

****PRESS RELEASE****

March 6, 2003



an international coalition to protect and restore
the Great Lakes / St. Lawrence River ecosystem

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New Legislation Will Help Keep Invasive Species Out of Great Lakes

Yesterday in Washington, D.C. Senators Carl Levin (D-MI) and Susan Collins (R-ME) and Representatives Wayne Gilchrest (R-MD) and Vernon Ehlers (R-MI) introduced the National Aquatic Invasive Species Act of 2003 (NAISA) to Congress. Senate bill number S.525, House of Representatives bill number H.R. 1080 and H.R. 1081. A list of NAISA cosponsors from your area is provided below.

NAISA would reauthorize the National Invasive Species Act of 1996 and improve federal authority and funding for prevention and control of aquatic invasive species. A list of NAISA cosponsors from your area is provided below.

Great Lakes United and Lake Michigan Federation are urging support for this critical legislation. The groups are also calling for provisions to strengthen Great Lakes protection and meet a challenge from the International Association for Great Lakes Research, the premier association of top Great Lakes scientists.

“We support NAISA. It is thorough, well thought-out legislation. But we are not going to meet the International Association for Great Lakes Research challenge unless NAISA ramps up Great Lakes protection,” says Jennifer Nalbone, Habitat and Biodiversity Coordinator from Great Lakes United.

The International Association for Great Lakes Research (IAGLR) recently released a report entitled *Research and Management Priorities for Aquatic Invasive Species in the Great Lakes*. This report summarizes the current science of aquatic invasive species and challenges the governments of the U.S. and Canada to eliminate all new introductions of aquatic invasive species into the Great Lakes in 10 years.

“Aquatic invasive species pose one of the greatest risks to the health and productivity of our Great Lakes, and threaten economic losses that total in the billions of dollars,” says Dr. John Hartig of IAGLR. Further, Dr. Hartig notes, “the governments of the U.S. and Canada must view the elimination of new aquatic invasive species as an urgent priority and protect one-fifth of the world’s standing freshwater found in the Great Lakes and the Canadian and U.S. economies that depend on this natural capital.”

The groups state that if NAISA wants to meet the IAGLR challenge, it needs to significantly shorten the timeline for applying the highest level of protection from foreign ships’ dirty ballast water discharges into the Great Lakes, and ensure the legislation is well funded, implemented and enforced.

As NAISA currently stands, ballast water exchange or an interim technology based standard will be mandatory nationwide, soon after the bill is passed. The highest level of protection from ballast discharges will be set through a final biological standard, defined in 2006 and implemented nationwide no later than 2011.

Ballast water exchange has been mandatory in the Great Lakes since 1993, but the IAGLR report reveals that this regulation has not reduced the rate of invasions from foreign ships' ballast discharges to the Lakes. Since 1993, five new invasive species, attributed to dirty ballast discharges, have established in the Great Lakes. These new invaders include the fishhook waterflea and the spiny waterflea.

“Final biological standards should be mandatory and enforceable as soon as they are defined in 2006 for all foreign vessels granted access to the Great Lakes. For this vulnerable freshwater resource, 2011 is too late, “ says Jennifer Nalbone Habitat and Biodiversity Coordinator for Great Lakes United. “This improvement to NAISA will protect the Great Lakes from a continued onslaught of invaders from foreign ships' ballast tank discharges, while spurring on needed development of ballast water treatments and technologies for the rest of the nation.”

The groups also stress that adequate funding is a critical need to ensure NAISA's effective implementation and enforcement. Long-term funding for research on separation of the Mississippi River from the Great Lakes and to achieve no new introductions of species through ballast water is imperative. “It doesn't take an economist to see that millions of dollars for the Great Lakes is a smart investment when you stack that next to a fishery that is worth \$4 billion annually,” said the Federation's Joel Brammeier. “It's time to look at a comprehensive strategy to inoculate the Great Lakes against all future invasions so we don't keep finding ourselves in the expensive position of having to react on a species by species basis.”

Contact your local NAISA co-sponsor for comments. Original co-sponsors from the Great Lakes states include:

House of Representatives: Biggert (IL), Kirk (IL), Emanuel (IL), Evans (IL), Lipinski (IL), Visclosky (IN), Ehlers (MI), Kildee (MI), Dingell (MI), Stupak (MI), Rogers (MI), Hoekstra (MI), Levin (MI), Knollenberg (MI), Upton (MI), McCotter (MI), Camp (MI), Smith (MI), Miller (MI), McCollum (MN), Houghton (NY), Boehlert (NY), Walsh (NY), McHugh (NY), Slaughter (NY), Quinn (NY), Maloney (NY), Weiner (NY), Kaptur (OH), LaTourette (OH), Gillmor (OH), Brown (OH), English (PA), Greenwood (PA), Baldwin (WI), Kind (WI), Kleczka (WI)
Senate: Durbin (IL), Fitzgerald (IL), Bayh (IN), Levin (MI), Stabenow (MI), Voinovich (OH), DeWine (OH)

Established in 1982, Great Lakes United is an international coalition of over 150 environmental and conservation organizations, unions, academia and businesses in the U.S., Canada, First Nations and tribes. GLU is dedicated to the protection and restoration of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin. More on Great Lakes United is available at: www.glu.org

Formed in 1970, the Lake Michigan Federation is the oldest citizens' Great Lakes organization in North America. Its mission is to restore fish and wildlife habitat, conserve land and water, and eliminate pollution in the watershed of the largest lake within U.S. borders. More on the Federation is available at www.lakemichigan.org.

Since 1967, the International Association for Great Lakes Research has compiled and disseminated multidisciplinary knowledge on North America's Laurentian Great Lakes and other large lakes of the world IAGLR's membership includes over 900 scientists, policymakers, engineers and resource managers from the U.S., Canada and 20 additional countries. The IAGLR report can be downloaded at: www.iaglr.org/scipolicy/ais/.