WSR 26-12-073
DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY
[Filed June 2, 2026, 3:48 p.m.]

PUBLIC NOTICE

Announcing the Draft Fresh Fruit Packing General Permit for Review and Comment

The Washington state department of ecology (ecology) proposes to reissue the fresh fruit packing National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) and state waste discharge general permit. The current permit was last issued November 17, 2021, and will expire December 31, 2026. The draft general permit, fact sheet explaining the legal and technical basis for the permit, economic impact analysis, and a copy of the proposed application for coverage are available on the permit web page. The public is invited to review and comment on the draft general permit from 9:00 a.m., June 17, 2026, through 11:59 p.m., August 8, 2026. Ecology will host two public meetings and hearings on the draft permit.

Purpose of the permit: Facilities in Washington that wash and pack fresh fruit for people to eat must obtain permit authorization to ensure operational wastewater does not carry pollutants into waters of the state. The fresh fruit packing general permit outlines the conditions, treatment, and disposal methods for a facility's wastewater prior to direct or indirect discharge to lakes, rivers, and groundwater.

The permit provides statewide NPDES coverage under the authority of the federal Clean Water Act and chapter 90.48 RCW. When the permitted activities conducted by a specific class of industries are similar, ecology issues a general permit to cover all of them, rather than issuing a series of individual permits.

Economic impact: Ecology evaluated the potential economic impacts of this permit, specifically looking at whether it disproportionately affects small businesses. Current permittees are a mix of privately owned small and large fresh fruit packing and long-term controlled atmosphere fruit storage facilities. The assessment concluded that the permit does not impose disproportionate costs on small versus large fresh fruit packing and long-term controlled atmosphere fruit storage facilities. The full economic impact analysis document is available on the permit web page.

Applying for coverage: Facilities that are covered under the existing permit and have submitted a renewal for their coverage by July 6, 2026, will have coverage under the new permit. New or unpermitted facilities may obtain coverage under the permit by submitting a complete permit application to ecology and satisfying all applicable public notice and State Environmental Policy Act requirements (WAC 173-226-200). The application can be accessed online at https://ecology.wa.gov/FruitPackPermit.

Copies of the draft permit and fact sheet: The draft permit, fact sheet, and related documents are available online at https://ecology.wa.gov/FruitPackPermit. You may also request copies from water quality reception at 360-407-6600.

Submitting comments: Ecology will accept comments on the draft permit from 9:00 a.m., June 17, 2026, through 11:59 p.m., August 8, 2026. Ecology prefers online comment submission. Written comments by mail must be postmarked by August 8, 2026, for inclusion in the public record. Comments should reference specific permit text when possible.

You can submit comments in the following ways:

- Submit comments online at https://wq.ecology.commentinput.com/?id=aCWrf9iJd (preferred method).
- By United States mail to Marcia Porter, Department of Ecology, 1250 West Alder Street, Union Gap, WA 98903.
- At one of our hearings.

Public meetings and hearings: During the comment period, we will host one online public meeting and hearing and one in-person public meeting and hearing, in Union Gap, Washington. We will share the same informational presentation at each session about the permit reissuance process and our proposed changes in the draft permit. A question-and-answer session will follow, then a formal public hearing. The hearings provide opportunity for the public to give formal spoken testimony on the proposed draft permit. The public hearings begin immediately following the meetings and conclude when public testimony is complete. Spoken testimony will receive the same consideration as written comments.

In-person public meeting and hearing: On July 21, 2026, at 6:00 p.m., at 1250 West Alder Street, Union Gap, WA.

- Live Spanish interpretation will be available.
- Free parking.
- Registration is not required, although it will assist event coordination. To register, email marcia.porter@ecy.wa.gov.

Online public meeting and hearing: On July 23, 2026, at 1:00 p.m.

- Live Spanish interpretation will be provided in this Zoom webinar.
- Register in advance at https://waecy-wa-gov.zoom.us/meeting/register/yH3x4JlMTaSmUw6fJJoUJw.

After ecology receives and considers all public comments, we will make a final decision on permit issuance. Ecology expects to make a decision on the general permit in November 2026.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility: To request an ADA accommodation, email marcia.porter@ecy.wa.gov, call 509-406-6624, or dial 711 to call through the Washington telecommunications relay for services like text telephone. Visit https://ecology.wa.gov/accessibility for more accessibility information.

Questions: If you have questions, please contact Marcia Porter, fresh fruit packing general permit writer and statewide permit manager, marcia.porter@ecy.wa.gov, 509-406-6624.