



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF
Natural Resources

Doug Sutherland - Commissioner of Public Lands

DNR's Aquatic Lands Habitat Conservation Plan will define the actions DNR will take to avoid and minimize impacts on at-risk species and balance public benefits for the people of Washington.

Contact

ESA Team
Aquatic Resources Division
PO Box 47027
Olympia, WA 98504-7027
360-902-1100
AQUATICSESA@wadnr.gov
www.dnr.wa.gov/htdocs/aqr/index.html

Protecting Endangered Species on State-Owned Aquatic Lands

Washington's Department of Natural Resources (DNR) manages state-owned submerged lands, which is land that lies beneath marine and fresh water. These aquatic lands provide habitat for many species. DNR is responsible for ensuring environmental protection, and thus protecting habitat for species, while also providing for navigation, commerce, use of renewable resources, and public uses.

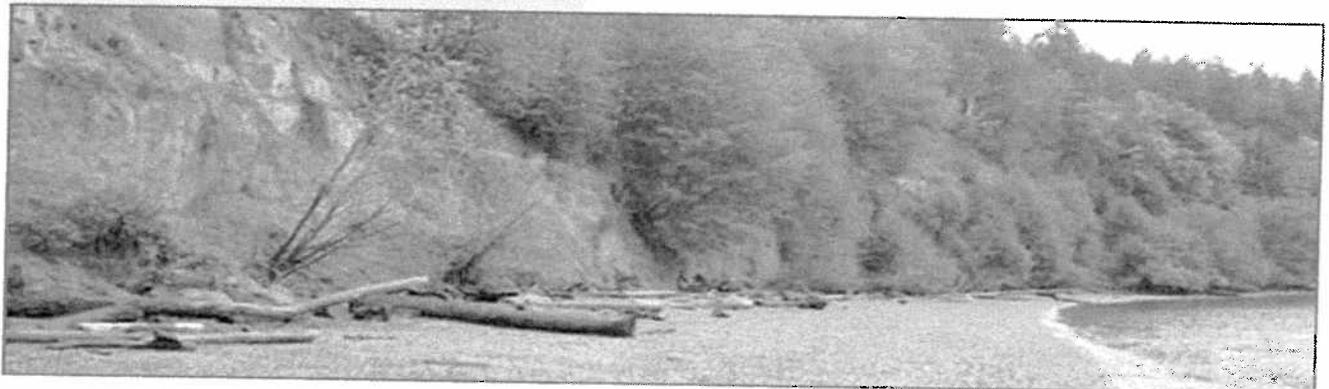
DNR's Endangered Species Act (ESA) Team is creating a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) to ensure that DNR's management of state-owned aquatic lands is in compliance with the ESA.

The two main goals of the Aquatic Lands HCP are to:

- Protect sensitive, threatened, and endangered species that may be vulnerable to DNR's authorized activities, and
- Gain assurances under the federal ESA that DNR can continue to authorize activities on state-owned aquatic lands.

To do this, we are analyzing *how* and *where* certain species that depend on aquatic habitats during migration, breeding, and foraging could be affected by activities that DNR authorizes on state-owned aquatic lands.

More →



Which species are covered in this HCP?

Of the 87 species initially considered for inclusion in the Aquatic Lands HCP, 22 have been identified for coverage (see list at right). Species were selected after we examined how each might be negatively affected by activities that take place on state-owned aquatic lands. We may add additional species as more information becomes available.

Who will be affected by this HCP?

The Aquatic Lands HCP will primarily affect businesses, individuals, and government agencies that lease or use state-owned aquatic lands for the following purposes:

- Overwater structures (docks, boat ramps, mooring buoys, nearshore buildings, floating homes, marinas, shipyards, and terminals)
- Aquaculture (finfish and shellfish)
- Log booming and storage

In focus: GIS & Docks

A good example of how DNR's ESA Team uses science and technology to inform our decisions is our creation of a state-wide "Overwater Structures" Graphic Information Systems (GIS) data layer. This layer, created with assistance from Washington Fish and Wildlife, includes bridges, buildings, docks, and floats in saltwater and navigable lakes and rivers.

So far we have quantified over 22,000 docks; 85 percent of those docks are partially or wholly on state-owned lands. Of the more than 19,000 docks that are on state-owned land, 87 percent are small docks that are likely used for recreational purposes.

Although a single dock may cause few impacts to aquatic habitats and species, docks that are clustered along the shoreline can significantly affect habitat. In addition to blocking light and preventing the growth of eelgrass and other aquatic vegetation, docks can alter currents and the movement of sediments as well as introduce chemicals from treated wood into the water and sediment.

The ESA Team is preparing information for owners of recreational docks that will specify how docks should be built to minimize impacts on aquatic lands.

22 covered species

Bald eagle
Black tern
Brown pelican
Bull trout/Dolly Varden
Coastal cutthroat trout
Columbia spotted frog
Common loon
Chinook salmon
Chum salmon
Coho salmon
Green sturgeon
Harlequin duck
Marbled murrelet
Northern leopard frog
Pink salmon
Sockeye salmon
Southern resident killer whale
Steelhead trout
Western pond turtle
Western snowy plover
Western toad
White sturgeon

DNR promotes stewardship

In planning this HCP, DNR has identified conservation measures that will help protect covered species and habitats. In addition, we will plan future activities on state-owned aquatic lands that will avoid future impacts to submerged habitats.

What's next?

To prepare for the release of the draft Aquatic Lands HCP in mid-2008, we are developing:

- Draft conservation measures
- Data for stewardship conservation strategies
- An Adaptive Management Plan

If you would like to be kept informed of our progress and provide input, please contact us: AQUATICSESA@dnr.wa.gov.