

WSR 21-17-136

PREPROPOSAL STATEMENT OF INQUIRY
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

[Filed August 18, 2021, 9:23 a.m.]

Subject of Possible Rule Making: Chapter 16-470 WAC, Quarantine—Agricultural pests, the department is considering amending and expanding the Japanese beetle quarantine to include portions of Yakima County, Benton County, and other areas of the state found to be infested. The current quarantine specified in chapter 16-470 WAC is solely an exterior quarantine that applies to over 30 states, encompassing most of the Midwest, South, and Northeast areas of the United States.

Statutes Authorizing the Agency to Adopt Rules on this Subject: RCW 17.24.011 and 17.24.041.

Reasons Why Rules on this Subject may be Needed and What They Might Accomplish: Japanese beetle (*Popillia japonica*) is a highly invasive plant pest native to Japan. It has been known to cause severe damage to more than 300 species of ornamental and agricultural plants, including roses, grapes, and hops. Adult beetles damage plants by skeletonizing foliage and feeding on buds, flowers, and fruit. The larvae also damages the roots of plants, such as turf grass. Although this feeding does not always kill the plant, it weakens it and may reduce the plant's overall yield.

Since June 2021, the department has collected thousands of Japanese beetles in traps around the city of Grandview in Yakima County. A large number of beetles were also collected from traps in nearby Benton County, indicating an established population in these areas. Its presence poses a serious threat to gardens, parks, and farms by destroying vegetation. If Japanese beetles were to become permanently established throughout the state, it could threaten a number of Washington's agricultural industries. The threat this pest poses is particularly concerning, due to the area in which the detection occurred. There are a number of farms and nurseries in close proximity to the detection site that are growing plants targeted by Japanese beetles.

Not only do these beetles pose a threat to the plants themselves, but if established they have the potential to impact export markets for agricultural commodities grown in the area. Expanding the Japanese beetle quarantine to include portions of Yakima and Benton counties is intended to prevent the spread of this invasive pest and protect Washington's agricultural industries, as well as maintain access to national and international markets.

Other Federal and State Agencies that Regulate this Subject and the Process Coordinating the Rule with These Agencies: United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The department is coordinating this quarantine with USDA and the National Plant Board, following guidance found in the "National Plant Board Japanese Beetle Harmonization Plan." This plan is signed by USDA and outlines requirements for preventing the interstate movement of Japanese beetles from infested states.

Process for Developing New Rule: Department staff will discuss any proposed amendments with affected stakeholder groups. Affected stakeholders will also have an opportunity to submit written comments on the proposed rules during the public comment period and will be able to present oral testimony at the public hearings.

Interested parties can participate in the decision to adopt the new rule and formulation of the proposed rule before publication by contacting Brad White, Assistant Director, Plant Protection Division,

Washington State Department of Agriculture, P.O. Box 42560, Olympia, WA 98504-2560, phone 360-902-1907, fax 360-902-2094, TTY 800-833-6388 or 711, email bwhite@agr.wa.gov, website <https://agr.wa.gov/services/rulemaking>; or Greg Haubrich, Pest Program Manager, Plant Protection Division, Washington State Department of Agriculture, P.O. Box 42560, Olympia, WA 98504-2560, phone 360-902-2071, fax 360-902-2094, TTY 800-833-6388 or 711, email ghaubrich@agr.wa.gov, website <https://agr.wa.gov/services/rulemaking>.

August 18, 2021
Brad White
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