

Chapter 7.84 RCW
NATURAL RESOURCE INFRACTIONS

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Tree spiking, action for damages: RCW 9.91.155.

RCW 7.84.010 Legislative declaration. The legislature declares that decriminalizing certain offenses contained in Titles *75, 76, 77, 79, and 79A RCW and chapter 43.30 RCW and any rules adopted pursuant to those titles and chapters would promote the more efficient administration of those titles and chapters. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a just, uniform, and efficient procedure for adjudicating those violations which, in any of these titles and chapters or rules adopted under these chapters or titles, are declared not to be criminal offenses. The legislature respectfully requests the supreme court to prescribe any rules of procedure necessary to implement this chapter. [1999 c 249 s 502; 1993 c 244 s 2; 1987 c 380 s 1.]

***Reviser's note:** Title 75 RCW was recodified, repealed, or decodified in its entirety by 2000 c 107. See Comparative Table for Title 75 RCW, in the Table of Disposition of Former RCW Sections.

Severability—1999 c 249: See note following RCW 79A.05.010.

Intent—1993 c 244: See note following RCW 79A.60.010.

RCW 7.84.020 "Infraction" defined. The definition in this section applies throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

"Infraction" means an offense which, by the terms of Title 76, 77, 79, or 79A RCW or RCW 7.84.030(2)(b) or 70A.200.060, and rules adopted under these titles and sections, is declared not to be a criminal offense or a civil infraction and is subject to the provisions of this chapter. [2024 c 231 s 5; 2012 c 176 s 2; 2003 c 39 s 3; 1999 c 249 s 503; 1993 c 244 s 3; 1987 c 380 s 2.]

Findings—2024 c 231: See note following RCW 70A.200.060.

Severability—1999 c 249: See note following RCW 79A.05.010.

Intent—1993 c 244: See note following RCW 79A.60.010.

RCW 7.84.030 Notice of infraction—Issuance—Authorization for detention for a reasonable period—Service—Filing. (1) An infraction proceeding is initiated by the issuance and service of a printed notice of infraction and filing of a printed or electronic copy of the notice of infraction.

(2) (a) A notice of infraction may be issued by a person authorized to enforce the provisions of the title or chapter in which the infraction is established, or by a person authorized by an interlocal agreement entered into under RCW 7.84.140, when the infraction occurs in that person's presence.

(b) A person who is a peace officer as defined in chapter 10.93 RCW may detain the person receiving the infraction for a reasonable period of time necessary to identify the person, check for outstanding warrants, and complete and issue a notice of infraction under RCW 7.84.050. A person who is to receive a notice of infraction is required to identify himself or herself to the peace officer by giving the person's name, address, and date of birth. Upon request, the person shall produce reasonable identification, which may include a driver's license or identicard. Any person who fails to comply with the requirement to identify himself or herself and give the person's current address may be found to have committed an infraction.

(3) A court may issue a notice of infraction if a person authorized to enforce the provisions of the title or chapter in which the infraction is established, or by a person authorized by an interlocal agreement entered into under RCW 7.84.140, files with the court a written statement that the infraction was committed in that person's presence or that the officer has reason to believe an infraction was committed.

(4) Service of a notice of infraction issued under subsection (2) or (3) of this section shall be as provided by court rule.

(5) A notice of infraction shall be filed with a court having jurisdiction within five days of issuance, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays. [2012 c 176 s 1; 2011 c 320 s 14; 2009 c 174 s 1; 2004 c 43 s 2; 1987 c 380 s 3.]

Effective date—2011 c 320: See note following RCW 79A.80.005.

Findings—Intent—2011 c 320: See RCW 79A.80.005.

Effective date—2004 c 43: See note following RCW 7.80.150.

RCW 7.84.040 Jurisdiction of court—Venue. (1) Infraction proceedings may be heard and determined by a district court.

(2) Infraction proceedings shall be brought in the district court district in which the infraction occurred. If an infraction takes place in the offshore waters, as defined in RCW 77.08.010, the infraction proceeding may be brought in any county bordering on the Pacific Ocean. [2003 c 39 s 4; 1987 c 380 s 4.]

RCW 7.84.050 Notice—Determination final unless contested—Form.

(1) A notice of infraction represents a determination that an infraction has been committed. The determination shall be final unless contested as provided in this chapter.

