



Aquatic Invasive Species Management

HB 2458 and SB 6040



Problem: Aquatic invasive species (AIS) pose an ongoing threat to Washington's environment and economy. Invasive species are often spread by boats, trailers and other aquatic conveyances to locations that lack natural defenses. Invasive species can damage irrigation and water systems, clog hydroelectric dam intakes, disrupt efforts to recover endangered salmon stocks, and out-compete native and commercially grown species

Preventing the introduction and spread of AIS in Washington is challenging and unpredictable, requiring vigilance against known and unknown threats, rapid response to their discovery, and persistent, cost-effective containment of species that have established themselves. Accordingly, the state AIS program monitors waters in lakes, rivers and bays; inspects vessels and trailers; conducts research; and develops educational materials to address risks posed by AIS across the state.

Proposed solution:

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is asking state lawmakers to revise current laws and increase funding to enhance the state's ability to address AIS threats. The proposal reflects recommendations by several state and regional organizations, including the Washington Invasive Species Council, the Pacific Northwest Economic Region, and the Northwest Power and Conservation Council. It also reflects WDFW's 15 years of experience in responding to AIS threats.

If enacted, the legislation would enable the WDFW AIS Management and Enforcement programs to:

- Organize the AIS statutes into a single chapter and build on WDFW's authority to manage AIS statewide;
- Proactively address a broader range of AIS and AIS pathways to anticipate high-risk threats based on WSDA pest and noxious weed management models;
- Expedite rapid-response management actions to contain, control, and eradicate AIS, including the ability to quarantine a water body that is infested with AIS and petition the Governor for emergency measures;
- Promote an integrated AIS management system to encourage cooperative management of infested sites and build private/public partnerships; and
- Expand prevention and enforcement responsibilities as funding resources become available.

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Under this administrative structure, funding will be sought in the future to implement key department AIS Prevention and Enforcement programs, such as early detection monitoring, rapid response and infested site management actions, education and outreach, watercraft inspections, and law enforcement trainings.

Potential benefits:

The ultimate goal of an enhanced AIS program is to prevent AIS from becoming established in Washington waters and causing costly environmental and economic damage. Program enhancement would benefit citizens and businesses by reducing environmental damage and restoration costs for native ecosystems and for salmon recovery and other fish and wildlife species. It would also protect key sectors of the state's outdoor economy, including agriculture and aquaculture, forestry, fishing and many forms of recreation.

The proposed legislation would provide WDFW with proven regulatory tools, modeled on the state's integrated pest management and noxious weed laws. Also, recognizing that Washington often must work with other states to address aquatic invasive species threats, the bill would increase the consistency of laws and resources among the Western states.

Washington's rivers, lakes, streams and marine areas represent critically important environmental and economic assets. A strong AIS program in Washington will benefit the entire Pacific Northwest region by helping to reduce the threats posed by invasive species.

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