

**Opening Statement of
Congressman Pete Hoekstra
Ballast water management and reduction of air pollution from ships
Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation
July 11, 2006**

I commend the Chairman of the Coast Guard Subcommittee for today's hearing on the staff discussion draft of legislation to stem the scourge of invasive species. This committee must assume a strong leadership role on the problem of invasive species in Michigan and across the nation. I welcome today's hearing and look forward to the testimony of our witnesses.

The Second Congressional District of Michigan, which I represent, includes nearly 200 miles of some of the most beautiful shoreline of Lake Michigan. On a day-to-day basis, the quality of life and indeed, the very livelihood of many of my constituents, is directly impacted by the health of Lake Michigan and the other Great Lakes.

As we know all too well, the problems created by invasive species have immensely impacted the Great Lakes region. Over the next 10 years, estimates indicate that the infamous zebra mussel will cost U.S. and Canadian industries in the Great Lakes region more than \$5 billion.

The introduction of additional non-native species to the Great Lakes is one of the largest economic and environmental threats to the Great Lakes region today. We can debate which techniques will best stem their introduction or adequacy of the effectiveness of current laws, but there is little debate that once an invasive species become established, its impacts are too frequently profound.

Worse yet, we remain all too vulnerable to these intruders. Our current defenses are inadequate. For now, we are losing the battle against Great Lakes intruders.

Since the 106th Congress I have introduced legislation that seeks to accelerate action by the Coast Guard to stem the introduction of invasive species into the Great Lakes from ballast water. Concrete action under the basis 1990 legislation and the 1996 amendments contained in National Invasive Species Act has proceeded painfully slow. Action has been paralyzed by seemingly endless analysis. We continue to await the required analyses and standards, but new invasive species have been introduced and taken up residence, and the people of the Great Lakes region have paid the price.

For many in the Great Lakes region, myself included, the claim that the technology is not available to justify alternative ballast water treatment methods

sounds more and more like excuses from those resistant to change or unwilling to acknowledge the severity of the issue. Research in the area of ballast water treatment has taken place for over a decade but there has been no force or incentive driving the implementation of solutions.

The staff draft is a step in the right direction because it establishes the framework for a ballast water discharge standard that alternative technologies can meet. However, I believe we need to aggressively encourage the Coast Guard to act. Further delay could catastrophically impact the health of the Great Lakes.

The status quo is no longer acceptable for ballast water management on the Great Lakes. I look forward to working with the Chairman to address the urgent threat of invasive species.

In building a better defense for the Great Lakes against the introduction of new invasive species, we must vigorously use the most effective tools currently available, while awaiting the improved techniques derived from additional research and its application through the free enterprise system.

We need to move forward on both fronts as aggressively as possible.