

Wisconsin Wildlife Federation

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Contact: George Meyer, Executive Director, Wisconsin Wildlife Federation

Conservation Organizations Call on the DNR to Regulate Ballast Water Discharges from International Ships

Poynette: Today, thirteen state, national and local conservation groups requested the Natural Resources Board and the Department of Natural Resources to require permits for the discharge of ballast water containing aquatic invasive species and diseases from international ships into the Wisconsin portions of Lake Michigan and Lake Superior. The organizations petitioning the Natural Resources Board at its meeting today are the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, the National Wildlife Federation, The Wisconsin Federation of Great Lake Sport Fishing Clubs, the Wisconsin Council of Sportfishing Organizations, the River Alliance of Wisconsin, Wisconsin State Council of Trout Unlimited, Walleyes for Tomorrow, Midwest Environmental Advocates, Wisconsin Association of Lakes, Winnebago Land Conservation Alliance, Wisconsin Environment and Lakeshore Fisherman Sports Club Ltd..

The request identified that current state law (the Wisconsin Pollutant Discharge Elimination System) requires that anyone discharging "biological materials" such as aquatic invasive species and diseases into Wisconsin waters requires a discharge permit and treatment for the ballast water. The State of Michigan has previously required such permits for international ships discharging ballast water into Michigan water of the Great Lakes. The request also petitioned the Natural Resources Board to modify any state rules if necessary to go forward with a discharge permit program.

Over one hundred and eighty-six invasive species and diseases have been introduced into the Great Lakes since they have been opened to Great Lakes shipping. It is projected that many of those species have been introduced through the release of ballast water taken on in foreign waters. Such species include the zebra mussel, the quagga mussel, the round goby, the white perch, spiny water flea and possibly VHS. The introduction of these species into the Great Lakes has cost businesses, municipalities and sportsmen and women hundreds of millions of dollars and has significantly threatened the \$2.9 billion sports fishing industry in Wisconsin.

"Sportsmen and women truly appreciate the efforts of the Natural Resources Board and

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the Department of Natural Resources to support federal and state legislation regulating the discharge of ballast water into the Great Lakes,” stated Lil Pipping, President of the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation. “However, it appears that upon a review of current state pollution laws, that the Board and the Department can already fully regulate the discharge of ballast water from international ships and the many organizations involved in this petition call on the DNR to do so now.”

The petition is being filed with the Natural Resources Board and the Department Secretary at its meeting in Madison today.

The Wisconsin Wildlife Federation is made up of one hundred and fifty-seven hunting, fishing and trapping organizations in Wisconsin and is the state affiliate of the National Wildlife Federation. The Federation is dedicated to conservation education and the advancement of sound conservation policies. For further information, contact George Meyer, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation at 608-516-5545.