



Aquatic Invasive Plant Funding Grant Guidelines

State Fiscal Years 2025 and 2026 (SFY 2025-26)



Publication and Contact Information

This report is available on the Department of Ecology's website at <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/SummaryPages/2310039.html>

For more information, contact:

Lizbeth Seebacher

Water Quality Program
P.O. Box 47600
Olympia, WA 98504-7600

Washington State Department of Ecology - www.ecy.wa.gov

- Headquarters, Olympia 360-407-6000
- Northwest Regional Office, Bellevue 425-649-7000
- Southwest Regional Office, Olympia 360-407-6300
- Central Regional Office, Yakima 509-575-2490
- Eastern Regional Office, Spokane 509-329-3400

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Description of Funding Opportunity

In 1991, the Washington State Legislature established the Freshwater Aquatic Invasive Plant Program (AIP). This program includes elements for public education, technical assistance, and grants. **Freshwater aquatic weeds account-43.21A.650.** The freshwater aquatic weeds account is hereby created in the state treasury. Expenditures from this account may only be used as provided in RCW 43.21A.660. Moneys in the account may be spent only after appropriation. [1991 c 302 2]. The Aquatic Weeds Management Fund (AWMF) provides financial and technical assistance to local and state governments, tribes, and special purpose districts to reduce the propagation of freshwater aquatic invasive plants and to manage the problems these invasive plants cause. An annual three-dollar license fee assessed to the owners of boat trailers provides funding for pass-through grants that address invasive plant control and abatement.

This Program provides grants for the following:

- Activities intended to prevent, reduce, or manage excessive growth of freshwater, aquatic invasive plants.
- Development of public education programs relating to the management of freshwater aquatic invasive plants.
- Demonstration or pilot projects (applied research), determined on a case-by-case basis through the competitive program submission.

Ecology limits projects to lakes, rivers, and streams with publicly provided seasonal or year-round boat launching ramps (except for *Hydrilla verticillata* projects), or lakes designated by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) for fly fishing only. Projects in wetlands not associated with a lake or stream are not eligible for funding under this program. Boat launching ramps must allow access to the water body by a wheeled boat trailer. Canoe or kayak put-in areas are not considered to be boat launching ramps. Seasonal access may be provided by a WDFW boat launch or similar public access.

Activities not eligible for AIP funds include: development of Phase I Lake Restoration Plans, algae control projects, implementation of source controls, dredging projects, and activities or education efforts related to marine or estuarine plants. These types of projects may be eligible for financial assistance under other state and federal grant and loan programs administered by Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology).

Definition of an Aquatic Invasive Plant

A freshwater aquatic invasive plant is any emergent, submersed, partially submersed, or floating-leaved, vascular aquatic plant in a lake, river, or stream that adversely affects fish populations, reduces habitat for desirable aquatic plant and wildlife species, and/or decreases public recreational opportunities. A freshwater invasive plant is further defined to include only those species that are classified by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as obligate or facultative wetland species. Obligate wetland species occur in wetlands greater than 99 percent of the time. Facultative wetland species occur in wetlands 67 to 99 percent of the time. Eurasian watermilfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*), Brazilian elodea (*Egeria densa*), and parrot feather

(*Myriophyllum aquaticum*) are examples of obligate wetland species. Purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) is an example of a facultative wetland species.

Ecology will prioritize AIP grants for projects involving non-native invasive aquatic species like Eurasian watermilfoil that are listed on the state noxious weed list and/or the Washington Department of Agriculture quarantine list. Projects dealing with submersed species like Eurasian watermilfoil generally receive funding priority over projects dealing with emergent plants like purple loosestrife.

Eligibility and Funding Cycle

Eligible entities include: cities, counties, state agencies, tribes, and special purpose districts. The AIP Program has an annual funding cycle for general aquatic invasive plant projects. The annual application period begins October 24th and closes on December 14th of each year. Each grant time frame will be a maximum of two years.

Ecology evaluates grant applications according to criteria established in these guidelines. Ecology publishes a list of projects proposed for funding two months after the application deadline.

Project negotiations may take three to six months after a funding offer is received. Applicants have up to six months from the date of the offer letter to negotiate an agreement. Ecology considers a recipient who is unable to negotiate a signed agreement during this time to have declined the grant offer.

Types of Grant Opportunities

1) **Integrated Aquatic Invasive Plant Management Plan (IAVMP)**

Planning involves the identification of problems and evaluation of cost-effective alternatives for managing aquatic invasive plants. To be eligible for Aquatic Invasive Plant Control and/or Education Project grants, applicants must complete and submit to Ecology an *Integrated Aquatic Vegetation Management Plan* for the targeted water body. An integrated plan considers all aquatic invasive plant management options and chooses one or a combination of options for implementation.

