

Chapter 47.40 RCW
ROADSIDE IMPROVEMENT AND BEAUTIFICATION

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City streets, parkways, boulevards, etc.: Title 35 RCW.

*State parks and recreation commission may plant trees along highway:
RCW 79A.05.030.*

Withdrawal of public lands abutting highway: RCW 79A.05.105.

RCW 47.40.010 Improvement and beautification a highway purpose.

The planting and cultivating of any shrubs, trees, hedges or other domestic or native ornamental growth, the improvement of roadside facilities and view points, and the correction of unsightly conditions, upon the right-of-way of any state highway is hereby declared to be a proper state highway purpose. [1961 c 13 s 47.40.010. Prior: 1937 c 53 s 88; RRS s 6400-88.]

RCW 47.40.020 Use of funds authorized.

Whenever funds are available for the planting or cultivation of any shrubs, trees, hedges, or other domestic or native ornamental growth, the improvement of roadside facilities and view points, the correction of unsightly conditions upon the right-of-way of any state highway, and for roadside development and beautification, the department is empowered to expend such funds, either independently or in conjunction with the funds of any county, political subdivision, or any person, firm, corporation, association, or organization. [1984 c 7 s 210; 1961 c 13 s 47.40.020. Prior: 1937 c 53 s 89; RRS s 6400-89.]

RCW 47.40.030 Permit to private persons.

Any person, firm, corporation, association, or organization owning lands abutting upon any state highway and desiring to plant, cultivate, and grow any hedge, shade trees, or ornamental trees or shrubs along the right-of-way thereof, or to clear and cultivate a portion of the state highway right-of-way for the purpose of growing crops and destroying noxious weeds, or any person, firm, corporation, association, or organization interested in public improvement and desiring to improve and beautify any state highway right-of-way or any portion thereof by planting,

cultivating, or growing any hedge or shade or ornamental trees or cultivate along or upon the right-of-way thereof, may upon application to the department, be granted a permit therefor as provided by law. [1984 c 7 s 211; 1961 c 13 s 47.40.030. Prior: 1937 c 53 s 90; RRS s 6400-90; prior: 1927 c 242 s 1; RRS s 6437-1.]

RCW 47.40.040 Application for permit, contents. Each application for a permit to plant, cultivate and grow any hedge, shade or ornamental trees or shrubbery along or upon the right-of-way of any state highway or improve such right-of-way shall be in writing, signed by the applicant, and shall describe the state highway or portion thereof along or upon the right-of-way of which permit to plant, cultivate, grow or improve is sought, by name, number, or other reasonable description, and the lands bordering thereon by governmental subdivisions, and shall state the names, places or residence and post office addresses of the applicant or applicants owning the land abutting upon such state highway or the name of the person, firm, corporation, association or organization applying for the permit and the names of its officers and their places of residence and their post office addresses, and shall state definitely the purpose for which the permit is sought, giving a description of the kind of hedge, or variety of shrubbery or trees desired to be planted or the kinds of crops to be grown, or improvement to be made, with a diagram illustrating the location and number of hedges, trees or shrubs or the area of cultivation desired or plans of the improvement proposed to be made. Whenever possible, applicants should use native forage plants that are pollen-rich or nectar-rich and beneficial for all pollinators, including honey bees, in order to develop habitat beneficial for the feeding, nesting, and reproduction of pollinators. [2019 c 353 s 10; 1961 c 13 s 47.40.040. Prior: 1937 c 53 s 91; RRS s 6400-91; prior: 1927 c 242 s 2; RRS s 6437-2.]

Findings—Intent—2019 c 353: See note following RCW 43.23.300.

RCW 47.40.050 Survey—Report—Permit. Upon the filing of such application, the department shall cause a survey of the state highway to be made with reference to the application and a report of the findings and recommendations as to the granting of the permit, and if it appears to the satisfaction of the department that the use of a portion of the state highway for the purpose set out in the application will not interfere with the use of the state highway for public travel and will beautify and improve the state highway, a permit may be granted and issued to the applicant to plant, cultivate, and grow any hedge, shade or ornamental trees, shrubbery, or crops, or make such improvement along or upon the right-of-way of such portion of the state highway as is definitely described in the permit, and to construct and maintain such temporary and substantial fence on and along the portion of the right-of-way of the state highway described in the permit as is specified in the permit. The permit shall specify the exact location of all hedges, shade or ornamental trees, or shrubbery to be planted and grown, or the area to be cultivated under the permit, or the area to be improved to which specified location the person, firm, corporation, association, or organization receiving the permit shall specifically conform. The department may in its

