The Recreation and Conservation Office will request $28,000 of new funding in the 2022 supplemental operating budget to administer a flowering rush cost-share program. The state funds will be used to develop and implement the Washington portion of a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission cost-share program covering the entire Columbia River basin including Idaho, Oregon, and Montana. If this budget request is approved, the funding will leverage more than $361,000 in federal funds and $371,000 in non-federal funds for flowering rush removal in six counties and three Indian reservations in Washington.

Invasive species pose one of the greatest ecological threats to Washington's lands and waters. Their control can be complex and expensive and can continue in perpetuity if the species is not promptly managed. When not swiftly removed, the harm that invasive species cause can be irreversible. Early detection and immediate response actions have been proven to reduce the long-term costs, environmental harm, and economic burden that invasive species have on communities.

Flowering rush is an aggressive, freshwater invasive plant that rapidly colonizes wetlands, lakes, slow-moving rivers, canals, and irrigation ditches. Without management, it forms dense stands both under and above water, which can dominate shorelines to depths of 20 feet. It affects irrigation, dam management, and recreational activities such as swimming, fishing, and boating. It provides cover and nesting habitat for invasive fish that eat desirable native fish such as salmon and trout. Flowering rush is spreading downstream in the Columbia River from Montana and Idaho. It has reached Washington and can be found in the Columbia River, Pend Oreille River, Yakima River, and Silver Lake in Whatcom County. Flowering rush is classified as a Class A Noxious Weed [1] which must be eradicated in Washington State[2].

The continued downstream spread of flowering rush and increased habitat for invasive fish pose a significant threat to not only the recovery of endangered salmon and steelhead but also the tribal, commercial, and recreational harvest of salmon and steelhead, valued at more than $1 billion annually. Furthermore, any predation of Columbia River spring Chinook threatens the survival of the remaining Southern Resident killer whales, which rely on Chinook for food in the winter.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) was authorized by the Water Resources Reform and Development Act of 2014 to control flowering rush and has received $3 million in appropriations to-date. The Corps has completed environmental assessments for the program, including consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service. Funding to Washington is being delivered via the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission to the Recreation and Conservation Office, which will enter contracts with cooperators to implement control statewide.

Once approved, the funding will reside in the existing invasive species account of the Washington Invasive Species Council administered by the Washington Recreation and Conservation Office. The Recreation and Conservation Office will develop and implement a flowering rush removal cost-share program statewide. The budget request of $28,000[i] will cover a 0.5 FTE to administer the cost-share program and leverage U.S. Army Corps of Engineers funds ($361,000) and cooperator funds ($371,000 in non-federal funds) for a total of $732,000 combined removal funds. The Recreation and Conservation Office, in partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Pacific States Marine

[1] WAC 16-750-005: State noxious weed list—Class A noxious weeds
[2] RCW 17.10.140: Owner's duty to control spread of noxious weeds

Fisheries Commission, will develop a scope of work annually for cost-share flowering rush removal that will be administered through contracts.

Washington State Cost-Share Program Cooperators

Benton County, Chelan County, Douglas County, Pend Oreille County, Spokane County, Whatcom County, Pend Oreille County Public Utility District, Seattle City Light, Kalispel Tribe of Indians, Spokane Tribe of Indians, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Washington State Department of Agriculture, Washington State Department of Ecology, Washington State Department of Natural Resources, Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife, and Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board.

Resources

- Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board Flowering Rush Information: https://www.nwcb.wa.gov/weeds/flowering-rush
- Written Findings of the Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board: https://www.nwcb.wa.gov/pdfs/Butomus_umbellatus_2020_update.pdf
- Washington State Department of Agriculture Regional Flowering Rush Map: https://wsda.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=9d3b3f18dc3e4b33bb4ca9db923882e3
- Columbia Basin Flowering Rush Management Plan: https://columbiabasincwma.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/2019-ISAN_Flowering-Rush_Report-FINAL-Low-Res-080519_Revised2020.pdf#:~:text=The%20Columbia%20Basin%20Flowering%20Rush%20Management%20Plan%20addresses,First%20Nations%20that%20fall%20within%20the%20Columbia%20Basin.
- Columbia Basin Flowering Rush Cooperative Weed Management Area: https://columbiabasincwma.org/
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Biological Assessment: https://invasivespecies.wa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Biological-Assessment-for-Washington-Cost-Share.pdf
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Letter of Consultation: https://invasivespecies.wa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/USFWS-Letter-of-Consultation-for-Washington-Cost-Share.pdf
- U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service Letter of Consultation: https://invasivespecies.wa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/NOAA-Letter-of-Consultation-for-Washington-Cost-Share.pdf

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[i] Total request includes $4,000 to correct a technical error in the 21-23 Operating Budget.