- Applicants must have an Ecology-approved plan in place prior to the grant application period. Ecology's *A Citizens Manual for Developing Integrated Vegetation Management Plans* provides more detailed guidance for developing a plan. This manual is available on Ecology's website. *EXCEPTIONS*: Ecology does not require a complete Integrated Aquatic Vegetation Management Plan for Early Infestation Projects.

Site-specific IAVMP's are not required for emergent species. Ecology requires that projects dealing with the control of freshwater emergent species such as purple loosestrife be conducted under the Washington Department of Agriculture's (AG) state-wide Integrated Aquatic Vegetation Management Plan for noxious emergent vegetation.

2) Aquatic Invasive Plant Control and/or Education Project (IAVMP Implementation)

Applicants must demonstrate that their projects will prevent, eradicate, contain, or control excessive growth of freshwater invasive plants in lakes, rivers, or streams. Ecology will give funding priority to projects with invasive, non-native, freshwater plant species. Projects with submersed species like Eurasian watermilfoil are considered higher priority for funding than projects with emergent species such as purple loosestrife.

3) Early Infestation Project

An early infestation is a situation in which an invasive, non-native, freshwater, aquatic plant is discovered in its pioneer stages of growth in a lake, river, or stream. Freshwater aquatic species considered to be non-native and invasive include, but are not limited to, Eurasian watermilfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*), parrot feather milfoil (*Myriophyllum aquaticum*), Brazilian elodea (*Egeria densa*), fanwort (*Cabomba caroliniana*), hydrilla (*Hydrilla verticillata*), and purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*). These plants have caused and continue to cause problems in Washington State and in other parts of North America by their aggressive, invasive growth habits. The early infestation set-aside enables Ecology to assist public bodies in responding to early infestations of invasive, non-native, freshwater plants when *immediate corrective action is likely to effectively achieve eradication or containment*. Because it is essential to proceed more quickly than the annual funding cycle allows, applications for early infestation projects may be submitted at any time.

Award Information

Ecology requires grant recipients to provide matching funds for AWMF grants. The percentage of match varies according to project type. Ecology funds general aquatic plant projects at 75 percent state share and 25 percent local match. Pilot projects and early infestation projects are funded at 87.5 percent state share and 12.5 percent local share.

For all projects, recipients can meet the match requirement using any combination of cash, interlocal costs, or in-kind contributions.

Ecology limits the size of grants to the following:

- The maximum grant for aquatic invasive plant control is \$75,000.
- Planning grants are limited to \$30,000.
- The maximum grant for an early infestation project is \$50,000.

Ecology also limits the amount of funds available to each grant recipient during each funding cycle. The maximum grant amount per grant recipient per funding cycle is \$75,000 for general aquatic weed management projects and \$75,000 for early infestation projects.

In-kind contributions – In-kind match contributions must meet the requirements explained in the Administrative Requirements for Ecology Grants and Loans (Yellow book). In addition, in-kind contributions are subject to the following limits:

- In-kind contributions must relate directly to the activity being funded.
- In-kind contributions are limited to time, material, or real or personal property donated to the grant recipient to fulfill project requirements.
- Volunteer time may be donated at Ecology's accepted in-kind rate (check Yellow Book for current rate).
- Volunteer time from individuals receiving compensation through the grant does not count as in-kind contribution.
- The recipient must fully document in-kind contributions.

Ecology will offer funding to applicants for high-priority projects based on the availability of funds. Generally, the demand for funds exceeds the dollars available.

Funding List – Ecology develops and posts to the Water Quality funding page a final offer list after an internal team review of all eligible applications. Ecology sends a grant offer letter to the applicant soon after the date of the funding list. The letter identifies any special grant conditions and the contact information for Ecology's project manager is responsible for negotiating the grant agreement.

Early authorization – Ecology recognizes that under certain circumstances, a grant recipient may need to commence work on a project in advance of a signed and executed grant agreement. Under circumstances and by written request of the applicant, Ecology may provide the applicant written authorization to incur expenses that could be grant eligible. Ecology will not release funds until a grant agreement is signed. Costs incurred prior to the effective date of the written notification of prior authorization from Ecology will be the sole responsibility of the public body. Until the recipient signs a grant agreement, it must assume responsibility for costs incurred as there is no guarantee by Ecology that a grant will be awarded. Any work performed by the public body that is not consistent with the conditions specified in Ecology's prior authorization letter, and all other applicable criteria, will not be eligible for grant funds.

