



June 3, 2003

The Honorable Sherwood L. Boehlert
Chairman, Committee on Science
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This letter provides the Department of Commerce's views on H.R. 1081, the "Aquatic Invasive Species Research Act." H.R. 1081 establishes marine and freshwater research, development, and demonstration programs to support efforts to prevent, control, and eradicate invasive species, as well as to educate citizens and stakeholders and restore ecosystems.

The Department generally supports the provisions of H.R. 1081. The bill addresses some weaknesses in the existing aquatic invasive species program and, in areas such as shipborne vectors, identifies logical next steps in research and development.

In testimony on July 26, 2001, before the House Science Committee, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), an agency within the Department, recognized that monitoring and early detection were the most significant issues for the NOAA program at that time. Specifically, the NOAA witness stated: "First, monitoring in aquatic systems requires a major resource commitment, both in terms of human and financial resources. And we have not developed protocols or technology for monitoring the problems." The Department is pleased that H.R. 1081 addresses both of the issues and builds upon progress made since the testimony on July 26, 2001.

The Department is also pleased that the Committee recognizes that research on pathways of introduction other than ballast water is essential. The preventive activities of the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force have, out of necessity, focused on ballast water as the most significant vector for introduction of species into coastal areas. The bill recognizes that other vectors may also be important and makes provisions for their examination.

The Department would like to suggest some modifications to H.R. 1081; these proposed modifications are enclosed.

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The Administration requests that all authorizations in this bill be consistent with the President's FY 2004 budget request.

The Department of Commerce appreciates the opportunity to present views on H.R. 1081. The Office of Management and Budget has advised that there is no objection to the transmittal of these views from the standpoint of the Administration's program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Theodore W. Kassinger". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "T".

Theodore W. Kassinger

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Ralph M. Hall
Ranking Minority Member

Proposed Modifications to H.R. 1081

Page 6, line 9, §4(a). It is the understanding of the Department that this bill is intended to be a part of a larger reauthorization of the Nonindigenous Aquatic Nuisance Prevention and Control Act of 1990. Therefore, the Department suggests that the memorandum of understanding be limited to those sections involving monitoring rather than for implementing the entire Act. Even if the bill were to stand alone, there are portions of the bill in which the "administering agencies" are not the lead agencies.

Page 10, line 8, §5(e). The reference to subsection (b) may be incorrect. Subsection (b) covers development of the protocol and not actual monitoring activities. Subsection (a) seems to be correct as it is the general requirement for research, including surveys and experimentation.

Page 14, line 18, §6(c). Although the procedures identified are appropriate, the Department is cognizant of the fact that H.R. 1080 contains a major section (§202) covering the screening process, and the Committee may want to work this provision into that section. In addition, we would recommend that recommendations on restrictions of planned importations be made to the agencies with regulatory authority rather than to the Invasive Species Council.

Page 16, line 23, §7(d). The Department recommends that the dissemination of information be the responsibility of individual agencies rather than the Invasive Species Council. For example, the National Sea Grant Program is experienced in such activities. Although the Council could play a role in coordinating and disseminating information, it does not have the infrastructure to implement such a provision.

Page 22, line 13, §9(a)(3). This provision on alternative exchange zones is unnecessary because the Task Force has already completed a study on alternative exchange zones.

The Administration requests that all authorizations in this bill be consistent with the President's FY 2004 budget request.