discretion refuse to issue the permit, and any such permit that is granted is revocable at the will of the department and nothing in this title may be construed as in anywise affecting the title of the state to the lands included in the state highway, or the right to use the lands for state highway purposes, or to remove or destroy any of such hedges, trees, shrubbery, or crops for the purpose of construction, alteration, repair, improvement, or maintenance of the state highway, or for any other purpose and at any time. [1984 c 7 s 212; 1961 c 13 s 47.40.050. Prior: 1937 c 53 s 92; RRS s 6400-92; prior: 1927 c 242 s 3, part; RRS s 6437, part.]

RCW 47.40.060 Agreement to maintain project. If any such permit is granted, the department shall enter into an agreement with the person, firm, corporation, association, or organization agreeing that such roadside development or beautification shall be maintained and kept up by the state through the department or by the person, firm, corporation, association, or organization. If any such person, firm, corporation, association, or organization so agreeing fails or neglects to maintain the roadside development or beautification, the department is empowered to do so, and the expense thereof shall be a charge against the person, firm, corporation, association, or organization. [1984 c 7 s 213; 1961 c 13 s 47.40.060. Prior: 1937 c 53 s 93; RRS s 6400-93; prior: 1927 c 242 s 3, part; RRS s 6437-3, part.]

RCW 47.40.070 Damaging project unlawful. It is unlawful for any person to injure, destroy, or remove any hedge, shade or ornamental trees, shrubbery, or crops, planted, cultivated, and grown or improvement made upon or along any portion of any state highway under permit from the department or otherwise, or to injure, destroy, or remove any fence erected under any such permit or otherwise. However, nothing in this section may be construed to prevent any person with the department to do so or the officers of the state charged with the duty of constructing and maintaining any such state highway, from removing any hedges, trees, shrubbery, or crops planted or improvements or fences built under permit, where in their judgment they interfere with or are detrimental to, the use of the state highway for public travel, or such removal is necessary for the construction, alteration, repair, improvement, or maintenance of the state highway. [1984 c 7 s 214; 1961 c 13 s 47.40.070. Prior: 1937 c 53 s 94; RRS s 6400-94; prior: 1927 c 242 s 4; RRS s 6437-4.]

RCW 47.40.080 Penalty for destroying native flora on state lands, highways, parks. Any person who shall break or cut from any lands owned by the state of Washington or shall cut down, remove, destroy or uproot any rhododendron, evergreen, huckleberry, native dogwood or any other native tree, shrub, fern, herb, bulb or wild plants, or any part thereof, within three hundred feet of the center line of any state or county road, or who shall cut down, remove or destroy any flowering or ornamental tree or shrub, or any native flowering plant, fern, herb or bulb, either perennial or annual, situate, growing or being on any public street or highway, state or city park, in the state of Washington, unless such person be engaged in the work of constructing or repairing such highway or street under

authority and direction of the legally constituted public officials being charged by law with the duty of constructing or repairing such highways or streets, state or city parks, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor. [1961 c 13 s 47.40.080. Prior: 1933 c 133 s 1; 1925 ex.s. c 59 s 1; RRS s 2787-1.]

RCW 47.40.090 Glass bottles along highways—Collection and removal. The department and any other governmental subdivision shall, with the staff, equipment, and material under their control, or by contract with others, take all necessary actions to collect and remove any or all glass bottles or glass containers along the right-of-way of any public road or public highway. [1984 c 7 s 215; 1969 ex.s. c 281 s 48.]

Deposit of unwholesome substance: RCW 9.66.050.

Removal of glass after accident: RCW 46.61.645.

Throwing glass on highway: RCW 46.61.645, 70A.200.060.

RCW 47.40.100 State adopt-a-highway program. (1) (a) The department of transportation shall establish a statewide adopt-a-highway program. The purpose of the program is to provide volunteers and businesses an opportunity to contribute to a cleaner environment, enhanced roadsides, and protection of wildlife habitats. Participating volunteers and businesses shall adopt department-designated sections of state highways, rest areas, park and ride lots, intermodal facilities, and any other facilities the department deems appropriate, in accordance with rules adopted by the department. The department may elect to coordinate a consortium of participants for adopt-a-highway projects.

