

Focus on: Seafood Processing Permit Fees



What is a seafood processing facility?

Seafood preserving and canning facilities receive raw or frozen seafood from harvesting operations (e.g. fishing, trapping, netting). The facilities prepare the seafood products by butchering and cleaning. Prior to packaging, the seafood may be preserved typically by curing, cooking, or freezing. Wastewater may be generated from each stage in the process. The water quality permits for seafood processing facilities include limits on what the facilities can discharge, such as bacteria, oil and grease, and water that is too acidic.

Seafood processing permit fees

One of the fee categories we have for industrial wastewater facilities is **Seafood Processing**. This fee category is used for facilities doing seafood processing activities that require a water quality discharge permit. This is a tiered fee based on a facility's maximum daily flow or maximum monthly average flow in millions of gallons per day (gpd), whichever is higher, as specified in their permit. This fee category was added to the fee schedule in 1994 and there have been no adjustments to the tier structure since then.

Rulemaking process

Ecology updates the Water Quality Permit Fees with a rulemaking every two years. Ecology is accepting public comment on the proposed changes from March 27, 2025, 12 a.m. to May 20, 2025, 11:59 p.m.

See the "Provide feedback" section to find out how you can stay involved in this rulemaking. After reviewing all feedback received, Ecology will consider whether any changes need to be made before adopting an updated fee schedule.

For this rulemaking, we are proposing to add new tiers to the permit fee structure for seafood processing facilities. We are also proposing a general fee increase to recover program costs, as the Seafood Processing fee category has not had a fee increase since the 2019 permit fee rulemaking. Increases are approximately 4-5% for fiscal years 2026 and 2027, depending on the tier. The expanded tiers would help buffer fee increases to small dischargers in the future.

New structure

We identified a few reasons why this permit fee category would benefit from adding new tiers. Overall, expanding the tiers from the current five tiers to 10 tiers provides a wider range of tiers and fees. Facilities can be charged fees that more closely match their maximum discharge. There are currently 24 permittees in this fee category. They have a range of maximum discharge flow amounts from below 1,000 gpd to near one million gpd. The current tiers do not equitably distribute fees for facilities discharging higher flows, as

everyone with a maximum flow of 100,000 gpd or above pays the same fee. We are proposing tiers for those higher flows, to better reflect the cost of administering those permits.

We are also proposing to add more tiers that reflect the lower end of discharges. Currently, 20% of permit holders in this category have a maximum flow of less than 7,000 gpd but are included in a tier that assesses fees based on a limit of 10,000 gpd. This helps us ensure that smaller facilities are paying less in permit fees than the larger facilities.

The table below shows the current fee tiers and amounts for seafood processors.

FY25 fee category and subcategories	FY25 Fees (Current)
Seafood Processing	
Less than 1,000 gpd ¹	\$1,960
1,000 - < 10,000 gpd	\$5,000
10,000 - < 50,000 gpd	\$8,930
50,000 - < 100,000 gpd	\$14,040
100,000 gpd or greater	\$19,640

Proposed changes can be seen in the table below.

Proposed fee category and subcategories	FY26 Proposed Fees	FY27 Proposed Fees
Seafood Processing		
Less than 1,000 gpd	\$2,050	\$2,150
1,000 gpd to < 7,000 gpd	\$5,300	\$5,600
7,000 gpd to < 15,000 gpd	\$8,000	\$8,500
15,000 gpd to < 30,000 gpd	\$9,500	\$10,100
30,000 gpd to < 50,000 gpd	\$12,000	\$12,500
50,000 gpd to < 100,000 gpd	\$14,500	\$15,000
100,000 gpd to < 250,000 gpd	\$16,500	\$17,500
250,000 gpd to < 500,000 gpd	\$19,640	\$20,500
500,000 gpd to < 1,000,000 gpd	\$21,000	\$22,000
1,000,000 gpd and more	\$24,000	\$25,000

We conducted a fee audit of this permit group as part of the rulemaking process, and discovered a few facilities were not being assessed fees that aligned with the latest discharge flow maximums. These issues are

¹ gpd stands for “gallons per day”

being resolved, and any facilities that were not previously being assessed fees in the correct category will be moved into the correct tiers at the beginning of fiscal year 2026.

Questions

If you have any questions about how the proposed fee schedule would impact your permit fee, please reach out to the Fee Unit at wqfeunit@ecy.wa.gov or 1-800-633-6193, Option 2.

Provide Feedback

Ecology is accepting comments from March 27, 2025, 12:00 a.m. to May 20, 2025, 11:59 p.m. We are also holding two virtual public hearings, which will include a presentation and question and answer session, followed by an opportunity to provide verbal comments.

- May 12, 5:30 p.m., [register on Zoom](#)
- May 13, 1:00 p.m., [register on Zoom](#)

Visit our webpage for this rulemaking at ecology.wa.gov/WQ-fee-rule to learn more about the proposed changes and how you can provide feedback to Ecology.

If you would like to receive announcements about this rulemaking, sign up for our [Water Quality Permit Fees email list](#)².



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To request an ADA accommodation, contact Ecology by phone at 360-407-6600 or email at wqfeunit@ecy.wa.gov, or visit <https://ecology.wa.gov/accessibility>. For Relay Service or TTY call 711 or 877-833-6341

² https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/WAECY/subscriber/new?topic_id=WAECY_152