

**Washington State Department of Agriculture**  
**2009-11 Biennium Operating Budget Request**

*Submitted to OFM, September 2008*

*Submitted request for changes in the agency's budget totals \$1.4 million, including \$74,000 from the State General Fund. Total proposed budget for WSDA is \$133.1 million.*

**Maintenance Level Adjustments - \$148,000**

Requests adjustments to cover increased fuel costs (\$187,000) and self-insurance premium (\$55,000), to reduce the Private/Local appropriation to a more realistic level (-\$226,000), and to cover increased costs associated with surface water monitoring activities (\$132,000).  
*(\$74,000 GF-S, \$74,000 All Other Funds)*

**Non-Appropriated Funds Adjustment (Risk Management) - \$780,000**

Provides spending authority to add four positions to address critical gaps in the department's basic administrative structure that expose the agency to significant risk. The request provides for positions in human resources, financial services and information technology based on the recommendations of an outside assessment of the agency's administrative and operational capacity. *(Non-Appropriated Local Funds)*

**Spartina Eradication - \$487,000 (one-time)**

Provides a one-time enhancement to the current state effort to eradicate Spartina, an extremely aggressive invasive weed that severely disrupts the ecosystems of native saltwater estuaries. The enhancement would allow WSDA to provide additional funding to state and local agencies for eradication efforts in Willapa Bay and Grays Harbor, so as to achieve virtual eradication of the weed by the end of the biennium. *(Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account)*

**Legislative Approval of Fee Proposals**

These proposals provide legislative approval, as required by I-960, to establish or increase fees administered by the Department of Agriculture. The actual fee levels would be determined through the public rulemaking process. The fees are expected to be effective January 1, 2010.

***Christmas Tree Grower License Fee (Estimated Annual Revenue - \$87,000)***

Legislation passed in 2007 (ESB 5401) at the request of the Christmas tree industry requires all Christmas tree growers, except small, retail-only growers, to be licensed with WSDA. The annual license fee may not exceed a basic charge of \$40 plus up to \$4 per acre. With legislative approval, WSDA will propose to adopt a license fee of \$40 plus \$3 per acre, as recommended by the Christmas Tree Advisory Committee.

***Nursery Dealer License Fees (Estimated Annual Revenue - \$115,000)***

The license fees paid by nursery dealers generate about 45% of the revenues received by the Nursery Inspection program, which is wholly supported by fees. With legislative approval, WSDA expects to propose to increase fees by up to 22% to help cover the increased cost of carrying out the program. Small retail nursery dealers, which make up about half of the state's 6,500 licensed nursery dealers, would see an annual increase of up to \$8 in their fee; mid-size and large nursery dealers would see annual increases of up to \$17 and \$34. This would be the first increase in 4.5 years and would allow WSDA to continue the current level of nursery facility inspections until at least 2016.

***Plant Pest Inspection and Testing Fees (Estimated Annual Revenue - \$224,000)***

This proposal allows WSDA to increase the fees for inspection and testing services that certify plant materials are free from disease and insects, as required by domestic and international markets. These fees include hourly rates as well as rates for specialized services and are intended to cover the cost of the services. Examples of services include growing season field inspections; inspection and certification of hay, lumber/logs, forest greens and other products for export; inspections of planting stock to meet certification standards; and laboratory testing of plant materials for nematodes, fungi, bacteria or viruses. If approved, WSDA expects to propose to increase fees up to 32% to cover the cost of providing these services.

***Commission Merchants License Fee (Estimated Annual Revenue - \$51,000)***

This proposal allows WSDA to increase the fees paid by individuals licensed under the Commission Merchants Act. These fees provide the entire funding for the Commission Merchants Program, which regulates persons involved in buying and selling agricultural products and investigates producer complaints against commission merchants. If approved, WSDA expects to propose to increase fees up to 20%. The increase is expected to allow the program to continue at its current level through 2013.

*For more information, contact Mary Beth Lang, Assistant to the Director, at (360) 902-1812.*

*Rev. 12/9/08*