(b) The adopt-a-highway program shall include, at a minimum, litter control for the adopted section, and may include additional responsibilities such as planting and maintaining vegetation, controlling weeds, graffiti removal, and any other roadside improvement or clean-up activities the department deems appropriate. Whenever possible, when planting and maintaining vegetation, volunteers and businesses should use native forage plants that are pollen-rich or nectar-rich and beneficial for all pollinators, including honey bees, in order to develop habitat beneficial for the feeding, nesting, and reproduction of pollinators. The department shall not accept adopt-a-highway proposals that would have the effect of terminating classified employees or classified employee positions.

(2) A volunteer group or business choosing to participate in the adopt-a-highway program must submit a proposal to the department. The department shall review the proposal for consistency with departmental policy and rules. The department may accept, reject, or modify an applicant's proposal.

(3) The department shall seek partnerships with volunteer groups and businesses to facilitate the goals of this section. The department may solicit funding for the adopt-a-highway program that allows private entities to undertake all or a portion of financing for the initiatives. The department shall develop guidelines regarding the

cash, labor, and in-kind contributions to be performed by the participants.

(4) An organization whose name: (a) Endorses or opposes a particular candidate for public office, (b) advocates a position on a specific political issue, initiative, referendum, or piece of legislation, or (c) includes a reference to a political party shall not be eligible to participate in the adopt-a-highway program.

(5) In administering the adopt-a-highway program, the department shall:

(a) Provide a standardized application form, registration form, and contractual agreement for all participating groups. The forms shall notify the prospective participants of the risks and responsibilities to be assumed by the department and the participants;

(b) Require all participants to be at least fifteen years of age;

(c) Require parental consent for all minors;

(d) Require at least one adult supervisor for every eight minors;

(e) Require one designated leader for each participating organization, unless the department chooses to coordinate a consortium of participants;

(f) Assign each participating organization a section or sections of state highway, or other state-owned transportation facilities, for a specified period of time;

(g) Recognize the efforts of a participating organization by erecting and maintaining signs with the organization's name on both ends of the organization's section of highway;

(h) Provide appropriate safety equipment. Safety equipment issued to participating groups must be returned to the department upon termination of the applicable adopt-a-highway agreement;

(i) Provide safety training for all participants;

(j) Pay any and all premiums or assessments required under RCW 51.12.035 to secure medical aid benefits under chapter 51.36 RCW for all volunteers participating in the program;

(k) Require participating businesses to pay all employer premiums or assessments required to secure medical aid benefits under chapter 51.36 RCW for all employees or agents participating in the program;

(l) Maintain records of all injuries and accidents that occur;

(m) Adopt rules that establish a process to resolve any question of an organization's eligibility to participate in the adopt-a-highway program;

(n) Obtain permission from property owners who lease right-of-way before allowing an organization to adopt a section of highway on such leased property; and

(o) Establish procedures and guidelines for the adopt-a-highway program.

(6) Nothing in this section affects the rights or activities of, or agreements with, adjacent landowners, including the use of rights-of-way and crossings, nor impairs these rights and uses by the placement of signs. [2019 c 353 s 11; 1995 c 106 s 1; 1990 c 258 s 5.]

Findings—Intent—2019 c 353: See note following RCW 43.23.300.

Legislative findings and intent—1990 c 258: "The legislature finds that despite the efforts of the department of transportation, the department of ecology, and the ecology youth corps to pick up litter along state highways, roadside litter in Washington state has

increased by thirty-six percent since 1983. The legislature further finds that in twenty-seven states, volunteer organizations are able to give of their time and energy, demonstrate commitment to a clean environment, and discourage would-be litterers by keeping sections of highway litter free because those states have established programs to encourage and recognize such voluntary efforts. Therefore, it is the legislature's intent to establish an "adopt-a-highway" litter control program as a partnership between citizen volunteers and the state to reduce roadside litter and build civic pride in a litter-free Washington." [1990 c 258 s 4.]

RCW 47.40.105 Local adopt-a-highway programs. Local government legislative authorities may enact local "adopt-a-highway sign" and "adopt-a-fish passage" programs which are not inconsistent with state or federal law. [2024 c 227 s 3; 1990 c 258 s 3.]

Findings—Intent—2024 c 227: See note following RCW 77.95.350.

Legislative findings and intent—1990 c 258: See note following RCW 47.40.100.

RCW 47.40.110 Adopt-a-fish passage program. The department may participate in an "adopt-a-fish passage" program under RCW 77.95.350. [2024 c 227 s 4.]

Findings—Intent—2024 c 227: See note following RCW 77.95.350.