



Seaweed Fact Sheet

The Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is tasked with facilitating water-dependent uses on state-owned aquatic lands, when consistent with other mandates, including environmental protection. Recently, DNR has seen an increased interest in the harvest and commercial use of seaweed. In this context, seaweed means saltwater marine plant species that are dependent upon the marine aquatic or tidal environment, and exist in either an attached or free-floating state. Marine aquatic plants include but are not limited to green algae, brown algae (including kelp), and red algae. Native kelp and other seaweeds provide important habitats that feed and provide shelter for salmon, forage fish, and numerous other species.

Collection of Seaweed for Commercial Use

Seaweed has inherent value and provides essential habitat. Hence, commercial harvest of seaweed, either attached (to substrate) or free-floating, is prohibited on all state-owned aquatic lands, as well as private tidelands (RCW 79.135.410). *Commercial harvest* of seaweed is prohibited except in the case of the herring spawn-on-kelp fishery. Spore “seed” collection from wild seaweed for use in (commercial) hatcheries is considered a separate activity from commercial harvest of seaweed. Spore collection from State Owned Aquatic Lands is allowed and may be authorized through a Right of Entry License through your DNR Land Manager.

Seaweed Attached to Tenant-Owned Improvements

Upon request, DNR *may* allow the commercial collection of naturally set seaweed from tenant-owned improvements, so long as these activities are *listed as permitted uses in a lease/sublease* ([RCW 79.135.100](#)), and provided that the seaweed is attached entirely on tenant-owned improvements within the leasehold. The lease should include any site-specific conditions needed to ensure environmental protection of state-owned aquatic lands. The site from which harvest is to occur must also be a registered Aquatic Farm with the Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW; [RCW 77.115.010](#)). Possession of commercial quantities of seaweed harvested from tenant-owned improvements is unlawful without a valid Aquatic Farm Registration (AFR) and a copy of the DNR lease or sublease specifically authorizing commercial collection as described above also in possession. Both a valid AFR and copy of the DNR lease/sublease must be available for inspection by WDFW and DNR Enforcement.



Free-Floating Seaweed on Tenant-Owned Improvements

Seaweed that floats onto a site and gets caught up in tenant-owned improvements may not be commercially harvested. However, this “nuisance” seaweed may be removed from tenant-owned improvements, so long as it is left to decompose in place.

Seaweed Aquaculture

DNR may lease state-owned aquatic land for the purpose of seaweed aquaculture, or for integrated aquaculture involving seaweed production in tandem with other uses, such as shellfish aquaculture.

Harvest for Personal Use

Per [RCW 79.135.410](#), individuals may harvest up to ten pounds per day of seaweed for personal use from state-owned aquatic lands and privately owned tidelands provided they comply with harvest limits, conservation restrictions, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) permits, and sustainable harvest practices (<https://www.dnr.wa.gov/seaweed>). This harvest may be for *personal use* only. *Commercial harvest* of seaweed is prohibited except in the case of the herring spawn-on-kelp fishery.



Questions

Questions about seaweed aquaculture leases should be directed to District Aquaculture Land Managers:

Jillian Greenwood

Puget Sound, Strait of Juan de Fuca, San Juans
(360) 460-1811
jillian.greenwood@dnr.wa.gov

Natalie Sahli

Grays Harbor, Willapa Bay
(360) 338-2726
natalie.sahli@dnr.wa.gov

Questions about harvesting for personal use should be directed to:

Noel Sharp

(360) 995-2496
noel.sharp@dnr.wa.gov

Additional information is available on the DNR website: www.dnr.wa.gov/programs-and-services/aquatics/leasing-and-land-transactions



WASHINGTON STATE DEPT OF
**NATURAL
RESOURCES**