

Wisconsin Takes Action on Invasive Species

Groups Say New Rule Amps Up Pressure for Strong Federal Ballast Water Solution

ANN ARBOR, MICH. (November 20)—Conservation organizations today supported the state of Wisconsin for taking action to prevent aquatic invasive species from entering the Great Lakes and urged the federal government to put forward a national solution. The state issued a permit requiring foreign ships to treat their ballast water to prevent non-native species, like the zebra mussel, from taking hold in the world’s largest source of surface fresh water.

“Wisconsin has taken a positive step forward in the effort to shut the door on aquatic invasive species and to protect our environment and economy,” said **Marc Smith, state policy manager for the National Wildlife Federation’s Great Lakes Regional Center**. “While the original draft permit offered stronger protections for the Great Lakes, we hope Wisconsin’s action will inspire other states—and eventually the federal government—to step up and enact the toughest protections possible.”

Aquatic invasive species cost people, businesses, utilities and communities at least \$200 million per year, according to Notre Dame University researchers. Ballast water discharge is the No. 1 way non-native species enter the Great Lakes.

“The problem of aquatic invasive species has gone unresolved for far too long,” said **George Meyer, executive director of the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation**. “Wisconsin has put an important stake in the ground that indicates yet another state is stepping up to the plate to solve this problem.”

Action by the state of Wisconsin comes as the U.S. EPA and Coast Guard grapple with how to address the issue of invasive species introduced via ballast water. After years of inaction, the Coast Guard is taking public comment on a draft rule mandating ships treat their ballast water, while the EPA is currently embroiled in litigation after issuing a ballast water discharge permit conservation organizations contend is too weak.

States such as Wisconsin, meanwhile, are taking action.

“Wisconsin joins a growing list of states in recognizing that the only effective way to fight invasive species is to keep them out in the first place,” said **Henry Henderson, Director of**

NRDC's Midwest Office. "The Coast Guard and EPA need to act quickly to adopt a strong federal standard that further strengthens protections for the entire Great Lakes."

Wisconsin's permit mandates that oceangoing vessels treat their ballast water to prevent non-native species from entering the Great Lakes. It offers a treatment standard more stringent than required by international law, though less protective than standards put forward by states such as New York and California.

"States like Wisconsin are taking one step forward on timelines for stopping invaders," said **Joel Brammeier, acting president of the Alliance for the Great Lakes.** "But the Great Lakes will take two steps back if the federal government can't slam the door on these critters."

More than 185 aquatic invasive species have been discovered in the Great Lakes, and one new non-native species is discovered in the Lakes every 28 weeks. Since the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway in 1959, more than 2/3 of invasive species have been likely introduced from ballast water discharge.

Preventing new invasive species introductions is one of the tenets of restoring the Great Lakes. The U.S. Congress and President Obama recently approved \$475 million to restore the lakes.

"Restoring the Great Lakes depends on putting a stop to the invasive species crisis," said Smith. "Wisconsin is doing its part to slam the door on invasive species, advance Great Lakes restoration and boost the regional economy. We're looking for the states and federal government to do all they can to protect our Great Lakes, economy and way of life."

The Brookings Institution found that the eight-state region of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin stands to gain at least \$2 in economic benefit for every \$1 invested in Great Lakes restoration.

For more information: www.nwf.org/greatlakes

Formed in 1970, the **Alliance for the Great Lakes** is the oldest independent citizens' organization in North America. Its mission is to conserve and restore the world's largest freshwater resource using policy, education and local efforts, ensuring a healthy Great Lakes and clean water for generations of people and wildlife. More about the Alliance for the Great Lakes is online at www.greatlakes.org.

The **National Wildlife Federation** is America's largest conservation organization inspiring Americans to protect wildlife for our children's future.

The **Natural Resources Defense Council** is a national, nonprofit organization of scientists, lawyers and environmental specialists dedicated to protecting public health and the environment. Founded in 1970, NRDC has 1.3 million members and online activists, served from offices in New York, Washington, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Beijing.

The **Wisconsin Wildlife Federation** is the state's largest conservation organization, comprised of 168 hunting, fishing, trapping and forestry related organizations that have over 100,000 members. The Wildlife Federation, founded in 1949, is dedicated to conservation education and the advancement of sound conservation policies.

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