

Update to permit for removing noxious weeds

Focus on: Controlling *Zostera japonica* on clam beds in Willapa Bay

What is this permit for?

Ecology is proposing to reissue a general permit that allows the use of the herbicide imazamox to control non-native eelgrass (*Zostera japonica*) on commercial clam beds in Willapa Bay.

The Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board classifies non-native eelgrass as a Class C noxious weed. While the law does not require control of Class C weeds, this status allows treatment with herbicide to protect beneficial uses. Controlling the non-native eelgrass is considered a beneficial use because the eelgrass makes it difficult to grow and harvest clams.

There are limits and permit requirements in place that help protect the environment. These limits include protective buffers for nearby properties, weather conditions, and herbicide concentration. Also, the permit has several requirements for notifying the public before herbicide treatments, and protections for native eelgrass (see “Protecting native eelgrass” on the next page).

Timeline

Spring 2024 - Gather input on changes.

August to October 2024 - Develop draft permit.

Nov 2024 to Jan 2025 - Public comments.

Spring 2025 – Expected permit reissuance.

Get involved

We invite you to comment on our proposed draft permit between November 21, 2024 at 12 a.m. and January 14, 2024 at 11:59 p.m.

You can comment in the following ways:

- Submit comments online
<https://ecology.wa.gov/eelgrasspermit/comment>

- By U.S. mail (postmarked by Jan. 14, 2024)
Shawn Ultican
WA Department of Ecology
PO Box 47696
Olympia, WA 98504-7696
- At our public hearings listed below.

Public workshops and hearings

- Monday, Dec. 30, 2024 at 2 p.m., (online – [register on Zoom](#))
- Tuesday, Jan. 7, 2025 at 6 p.m. (in person, Willapa Harbor Community Center)

We will provide an overview of the draft permit and hold a question-and-answer period. The hearings will have an opportunity for formal testimony.

See our webpage for more information:
ecology.wa.gov/zjaponicapermit



Zostera japonica, pictured here, is a non-native eelgrass in Washington.

Issuing the permit

Ecology will consider all comments in developing the final permit, expected in Spring 2025.

When issuing the final permit Ecology will respond to comments we receive and notify all commentors that provide contact information.

Summary of proposed changes

Changes in the draft permit include:

- Shifting when treatments can be done – from April 15 - June 30 to May 15-July 31 each year.
- Requiring monitoring related to treatment buffers and off-site impacts.
- Adding pre-treatment notifications to Ecology.
- Two new public notice requirements for permittees: signage at nearby public access points and boat launches, and notifying adjacent landowners.
- Updating several sections about applying for, modifying, renewing, transferring, and ending permit coverage.
- Revising language about new electronic reporting requirements.
- Creating a separate section about Spill Prevention and Control, maintaining existing requirements.
- Added several new definitions to Appendix A.

Other technical documents available

In addition to the draft permit and information about the public comment process, the permit web page has links to the Fact Sheet, an [Environmental Impact Statement](#) (EIS) for activities conducted under the ZJ permit, and other related documents.

[Visit ecology.wa.gov/zjaponicapermit](https://ecology.wa.gov/zjaponicapermit)

Limited treatment area

How much of Willapa Bay has been treated with imazamox each year?

Between 2014 and 2018, an average of 218 acres was treated each year. More recently, this average has gone down. Between 2019 and 2023, an average of only 82 acres of clam beds have been treated each year.

For comparison, the total area of Willapa Bay is around 80,000 acres, with approximately 8,000 acres covered by the native eelgrass *Z. marina*, and about 6,000 acres covered by the invasive eelgrass *Z. japonica*.

Protecting native eelgrass

Eelgrass, or seagrasses, are plants found in brackish or marine waters that form highly productive ecosystems. They tend to stabilize sediment, and provide food, shelter, and nursery areas for many types of marine animals. Several permit requirements are designed to protect the native eelgrass, *Zostera marina*. These include:

- Requiring at least a 10 meter buffer (about 33 feet) between treated areas and adjacent untreated property parcels.
- Limiting the application rate of imazamox to no more than 1.4 ounces per acre, and only one treatment each year.
- Applications of imazamox are also limited to; wind speeds under 10 mph to minimize spray drift, and situations when there is at least one hour of dry time before the incoming tide.
- Treatments are prohibited in drainages that flow to areas containing the native eelgrass *Zostera marina*.



Shawn Ultican

shawn.ultican@ecy.wa.gov

360-407-6283



To request an ADA accommodation, contact Ecology by phone at 360-407-6600 or email at jessica.shook@ecy.wa.gov, or visit <https://ecology.wa.gov/accessibility>.

For Relay Service or TTY call 711 or 877-833-6341.