

Aquatic Weeds Management and Freshwater Algae Control

Funds for Aquatic Weeds Management

The Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) administers a state financial and technical assistance program to manage problems caused by state-listed, invasive, noxious freshwater weeds. Such weeds, including Eurasian watermilfoil and purple loosestrife, are a serious threat to the health of lakes, rivers, and streams throughout the state. Excessive weed growth harms fish and wildlife habitat and restricts recreational activities. Funding for this Aquatic Weeds Program comes from an annual boat trailer registration fee that generates approximately \$600,000 per year in revenue.

Each year Ecology accepts applications from cities, counties, state agencies, tribes, and conservation districts seeking financial help to deal with problems caused by the excessive growth of invasive, freshwater weeds. Ecology awards grants through a competitive evaluation process. Ecology also awards early infestation grants on a first-come, first-served basis. The purpose of early infestation grants is to provide immediate financial assistance to local or state governments to eradicate or contain a pioneering invasion of a non-native freshwater aquatic plant.

For the last several funding cycles, Ecology received more Aquatic Weeds grant applications than it had money to fund. Generally, Ecology awards about \$350,000 in grants each year.

Recent projects include:

- Development of integrated aquatic plant management plans for waters infested with invasive plants, such as Eurasian watermilfoil, Brazilian elodea, or parrotfeather.
- Freshwater plant management using mechanical, chemical, and biological control methods.
- Immediate removal of invasive plants, such as Brazilian elodea, using diver hand removal and covering with bottom barriers.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information about the Aquatic Weeds Management or Freshwater Algae Control Programs, contact

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- Research of harm to salmon and amphibians from use of aquatic herbicides.
- Education about aquatic plants.

Funding evaluation

Ecology staff evaluate the project proposals received during the annual grant application period and develop a statewide priority list. Projects are evaluated based on the highest-priority aquatic plant management needs statewide. Priority projects include those dealing with the state-listed noxious freshwater weeds rather than native nuisance plants. Submersed plant projects like those targeting Eurasian watermilfoil receive higher funding priority over projects managing wetland plants like purple loosestrife. Projects with strong local commitment are favored. Ecology offers funds to the highest-ranking projects.

Funding cycle schedule

Ecology offers Aquatic Weeds grants on an annual basis. The grant funding cycle starts on October 1 and closes on November 1 of each year. Early infestation grants are offered on a first-come-first-served basis. The agency reserves approximately \$100,000 each year for early infestation projects. See the specifics for each year's Aquatic Weeds grant funding cycle on Ecology's Water Quality Programs website at:
<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/plants/grants/index.html>

Funds for Freshwater Algae Control

Many Washington lakes have problems with excessive algae growth. Algae can be smelly, unsightly, and potentially toxic to humans, pets, and livestock. In 2005, the Washington Legislature established funding for the Freshwater Algae Control Program and tasked Ecology with developing and implementing the program. Funding for the Freshwater Algae Control Program comes from an annual boat registration fee that generates approximately \$250,000 per year in revenue.

Ecology administers the financial and technical assistance program to control algae problems in Washington lakes, rivers, and streams. The Freshwater Algae Control Program focuses on blue-green algae (also known as cyanobacteria) because some types of blue-green algae produce toxins that kill pets and have the potential to affect humans.

In 2007 and 2008, Ecology accepted applications from cities, counties, state agencies, tribes, and conservation districts seeking financial help to deal with problems caused by the excessive growth of freshwater algae. Other elements of Ecology's Freshwater Algae Control Program include:

- A mail-in service for identification of algae blooms in Washington waters, including toxicity testing for blue-green algae blooms.
- A web-based database to post algae identification and toxicity testing results.
- A partnership with Washington Department of Health (Health) for the development of statewide guidelines for toxic algae blooms.

- Ecology and Health websites with information about freshwater algae control methods and human and pet health risks of toxic blue-green algae.

See the *Freshwater Algae Control Program Report to the Washington State Legislature* at www.ecy.wa.gov/biblio/0910082.html for an update on Algae Control activities in 2009.

Funding evaluation

Ecology staff evaluate the project proposals it receives during the annual grant application period and develops a statewide priority list. Ecology evaluates projects based on the highest-priority algae control needs statewide. Priority projects include those dealing with lakes where harmful algal blooms have occurred within the past three years. Projects involving potentially toxic blue-green species receive funding priority. Projects with strong local commitment are favored. Ecology offers funds to the highest-ranking projects.

Funding cycle schedule

In 2007 and 2008, Ecology offered Freshwater Algae Control grants on the same funding cycle as for the Aquatic Weeds Management fund. For 2009, Ecology did not have sufficient appropriation authority for this account to fund both a Freshwater Algae grant program and the Legislative proviso through the 2009-2011 Biennial Budget for a Saltwater Algae grant program.