

Fresh Fruit Packing General Permit

Focus on: 2026 permit reissuance

What is this permit for?

Fresh fruit packing facilities in Washington must have a permit if they directly or indirectly discharge wastewater into waters of the state. The Fresh Fruit Packing General Permit sets the conditions and requirements for how these facilities treat and dispose of their wastewater before it reaches lakes, rivers, or groundwater.

The permit combines two authorities: the federal National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit program and the state Waste Discharge Permit. Together, they limit pollutants that can enter surface water and groundwater.

Why does this matter?

Fruit packing facilities use water to wash fruit before it's sold in stores. That wash water can carry dirt, bacteria, and small amounts of pesticide residue that are rinsed off the fruit. Without treatment, this wastewater can harm people, fish, and other wildlife.

The permit protects public health and the environment by requiring facilities to treat their wastewater before it's released.

Who's covered?

About 168 fruit packing facilities — mostly in the Central Region of Washington — currently operate under this permit. Together, they discharge millions of gallons of treated wastewater each year.

By following the permit's best management practices, keeping pollution control plans up to date, and regularly monitoring and reporting results to Ecology, these facilities help protect water quality. This helps support Washington's agricultural industry.

A benefit to businesses

The permit lasts for five years and helps businesses operate with clear expectations and consistent rules statewide. The current permit expires December 31, 2026.

We value ongoing conversations about this permit, especially during permit reissuance. Open communication helps us understand industry needs, improve the permit language and requirements, and keep it practical and effective.

A smarter permit process

When we renew the permit, we review new or emerging products used after harvest — such as fungicides and sanitizers — that could appear in wastewater.

We also invite input from anyone who could be affected by the permit. Your feedback helps us:

- Create rules that protect water quality.
- Improve how the permit addresses real-world changes.
- Make sure requirements are practical and affordable.



Get involved

With the current permit set to expire December 31, 2026, we have started the process to draft the next version of the permit.

- **Public listening session:** We will host an in-person listening session Thursday, November 13, from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. at Ecology's Union Gap office. A Spanish interpreter will be available.
- **Informal comment period:** We invite your feedback on the current Fresh Fruit Packing General Permit between November 13 and December 1. We will consider your feedback as we develop the draft permit.



Scan this QR code to submit your informal comment.

- **Draft development:** We will work on developing a draft permit through spring 2026.
- **Public comment period:** We plan to start a formal comment period in June 2026. We will hold public hearings during the summer. Ecology will review comments and may revise the draft permit based on input.
- **Final permit:** We plan to issue the updated permit in late 2026. When we issue the permit we will also share our response to comments.

Stay informed

Visit Ecology's Fresh Fruit Packing General Permit webpage at ecy.wa.gov/FreshFruitPack for updates and schedule changes.

**Information will be available
in English and Spanish.**



Related information



Fresh Fruit Packing
General Permit webpage



Water Quality Permits
webpage



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