and public hearing will last until the afternoon. It will include a discussion of scoping for the Environmental Impact Statement being developed for a separate permit to allow the use of imidacloprid to control borrowing shrimp in Willapa Bay and Grays Harbor.

People also can submit comments on either proposal to the Department of Ecology during the Feb. 1, 2014 meeting. Both public comment periods end on February 15, 2014.

**Issuing the permit**

Ecology will issue a final permit after it receives and considers all public comments. If public comments cause a substantial change in the permit conditions from the original draft permit, Ecology may convene another public notice of draft and comment period. Ecology expects to issue the general permit in the spring of 2014.

**Timeline for burrowing shrimp & non-native eelgrass control proposals**

