

Invasives Update

National Environmental Coalition on Invasive Species



September 2005

Legislation...

Aquatic Invasive Species

Senator Mike DeWine (R-OH) and seven other members of the Senate Great Lakes Task Force introduced the Asian Carp Prevention and Control Act, companion legislation to H.R. 3049 that was introduced by Rep. Mark Green (R-WI). These bills would amend the Lacey Act to list three species of Asian carp as injurious wildlife and would prohibit the interstate transport of live Asian carp. The bills are designed to decrease the risk of an intentional introduction of Asian carp into the Great Lakes or waters that connect with the Great Lakes. Contact: Joy Mulinex with the Great Lakes Task Force (202/224-1211).

Re-opening the Domestic Trade in Turtles

A recent article in the Northern Louisiana Times Picayune (www.nola.com) highlighted a potential bill by Congressional Representative Rodney Alexander (R-La) that would permit the interstate sale of turtles. At the behest of local turtle farmers, the bill would overturn a national ban on the interstate sale of most turtles enacted to prevent the spread of salmonella. Area turtle farmers currently breed native red-eared sliders for international export, despite the fact that these turtles have proven invasive with major ecological impacts in Asia, the Caribbean, Europe, South Africa and the Middle East.

Although farmers claim that their pets are now over 99% salmonella free, that remaining 1% can still present a significant threat to public health. Red-eared sliders could also prove invasive in other ecological regions in the US outside the Mississippi Valley, and reintroduction of the trade could compromise the legality of existing import bans of turtles from other countries under the World Trade Organization. In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, the region certainly has other priorities and the condition of the region's turtle farms is still unclear.

For further information, contact Stas Burgiel at SBurgiel@defenders.org

Policy...

Coast Guard No Ballast On Board (NOBOB) Policy

The Coast Guard announced a new NOBOB policy (70 FR 51831, 8/31/05) on August 31st. This is a "voluntary program" to take effect immediately. The policy says that NOBOB vessels bound for the Great Lakes should conduct best management practices such as saltwater flushing of their ballast tanks in an effort to get the residual salinity is as high as possible (A NOAA/GLERL report <http://www.glerl.noaa.gov/res/projects/nobob/products/concludes> that "swish and spit" or flushing would reduce introductions from NOBOBs; and that salty residuals posed the lowest threat of introducing new invaders.) NOBOB vessels that conduct these practices should incorporate them into management records that they are required to keep onboard.

The Coast Guard intends to take samples of residual water from the ballast tanks of NOBOB vessels in order to determine the efficacy of the program. Since the program is voluntary, no penalties will be assessed for noncompliance. However, if the Coast Guard determines that the program is not effective in preventing NIS introductions into the Great Lakes, the Coast Guard says it may consider other alternatives.

The Coast Guard still refuses to say that compliance is mandatory, even though a plain reading of the National Invasive Species Act and current regulations require this. The new policy also overlooks the fact that the Coast Guard can/must, under its regulations and the law, refuse entry into the Great Lakes for ships that have not certified compliance with current ballast water management regulations for vessels entering the Great Lakes.

Overall, this is a step in the right direction. Many more steps are needed, including: making the voluntary policy mandatory and including enforcement provisions; ensuring noncompliant vessels are penalized or, must seal tanks or, are restricted access to the Great Lakes, and; passing strong comprehensive federal legislation to require the technology onboard ships to effectively protect against aquatic invasions.

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