(2) The form for the notice of infraction shall be prescribed by rule of the supreme court and shall include the following:

(a) A statement that the notice represents a determination that an infraction has been committed by the person named in the notice and that the determination shall be final unless contested as provided in this chapter;

(b) A statement that an infraction is a noncriminal offense for which imprisonment will not be imposed as a sanction;

(c) A statement of the specific infraction for which the notice was issued;

(d) A statement of the monetary penalty established for the infraction;

(e) A statement of the options provided in this chapter for responding to the notice and the procedures necessary to exercise these options;

(f) A statement that at any hearing to contest the determination, the state has the burden of proving, by a preponderance of the evidence, that the infraction was committed; and that the person may subpoena witnesses including the officer who issued the notice of infraction;

(g) A statement that at any hearing requested for the purpose of explaining mitigating circumstances surrounding the commission of the infraction the person shall be deemed to have committed the infraction and shall not subpoena witnesses;

(h) A statement that failure to respond to a notice of infraction within fifteen days is a misdemeanor and may be punished by fine or imprisonment; and

(i) A statement that failure to appear at a hearing requested for the purpose of contesting the determination or for the purpose of explaining mitigating circumstances is a misdemeanor and may be punished by fine or imprisonment. [2006 c 270 s 7; 1987 c 380 s 5.]

RCW 7.84.060 Response to notice—Contesting determination—Mitigating circumstances—Hearing—Failure to respond or appear—Penalty.

(1) Any person who receives a notice of infraction shall respond to such notice as provided in this section within fifteen days of the date of the notice.

(2) If the person determined to have committed the infraction does not contest the determination, the person shall respond by completing the appropriate portion of the notice of infraction and submitting it, either by mail or in person, to the court specified on the notice. A check or money order in the amount of the penalty

prescribed for the infraction shall be submitted with the response. When a response which does not contest the determination is received, an appropriate order shall be entered in the court's records.

(3) If the person determined to have committed the infraction wishes to contest the determination, the person shall respond by completing the portion of the notice of infraction requesting a hearing and submitting it, either by mail or in person, to the court specified on the notice. The court shall notify the person in writing of the time, place, and date of the hearing, and that date shall not be sooner than seven days from the date of the notice, except by agreement.

(4) If the person determined to have committed the infraction does not contest the determination but wishes to explain mitigating circumstances surrounding the infraction, the person shall respond by completing the portion of the notice of infraction requesting a hearing for that purpose and submitting it, either by mail or in person, to the court specified on the notice. The court shall notify the person in writing of the time, place, and date of the hearing.

(5) If any person issued a notice of infraction: (a) Fails to respond to the notice of infraction as provided in subsection (2) of this section, or (b) fails to appear at a hearing requested pursuant to subsection (3) or (4) of this section, the court shall enter an appropriate order assessing the monetary penalty prescribed for the infraction and any other penalty authorized by this chapter. In addition, failure to respond to a notice of infraction, as required by this chapter, and failure to appear at a hearing requested pursuant to subsection (3) or (4) of this section are each punishable as a misdemeanor under chapter 9A.20 RCW. [1987 c 380 s 6.]

RCW 7.84.070 Hearing—Rules of procedure—Counsel. (1)

Procedures for the conduct of all hearings provided for in this chapter may be established by rule of the supreme court.

(2) Any person subject to proceedings under this chapter may be represented by counsel.

(3) The attorney representing the state, county, city, town, or agency authorized to issue an infraction as defined in RCW 7.84.020 may appear in any proceedings under this chapter but need not appear, notwithstanding any statute or rule of court to the contrary. [2020 c 38 s 5; 1987 c 380 s 7.]

RCW 7.84.080 Hearing—Contesting determination that infraction committed—Appeal. (1) A hearing held for the purpose of contesting the determination that an infraction has been committed shall be without a jury.

(2) The court may consider the notice of infraction and any other written report made under oath submitted by the officer who issued the notice or whose written statement was the basis for the issuance of the notice in lieu of the officer's personal appearance at the hearing. The person named in the notice may subpoena witnesses, including the officer, and has the right to present evidence and examine witnesses present in court. The rules of evidence shall apply to contested hearings.

(3) The burden of proof is upon the state to establish the commission of the infraction by a preponderance of the evidence.

(4) After consideration of the evidence and argument, the court shall determine whether the infraction was committed. Where it has not been established that the infraction was committed, an order dismissing the notice shall be entered in the court's records. Where it has been established that the infraction was committed, the court may assess a monetary penalty not exceeding that provided for the infraction in the applicable court rule or statute and shall enter an appropriate order.

(5) An appeal from the court's determination or order shall be to the superior court. A defendant may appeal a judgment entered after a contested hearing finding that the defendant has committed the infraction. The plaintiff may appeal a decision which in effect abates, discontinues, or determines the case other than by a judgment that the defendant has not committed an infraction. No other orders or judgments are appealable by either party. The decision of the superior court is subject only to discretionary review pursuant to the rules of appellate procedure. [1987 c 380 s 8.]

