



Great Lakes Fishery Commission

ESTABLISHED BY CONVENTION BETWEEN CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES TO IMPROVE AND PERPETUATE FISHERY RESOURCES

February 28, 2006

Hon. Mark Kirk
1717 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Kirk:

Thank you for introducing H.R. 4771, the *Great Lakes Invasive Species Control Act*, legislation designed to stop the introduction of invasive species via ocean-going vessels claiming "no ballast on board" (NOBOB). Invasive species, as you know, are the major threat to the health of the Great Lakes and the Great Lakes Fishery Commission greatly appreciates your interest in this issue. The commission supports your legislation and hopes that it will pass Congress immediately or become part of a comprehensive response to invasive species.

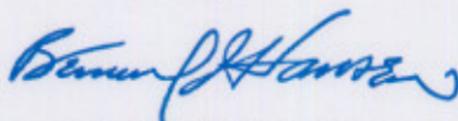
The Nonindigenous Aquatic Nuisance Prevention and Control Act of 1990 (and its successor, the National Invasive Species Act) envisioned ballast water management for oceangoing vessels. NOBOB vessels—the vast majority of ocean-going vessels entering the Great Lakes—are currently not being regulated. However, these vessels often contain a large number of viable organisms and remain a threat to the Great Lakes. The exemption of NOBOB vessels from ballast water management is a major loophole in the law that needs to be addressed.

Your legislation is intended to clarify that ballast water management must apply to ocean-going NOBOB vessels. Such measures are badly needed for the Great Lakes and all U.S. waters. The regulation of NOBOB vessels—in the most-current shipping season—was a major recommendation of the Aquatic Invasive Species Strategy Team, convened under President Bush's Executive Order of May, 2004. The Great Lakes Fishery Commission thanks you for introducing legislation to fulfill one of the Regional Collaboration's recommendations. In addition to requiring NOBOB vessels to manage ballast, the commission also supports the provisions of your bill that call for speedy implementation and the development of environmentally sound ballast water treatment methods.

While the commission is very pleased with your legislation, we have two suggestions that would make your efforts more effective. First, the commission has been a strong proponent of comprehensive legislation to address invasive species. This was also a major recommendation of Aquatic Invasive Species Strategy Team. Comprehensive legislation exists in the form the National Aquatic Invasive Species Act—H.R. 1591 and H.R. 1592—and the commission hopes such legislation will be passed immediately. Your NOBOB bill complements the comprehensive legislation and should be a part of a comprehensive response. Second, the commission believes your bill can and should be applied nationwide. While the Great Lakes are on the cutting edge of invasive species management, and while the lakes often feel the affects of invasive species before other regions, NOBOB provisions that are not applied nationwide would still allow the transfer of species into adjacent waters, and such species could easily find their way into the Great Lakes.

Thank you, again, for your interest in protecting the Great Lakes from invasive species and for introducing legislation to close a major loophole—the exemption of NOBOB vessels from ballast water management. We hope that your legislation, and comprehensive invasive species legislation, is passed and implemented immediately.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bernard J. Hansen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "B" and a long, sweeping tail.

Bernard J. Hansen
Chair, U.S. Section

Cc: Hon. Don Young, Chairman, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
Hon. James Oberstar, Ranking Member, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
Hon. Frank LoBiondo, Chair, Subcommittee on Coast Guard
Hon. Bob Filner, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Coast Guard
Hon. Peter Hoekstra, Great Lakes Member, Subcommittee on Coast Guard
Hon. Brian Higgins, Great Lakes Member, Subcommittee on Coast Guard