



State of Washington
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

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Main Office Location: Natural Resources Building • 1111 Washington Street SE • Olympia, WA

February 8, 2011

The Honorable Brian Blake
Chair, House Agriculture and
Natural Resources Committee
105 Modular Building F
Post Office Box 40600
Olympia, Washington 98504-0600

Re: Japanese Eelgrass, *Zostera japonica*

Dear Chair  Blake:

This letter is intended to address the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (Department) policy regarding the listing of the Japanese eelgrass, *Zostera japonica*, as priority habitat needing protection. We understand that the Washington State shellfish industry has been negatively impacted by this eelgrass because it occupies the same habitat that shellfish growers need to culture shellfish. This competition for space has caused some growers to lose access to valuable shellfish grounds and, therefore, they have lost, and continue to lose, economic opportunities.

Zostera japonica is a non-native in Washington. Given this, and given the negative economic impact this aquatic plant is having on the shellfish industry, the Department will exclude *Zostera japonica* in our listing as priority habitat needing protection.

The management tool we will use to implement this change of policy is the Department's Priority Habitats and Species (PHS) list. The PHS list is developed and used by the Department and used by other state, federal and county governments as a guide for identifying habitats and species needing protection. Effective March 1, 2011, the PHS list will include the following amendments:

- On pages 169, 170 and 171, each mention of the word eelgrass will have a corresponding footnote stating: "This reference to eelgrass excludes *Zostera japonica*."
- On page 176, the word "native" will be inserted before the word "eelgrass."

We are hopeful this action will address concerns associated with the Department's current policy regarding the protection of *Zostera japonica*.

Representative Blake

February 8, 2011

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Please contact me at (360) 902-2720, or Lisa Veneroso at (360) 902-2836, if you would like to discuss our plan as outlined in this letter in more detail.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Philip Anderson", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Philip Anderson
Director

cc: Lisa Veneroso