Important dates – The grant agreement becomes effective on the date that Ecology's Water Quality Program Manager signs the agreement, unless otherwise state in the agreement. Any costs incurred before this effective date are not eligible for reimbursement unless prior authorization has been obtained in writing from Ecology. If the recipient does not begin work on the funded project within four months of the effective date (or other mutually acceptable start date), Ecology reserves the right to terminate the agreement.

Application Instructions

Applicants must complete and submit an application through the Ecology Administration of Grants and Loans (EAGL) web based grants system by the due date each year. For the **FY2025 grant cycle**, the open period is from **October 24th through December 14th**. If funded, the grant agreement information comes from the application. The description and tasks proposed through the application are used to negotiate and develop the final scope of work and funding agreement.

Applicants and recipients of funds use the web-based EAGL system to electronically fill out and submit applications, manage agreements, request amendments, submit payment requests and progress reports and submit closeout reports. **To access the application forms, applicants must**

register for a **Secure Access Washington (SAW) online services account**. While logged into your SAW account, register for an **EAGL user account**.

Once validated as a new user by Ecology's EAGL System Administrator, you will have access to the web-based EAGL system. Only EAGL users in the role of Authorized Official can view available funding opportunities, initiate and submit an application. If you have any questions with the application submittal process please contact Lizbeth Seebacher at lsee461@ecy.wa.gov.

Refer to the *EAGL – External Users' Manual* (December 2017) Publication No. 17-01-015 at <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/SummaryPages/1701015.html> for detailed instructions on how EAGL works, EAGL terminology, and EAGL roles and permissions.

All grant applicants are responsible for reading and understanding these guidelines along with the Administrative Requirements for Ecology Grants and Loans (Yellow Book) (Publication No. 17-01-004) before entering into a grant agreement with Ecology. The Administrative Requirements document is available at:

<https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/SummaryPages/1701004.html>

Ecology rates and ranks project applications based on the criteria outlined in the table below. Applications are reviewed by a committee of three Ecology staff with aquatic invasive plant expertise.

Application Evaluation and Ranking

SCORE	EVALUATION CRITERIA
0-10	The scope of work represents a complete and concise description of the project tasks and outcomes, including deliverables and timelines
0-20	Project directly and measurably addresses an aquatic invasive plant problem
0-10	The cost estimate process is reasonable
0-10	The project task costs represents a good value for the work and water body benefits achieved.
0-10	Species severity
0-10	Water body need
0-10	Risk of species spreading to a nearby water body
0-20	Improvements to water body habitat
0-10	Improvements to water body recreation
0-10	If the project is in a water body with endangered species and/or salmonids, these species are addressed
0-10	Decontamination measures addressed
0-10	Scientific integrity - quality of the project
0-10	Project success can be measured, and proposed methods to measure success are reasonable
0-10	The project will provide long-term water quality benefits. Systems are in place to sustain the benefits after funding support has ended
0-5	Team members' roles and responsibilities are well defined and adequate for the scope of work
0-5	Team members' past experience is relevant
0-5	Staffing commitment is well documented
0-5	Financial need of applicant
0-5	Plans for long-term project success and sustainability were considered during project development
0-5	A high level of local support and commitment for the project is documented
0-5	The applicant documents successful performance on other funded aquatic invasive plant projects, including all Ecology funded projects
0-5	Project elements are in place for the project to proceed, permits obtained or researched and documentation is provided

Financial Management and Administration of Grants

Grant recipients must comply with all applicable federal, state and local statutes, ordinances, orders, regulations, and permits including those related to discrimination, labor, job safety, and applicable provisions of the state or federal regulations for minority and women owned businesses. Recipients must also secure any necessary permits required by authorities having jurisdiction over the project and must provide documentation to Ecology upon request. Ecology requires all grant recipients to maintain accounting records in accordance with generally accepted government accounting standards. These standards include those contained in the most recent editions of the United States General Accounting Office publication, *Standards for Audit of Government Organizations, Programs, Activities and Functions*, and *Ecology's Administrative Requirements for Ecology Grants and Loans*. In addition, Ecology requires grant recipients to maintain an accounting system which can track project expenditures separately from general local government expenses.

Ecology may conduct periodic administrative reviews of funded projects to evaluate a recipient's records and accounting systems. These reviews are intended to verify that eligible and ineligible costs have been documented for audit and that recipients are in compliance with applicable state statutes, regulations, and requirements (included special grant conditions).

Grant disbursements – Ecology disburses payments as costs are incurred. Recipients will submit Project Reports and Payment Requests at least quarterly, but not more than monthly, via the EAGL system per the *EAGL – External Users' Manual* (December 2017) Publication No. 17-01-015, noted above.

Payment request and progress reports – All payment request must follow the procedures described in *Administrative Requirements for Ecology Grants and Loans* and via the EAGL system.