

NMMA Supports Robust Response to Aquatic Invasive Species

BACKGROUND

An "invasive species" is a plant or animal that is not native to an ecosystem and whose introduction has, in many areas of the country, lead to substantial economic damage in terms of mitigation and remediation costs as well as contributed to often significant negative changes to aquatic habitats and ecosystems. Once an invasive species is introduced, it is extremely difficult to prevent it from spreading throughout an aquatic ecosystem. Invasive species are introduced into aquatic environments in a variety of ways, most commonly through ballast water—the U.S Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has suggested that more than 10,000 marine species are transported *each day* across the oceans through cargo ship ballast water.

The damage done our nation's waterways by aquatic invasive species (AIS) can be devastating. According to EPA, AIS are the second leading cause of species extinction and loss of biodiversity in aquatic environments worldwide. AIS out-compete native fish for food, damage coastal wetlands and hamper key economic industries in the regions they attack. It has been estimated that the zebra mussel in the Great Lakes alone has caused \$5 billion in damage to water pipes, boat hulls and other in-water structures. The cost of environmental remediation and associated economic impacts are in the hundreds of millions of dollars per year.

ISSUE

AIS pose a grave environmental and economic threat to our nation's waterways. Key recreational and commercial industries including fishing, boating and tourism are harmed by AIS. The impact of AIS has been particularly acute in the Great Lakes where non-native mussels and mollusks are wreaking havoc on native fish populations and crippling local industry. Therefore, NMMA supports a robust federal, state, local and private effort to tackle this issue, including:

- **Legislative Remedies.** The 110th Congress has already seen the introduction of several bills developed specifically to address AIS; S. 336, "Barrier Project Consolidation and Construction Act of 2007", H.R. 553, "Asian Carp Barrier Act". H.R. 260, "Aquatic Invasive Species Research Act" and H.R. 801, "Great Lakes Invasive Species Control Act". NMMA supports these bills and will work with Congress to get them enacted.
- **Copper Anti-foulants.** Copper anti-fouling paint is a proven weapon in the fight against invasive species, making it difficult for invasives to "hitch a ride" on recreational vessels. Despite this, there is a possibility that copper bottom paints could be banned by unwise and counterproductive regulation. NMMA believes anti-fouling paint is an essential asset in the prevention and control of AIS.
- **Ballast Water Regulations.** NMMA believes that it is necessary for Congress to establish national regulations on the discharge of ballast water from commercial vessels and cruise ships. A uniform national standard will facilitate enforcement and compliance and will solve the most significant vector of AIS.
- **Federal Appropriations.** NMMA urges Congress to identify a revenue stream to finance sustained federal funding for research, education, outreach and best practices to communicate to boaters, anglers and other users of aquatic resources how best to prevent the introduction of species.