



Messrs. Gary Frazer and Timothy R.E. Keeney
Co-Chairs, ANS Task Force
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
4401 North Fairfax Dr., Room 322
Arlington, VA 22203

Dear Co-Chairs Frazer and Keeney:

The National Invasive Species Council's draft National Management Plan for Invasive Species and the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration's *Strategy to Restore and Protect the Great Lakes* described the need to develop and implement screening tools that enable rapid assessment of risks nonnative species pose to native species. As you know, screening tools can be used by agencies to allow trade of nonnative species with low risk, while regulating importation and transport/use of nonnative species with high risk. The Mississippi River Basin Panel on Aquatic Nuisance Species recently developed a model risk assessment process that can be used by States and possibly others for initial rapid screening of aquatic species prior to importation. This process, and a variety of more detailed risk assessment methods that would inform steps in a full screening process, should be comparatively evaluated so that users understand strengths and weaknesses of each model. This information would enable adaptation of selected models to maximize consistency, efficiency of use, and effectiveness for various regions of the U.S. Therefore, on behalf of the Mississippi River Basin and Great Lakes Panels on Aquatic Nuisance Species (Panels), we are writing to convey to the ANS Task Force (ANSTF), the necessity to: 1) scientifically evaluate the accuracy, sensitivity, ease of use, and cost effectiveness of existing risk assessment screening tools, 2) report on the strengths and weaknesses of each screening tool, and 3) recommend how to adapt screening approaches and risk assessment methods that rapidly and accurately assess risks to native species and ecosystems.

If any member of the ANSTF plans to issue a request for proposals for aquatic invasive species research, then **we strongly recommend** consideration of the risk assessment needs recommended, in steps 1-3 above, as a high priority research project to be funded. The Mississippi River Basin Panel will continue to work on improving its Screening Tool, and both Panels are willing to help describe details of the needed research, possibly in conjunction with the ANSTF's Aquatic Organisms Screening Working Group, so that the proposed project results in needed outputs. Please inform us if you wish additional information about our recommendation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Douglas C. Keller".

Doug Keller, Co-Chair
Mississippi River Basin Panel on ANS

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James L. Grazio".

Jim Grazio, Chair
Great Lakes Panel on ANS