



Stray logs and woody debris in Washington's waterways

HOW DOES DNR WORK WITH STRAY LOGS AND WOOD DEBRIS?

Aquatic lands were long used as a mode of transportation for logs in Washington. Throughout state history, it was not uncommon to see large log rafts, or “booms” on bodies of water, such as the Puget Sound, rivers, and lakes—some are still in limited use today.

Often times, storms, floods, or other mishaps break up booms allowing logs to slip from their moorings. Stray logs may float for years before becoming stranded along the coast and shorelines, mired in sediment, or become locked together in log jams in our rivers and streams.



Log booming yard in Puget Sound. Photo: DNR

Although log booming on rivers has decreased, environmentally protective logging practices have resulted in more natural trees being left along the banks of streams and rivers, and these trees can fall or be washed into river systems by forces of nature. The question is whether these stray logs and wood debris may be removed from beaches, shores and waters of the state's lakes, rivers or marine waters.

Healthy Ecosystems and DNR's Role with Stray Log and Wood Debris Removal

Stray logs and wood debris are considered an integral component of healthy ecosystems, creating important habitat for a number of aquatic species, especially in rivers and lakes. Under DNR's administrative rules, (WAC 332-30-163) stray logs and wood debris in rivers and lakes will generally be left were they lie *unless* intruding on the navigational channel or reducing flow, adversely redirecting a river course, or are harmful to life and property.

Stray Logs

DNR may consider authorizing the removal of stray logs *if* the log poses an imminent hazard to navigation, life, property, the environment, or publicly owned aquatic resources *and* the affected regulatory agencies permit the removal. Unbranded or unmarked stray logs become the property of the state when recovered.

Wood Debris

DNR may consider authorizing the removal of wood debris for *commercial* purposes *if* the debris pose an imminent hazard to navigation, life, property, the environment, or publicly owned aquatic resources *and* the affected regulatory agencies permit the removal.

Wood debris including driftwood may be salvaged *without* DNR permission from state-owned lands *if* the wood debris:

- Will not be used for commercial purposes;
- Is not embedded in the sediment,
- Is not located within a state park, and
- Removal will not cause environmental harm.

In all other cases, a request for permission to remove stray logs or wood debris from state-owned aquatic lands must be submitted in writing to DNR. In addition to obtaining DNR permission, permits may be required from the state Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and the Department of Ecology. DNR will not authorize removal of logs unless all necessary permits have been obtained.

Collection of driftwood and wood debris in state parks is prohibited, *except* where specifically permitted by a park ranger for personal firewood use.

Definitions

- **Stray Logs**—include wood materials with merchantable value such as logs, trees, pilings, or poles.
- **Branded**—a stray log owned by a person or company that has registered the brand. State law permits the owner to retrieve these logs even from private land. Stray logs without a brand become the property of the state when they are recovered, even when stranded on private property.
- **Wood debris**—wood, other than stray logs, that is adrift on navigable waters or stranded on beaches, marshes, or tide and shorelands.