

## POLICY 5310

**See Also:** POL 5307 – Managing Weeds on WDFW Lands  
POL 5104 – Executing Fish Health Standards  
POL 5103 – Planting Triploid Grass Carp

**Approved by and Date:** /s/ Phil Anderson 2/28/11

### **POL – 5310 MANAGING INVASIVE SPECIES**

This policy provides direction for Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) practices with regard to preventing the spread of nonnative invasive species, to address the risks that invasive species pose to the ecosystems and economy of Washington State. It does not provide guidance for determination of what species are categorized as nonnative or invasive species.

This policy applies to all Department employees and volunteers. However, if policies or procedures are in conflict with or are modified by a bargaining unit agreement, the agreement language shall prevail. Fiscal impacts may be phased in based upon available revenue.

#### **DEFINITIONS:**

**Invasive Species** - Invasive species are nonnative species classified by the Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) as prohibited invasive or regulated aquatic invasive. For purposes of this policy, plants on the State Noxious Weed List (RCW 17.10.010) are also defined as Invasive Species.

**Manage** – to prevent, contain, control, and/or eradicate the introduction or spread of invasive species.

**Nonnative species** – any species or other viable biological organism occurring within a defined and documented geographic range or ecosystem limit of Washington State, where its presence in that region is the result of human intervention. Nonnative species may include genetically modified and cryptogenic species.

**Noxious weeds** – are designated by the Department of Agriculture as a plant that when established is highly destructive, competitive, or difficult to control by cultural or chemical processes as defined under RCW 17.10.010.

**1. Invasive Species Pose a Very Serious Risk to Washington's Ecosystems and Native Species.**

Nonnative invasive species significantly threaten the ecological integrity of our natural systems. Nationwide, invasive species are one of the primary risk factors facing threatened and endangered species.

**2. Department Activities Shall Prevent the Introduction and Spread of Invasive Species.**

Prevention is the "gold standard" when dealing with invasive species. Prevention of new species from establishing and existing infestations from spreading results in the least amount of environmental and economic harm, as well as being the least costly management option.

The Department's activities must protect the integrity of the ecosystems that we manage. In areas where we work we must protect fish and wildlife that are vulnerable to invasive species and set a good example for others who work or recreate in Washington's outdoors.

**3. Department Activities Shall Not Contribute to the Introduction or Spread of Unclassified Nonnative Species.**

Many nonnative species have not been classified by the Commission or the Department of Agriculture as invasive: either because they are already well established and little can be done to address their impacts, or because there is uncertainty about whether they pose comparable levels of risk as species that are categorized as invasive, or because they are not expected to occur in Washington state now or in the near future.

Regardless of classification status, Department activities should be conducted with reasonable precaution to avoid contributing to their introduction and spread. Even though they are unclassified, the Department should be mindful of their potential adverse impacts. In most cases, procedures adopted by the Department for minimizing the introduction and spread of Invasive Species should also address the potential risks of introducing or spreading Unclassified Nonnatives as well.

**4. The Department Will Comply With All Laws and Executive Policies Pertaining to the Control of Invasive Species and Noxious Weeds.**

The Department shall not only meet legal obligations to control listed weed species, prohibited animal species, and deleterious exotic species; by its actions the Department shall set a high standard for others with regard to controlling the spread of invasive species. The Department will adopt and actively maintain

science-based protocols for minimizing the risk that field and property management activities will contribute to the spread of invasive species.

**5. The Department Will Comply With All Water Quality Standards When Handling Decontamination Materials.**

Disposal of decontamination materials will be accomplished consistent with federal and state regulations protecting water quality.

**6. The Department Will Implement and Maintain Protocols for Controlling the Spread of Invasive Species.**

The Department will adopt precaution-based protocols for conduct of field activities to minimize the risk of introducing or spreading invasive species, and will update them to incorporate advances in invasive species management technologies. The Department will implement procedures to ensure that the protocols are being followed, and that Department staff have safe access to decontamination equipment, supplies and facilities. The Department shall base protocols on the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point format, providing specific guidance on who the protocols apply to, when and where the protocols are effective, what the protocols entail, how to employ them, and why they are necessary.

**7. The Department Will Actively Encourage Natural Resource Managers and the Public to Adopt and Maintain Similar Precautions.**

Effective prevention measures require similar levels of precaution by others working within Washington and in neighboring states and provinces. Because regional coordination efforts are essential for managing invasive species, the Department will be an active participant in regional forums such as:

- Washington Invasive Species Council
- Columbia River Basin Team
- Pacific Ballast Water Group
- Aquatic Nuisance Species Committee
- Ballast Water Working Group

Cooperative prevention and response efforts are also a key element of invasive species control. In order to develop regional efficiencies, the Department will develop and support formal agreements with other entities to efficiently share resources for response and control.

**8. Department Activities Should Safeguard State or Federal Listed Species and Their Critical Habitats.**

The Department shall prioritize protection for habitats that are critical to the existence and recovery of listed species, treat those habitats with extreme concern, and ensure that the control measures themselves (such as the use of disinfectant chemicals) do not harm listed species. Ecological integrity will be maintained or enhanced for all aquatic and terrestrial locations, to avoid net loss of integrity resulting from establishment or spread of invasive species.

**9. The Department Shall Adopt and Maintain Proactive Weed Management Plans and Protocols For Agency-Owned and Controlled Lands.**

Permits and contracts issued by the Department shall require permittees and contractors to follow Department protocols for controlling the spread of invasive species. While working on Department lands and access points, employees, contractors, and volunteers shall follow the Weed Management Plans and Department protocols.

**10. The Department Shall Adopt a Rapid Response Approach to Eradicate or Control Invasive Species on State-Owned or Controlled Lands.**

After prevention, rapid response has been shown to be the most cost-effective means to control invasive species. Eradication of invasive species is simplest before they become well established, and when control or eradication activities are less likely to disrupt the ecosystem.

The basic steps in rapid response are: initial assessment of the extent of the infestation, containment of the infested area to prevent additional inadvertent spreading, and effective eradication. Rapid response capability is facilitated by proactive planning; the Department will develop strategic plans to support a rapid response capability.

**11. The Department Shall Encourage Citizen Science In Detecting, Assessing, and Reporting Invasive Species Occurrences.**

Informed stakeholders can assist with early detection as well as increased detection effort, increasing the probability that invasive species will be detected before they become solidly entrenched in an area and more difficult to eradicate or control. Informed stakeholders are also more likely to adopt precautions against inadvertent transportation of invasive species.