RCW 7.84.090 Hearing—Explanation of mitigating circumstances.

(1) A hearing held for the purpose of allowing a person to explain mitigating circumstances surrounding the commission of an infraction shall be an informal proceeding. The person may not subpoena witnesses. The determination that an infraction has been committed shall not be contested at a hearing held for the purpose of explaining mitigating circumstances.

(2) After the court has heard the explanation of the circumstances surrounding the commission of the infraction, it may assess a monetary penalty not exceeding that provided for the infraction in rules adopted pursuant to this chapter and shall enter an appropriate order.

(3) There may be no appeal from the court's determination or order. [1987 c 380 s 9.]

RCW 7.84.100 Monetary penalties. (1) A person found to have committed an infraction shall be assessed a monetary penalty. No penalty may exceed \$500 for each offense unless specifically authorized by statute.

(2) The supreme court may prescribe by rule a schedule of monetary penalties for designated infractions. The legislature requests the supreme court to adjust this schedule every two years for inflation. Except as otherwise provided, the maximum penalty imposed by the schedule shall be \$500 per infraction and the minimum penalty imposed by the schedule shall be \$10 per infraction. This schedule may be periodically reviewed by the legislature and is subject to its revision.

(3) Penalties for violations of RCW 70A.200.060 that are natural resource infractions are as follows:

(a) Up to \$250 for a person found liable of littering between one cubic foot and one cubic yard of material;

(b) Up to \$750 for a person found liable of littering more than one cubic yard and less than seven cubic yards of material;

(c) Up to \$1,000 for a person found liable of littering between seven and 10 cubic yards of material.

(4) Whenever a monetary penalty is imposed by a court under this chapter, it is immediately payable. If the person is unable to pay at that time, the court may, in its discretion, grant an extension of the period in which the penalty may be paid.

(5) (a) The county treasurer shall remit 75 percent of the money received under RCW 79A.80.080(5) to the state treasurer.

(b) Money remitted under this subsection to the state treasurer must be deposited in the recreation access pass account established under RCW 79A.80.090. The balance of the noninterest money received by the county treasurer must be deposited in the county current expense fund. [2024 c 231 s 3; 2020 c 268 s 1; 2012 c 262 s 2; 1987 c 380 s 10.]

Findings—2024 c 231: See note following RCW 70A.200.060.

RCW 7.84.110 Order of court—Civil nature—Modification of penalty—Community restitution. (1) An order entered after the receipt of a response which does not contest the determination, or after it has been established at a hearing that the infraction was committed, or after a hearing for the purpose of explaining mitigating circumstances, is civil in nature.

(2) The court may, in its discretion, waive, reduce, or suspend the monetary penalty prescribed for the infraction. At the person's request, the court may order performance of a number of hours of community restitution in lieu of a monetary penalty, at the rate of the then state minimum wage per hour. [2002 c 175 s 3; 1987 c 380 s 11.]

Effective date—2002 c 175: See note following RCW 7.80.130.

RCW 7.84.120 Issuance of process. A court of limited jurisdiction having jurisdiction over an alleged infraction may issue process anywhere within the state. [1987 c 380 s 12.]

RCW 7.84.130 Failure to pay or complete community restitution—Penalty. (1) Failure to pay a monetary penalty assessed by a court under the provisions of this chapter is a misdemeanor under chapter 9A.20 RCW.

(2) Failure to complete community restitution ordered by a court under the provisions of this chapter is a misdemeanor under chapter 9A.20 RCW. [2002 c 175 s 4; 1987 c 380 s 13.]

Effective date—2002 c 175: See note following RCW 7.80.130.

RCW 7.84.140 Authority to delegate or accept enforcement authority over natural resource infractions. (1) The director chosen by the state parks and recreation commission, the commissioner of public lands, and the director of the department of fish and wildlife are each authorized to delegate and accept enforcement authority over natural resource infractions to or from the other agencies through an agreement entered into under the interlocal cooperation act, chapter 39.34 RCW.

(2) Any person specified in RCW 70A.200.050 may initiate enforcement of RCW 70A.200.060 for those infractions that are natural resource infractions under this chapter, with or without an interlocal agreement under this section. [2024 c 231 s 4; 2011 c 320 s 13.]

Findings—2024 c 231: See note following RCW 70A.200.060.

Effective date—2011 c 320: See note following RCW 79A.80.005.

Findings—Intent—2011 c 320: See RCW 79A.80.005.

RCW 7.84.900 Effective date—1987 c 380. This act shall take effect January 1, 1988. [1987 c 380 s 21.]