



Adopted March 5, 2014

Strengthening federal protections against the importation and trade of invasive species

Whereas, the integrity of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin ecosystem and economy is threatened by the ongoing introduction and spread of harmful aquatic invasive species; and

Whereas, the United States is a leading import market in the global trade of live organisms with more than 2,200 different species of non-native wildlife being imported to the United States over the last decade, including more than 300 species that pose risks as potential invaders; and

Whereas, the existing federal regulatory system for preventing the importation and trade of injurious wildlife, established through the Lacey Act (18 USC 42) in the early 1900s and administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is too cumbersome and inefficient to keep up with globalization and the current high volume of trade in non-native organisms; and

Whereas, existing procedures too often result in listing species as “injurious” only after they have been imported and begin spreading in the wild, as occurred with species such as Asian carp, Northern snakehead and the Burmese python, which are causing severe disruptions in ecosystems where they are established and costing millions of dollars annually to control; and

Whereas, legislation entitled “The Invasive Fish and Wildlife Prevention Act” (S. 1153 and H.R. 996) has been introduced by Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (NY) and Rep. Louise Slaughter (NY-25) to strengthen federal laws and programs to reduce the risk of introduction of injurious, non-native wildlife and associated diseases through the trade in live animals; and

Whereas, the above legislation is revenue neutral and would provide the Fish and Wildlife Service with streamlined authority and the ability to proactively list foreign species as “injurious” while providing exemptions for qualified zoos, aquaria and research institutions and common domesticated species kept as pets or livestock; and

Whereas, the Great Lakes Commission has consistently advocated for strengthened federal laws to prevent the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species.

Therefore, Be It Resolved, that the Great Lakes Commission calls on Congress to support and pass legislation, such as the Invasive Fish and Wildlife Prevention Act (S. 1153 and H.R. 996), to maintain and improve federal laws and programs to strengthen our ability to make rapid, science-based decisions, prevent the importation of potentially damaging non-native fish and wildlife, and reduce the risk of introduction of injurious, non-native wildlife and associated diseases through the trade in live animals; and

Be It Further Resolved, that the Great Lakes Commission calls on the Department of Interior to accelerate use of existing authorities to expedite the listing of and restrict import of harmful, non-native species; and

Be It Finally Resolved, that the Great Lakes Commission supports legislative or executive branch action that will:

- establish a mandatory pre-import screening process that is efficient and systematic for federal agencies to evaluate risks associated with species proposed for importation;

- allow federal agencies to implement the screening process for non-native species already in trade; and
- provide the authority needed for federal agencies to prohibit importation of those species determined to be injurious.

Adopted at the 2014 Semiannual Meeting of the Great Lakes Commission, March 4-5 in Washington, D.C.