



News from

# Congressman Ron Kind

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CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Thursday, June 21, 2007

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## Hearing Advances Kind Legislation to Combat Invasive Species in Wildlife Refuges

### *REPAIR Act Would Establish Comprehensive Approach to #1 Refuge Threat*

**Washington, DC** – A house subcommittee today held a hearing on H.R. 787, U.S. Rep. Ron Kind's Refuge Ecology Protection, Assistance, & Immediate Response (REPAIR) Act, bringing the bill that would combat the growing and costly problem of invasive species in the nation's wildlife refuges one step closer to passage.

Today's hearing by the House Natural Resources Subcommittees on Fisheries, Wildlife, and Oceans was requested by Rep. Kind, a member of the subcommittee. The hearing examined the benefits of the legislation, which through grants and enhanced private-public partnerships would establish an innovative and cost-effective approach to maximize eradication efforts and promote ecological conservation.

"By providing grants for both immediate response and long-term eradication of invasives, the REPAIR Act will bring a needed infusion of funding and energy to what has been identified as the number one ecological and economic threat to our refuges, including our very own Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge," Rep. Kind said.

The backlog for combating invasive species is the fastest-growing portion of the National Wildlife Refuge budget, reaching nearly \$300 million. These expenses are cutting deeply into already stretched refuge operations and maintenance budgets. The REPAIR Act begins to address this crisis in the nation's refuge system by providing voluntary REPAIR grants to states, local governments, regional agencies or individuals to fund the planning, execution, and maintenance of projects to remove harmful nonnative species.

Testifying at the hearing in support of the bill's goals were representatives of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Foundation, Ducks Unlimited, as well as Mr. Ken Visger of LaCrescent, Minnesota, who is a board member of the Friends of the Upper Mississippi National Wildlife and Fish Refuge.

"We are literally in a war with invasive species, but our refuges lack the resources to launch and sustain an adequate response," Mr. Visger said in his written testimony. "The REPAIR Act is critical to the health of our national wildlife refuges. With the act's focus on grants and partnerships, it would provide the means to make a meaningful difference with invasives on the Upper Miss Refuge, Trempealeau Refuge, and hundreds of other refuges and thousands of waterfowl production areas across the country."

(more)

“While invasive species are a problem for ecosystems across our country, they present a unique danger for refuges,” Rep. Kind said. “These areas have been set apart because they are critical for the survival of cherished wildlife species, particularly threatened and endangered species. These are the animals most in danger of facing extinction, so changes to their habitat or threats from foreign organisms could be potentially devastating to them. If these places are, indeed, meant to be refuges for wildlife, we have a special obligation to guard against invasives in them.”

Species that are considered invasive the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish include the purple loosestrife, black locust and zebra mussels.