

RCW 77.55.440 Penalties—Notice—Appeal—Authority of attorney general to recover penalty—Penalty schedule. (b) *[(1)] Penalties must be authorized by senior or executive department personnel. The department shall initiate rule making to identify the appropriate level of senior and executive level staff approval for these actions based on the level of financial effect on the violator and the scope and scale of the impact to fish life and habitat.

(2) The penalty provided must be imposed by notice in writing by the department, provided either by certified mail or by personal service, to the person incurring the penalty and to the local jurisdiction in which the hydraulic project is located, describing the violation. The department must take all measures reasonably calculated to ensure that the project proponent actually receives notice of the notice of penalty. The civil penalty notice must set forth:

(a) The basis for the penalty;

(b) The amount of the penalty; and

(c) The right of the person incurring the penalty to appeal the civil penalty.

(3) (a) Except as provided in (b) of this subsection, any person incurring any penalty under this chapter may appeal the penalty to the board pursuant to chapter 34.05 RCW. Appeals must be filed within thirty days from the date of receipt of the notice of civil penalty in accordance with RCW 43.21B.230.

(b) Issuance of a civil penalty may be informally appealed by the person incurring the penalty to the department within thirty days from the date of receipt of the notice of civil penalty. Requests for informal appeal must be filed in the form and manner prescribed by the department by rule. A civil penalty that has been informally appealed to the department is appealable to the board within thirty days from the date of receipt of the department's decision on the informal appeal.

(4) The penalty imposed becomes due and payable thirty days after receipt of a notice imposing the penalty unless an appeal is filed. Whenever an appeal of any penalty incurred under this chapter is filed, the penalty becomes due and payable only upon completion of all review proceedings and the issuance of a final order confirming the penalty in whole or in part. When the penalty becomes past due, it is also subject to interest at the rate allowed by RCW 43.17.240 for debts owed to the state.

(5) If the amount of any penalty is not paid within thirty days after it becomes due and payable, the attorney general, upon the request of the director, shall bring an action in the name of the state of Washington in the superior court of Thurston county or of the county in which such a violation occurred, to recover the penalty. In all such actions, the rules of civil procedure and the rules of evidence are the same as in an ordinary civil action. The department is also entitled to recover reasonable attorneys' fees and costs incurred in connection with the penalty recovered under this section. All civil penalties received or recovered by state agency action for violations as prescribed in subsection (1) of this section must be deposited into the state's general fund. The department is authorized to retain any attorneys' fees and costs it may be awarded in connection with an action brought to recover a civil penalty issued pursuant to this section.

(6) The department shall adopt by rule a penalty schedule to be effective by January 1, 2020. The penalty schedule must be developed in consideration of the following:

- (a) Previous violation history;
- (b) Severity of the impact on fish life and fish habitat;
- (c) Whether the violation of this chapter or of its rules was intentional;
- (d) Cooperation with the department;
- (e) Reparability of any adverse effects resulting from the violation; and
- (f) The extent to which a penalty to be imposed on a person for a violation committed by another should be reduced if the person was unaware of the violation and has not received a substantial economic benefit from the violation.

(7) This section does not apply to a project, or to that portion of a project, that has received a forest practices hydraulic project permit from the department of natural resources pursuant to chapter 76.09 RCW. [2019 c 290 s 8.]

***Reviser's note:** The governor partially vetoed section 8, chapter 290, Laws of 2019.

Finding—Intent—2019 c 290: See note following RCW 77.12.085.