

Media Release



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To All Media

For Immediate Release

Shipping Act to reduce invasion of Canadian waters

A step in the right direction, but Great Lakes exempt from added protection

Earlier today, Transport Canada announced new regulations under the Canada Shipping Act to reduce the introduction of aquatic invasive species and pathogens into Canadian waters through ship ballast water discharges. The regulations, which have been under development since 2000, set new ballast water management requirements for all ships and represent the first step towards the implementation of the International Maritime Organization's Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments.

Three major conservation organizations, the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (O.F.A.H.), the Sierra Legal Defence Fund and Great Lakes United are initially supportive of the new regulations, but are highly critical of the absence of exemptions for ships entering the Great Lakes with no ballast on board (NOBOB's); the lack of enforceable deadlines for treatment standards; and the slow pace at which Canada is responding to the threat posed by invasive species. Responding to the influx of invasive species and the damage they do costs Canadian taxpayers billions of dollars each year. The cost associated with just one species, the zebra mussel, is estimated at over \$1 billion for the Great Lakes region alone.

"Over the past fifty years, aquatic invasive species have been one of the greatest threats to Canada's aquatic ecosystems, and ballast discharge from ocean going ships has been the main pathway for the spread of these invaders," said Francine MacDonald, O.F.A.H. Aquatics/Invasive Species Biologist. "Given the enormous scope of the problem, and the rapid rate at which new species are invading our waters, the federal government needs to pick up the pace when addressing these threats to our environment."

While the new regulations mandate that all transoceanic ships entering Canadian waters will have to manage the discharge of ballast water through one of four means: 1.) exchange 2.) treatment 3.) discharge to a reception facility or 4.) retention on board, at the present time, only the first is available to deal with this problem.

"The regulations are an important step towards curbing aquatic invasive species, but the federal government has failed to commit to an enforceable deadline for compliance with more effective management requirements," said Justin Duncan, staff lawyer at the Sierra Legal Defence Fund. "Without an aggressive standard and timeline, the invasion of Canada's waterways will continue unabated."

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An exemption to the regulations outlining requirements for NOBOB's in the Great Lakes, is unenforceable and will not stop invasives. Despite carrying no ballast, NOBOB's can carry unpumpable water and sediment in their tanks, which harbour invasive species that are later discharged into Canadian waters when new cargo is loaded. "Only mandatory exchange regulations for NOBOB's would have resulted in improved protections for this closed freshwater ecosystem," noted Jennifer Nalbone, Campaign Director for Great Lakes United. "In essence, the exemption provided to these ships means that federal government has failed to protect the Great Lakes."

According to recent academic research, a new invasive species is detected in the Great Lakes every twenty-eight weeks. Since 1959, seventy three per cent of new invasions have been attributed to transoceanic shipping. More than ninety per cent of oceans going ships entering the Great Lakes are NOBOB's, which due to their prevalence pose the greatest threat for new invasions.

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Contact:

Francine MacDonald, O.F.A.H. (705) 748-6324 (francinem@ofah.org)

Jennifer Nalbone, Great Lakes United (716) 213-0408 (jen@glu.org)

Justin Duncan, Sierra Legal (416) 368-7533, extn. 22 (jduncan@sierra.org)

