

# **Wisconsin Wildlife Federation** **National Wildlife Federation**

## **Conservation Groups File Challenge To Inadequate DNR Action on Invasive Species**

**MADISON, WISC. (November, 20 2008)**—The Great Lakes will not be protected from invasive species by an EPA permit certified by Wisconsin’s Department of Natural Resources, asserted the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation and the National Wildlife Federation. The conservation groups yesterday submitted a legal challenge to the permit.

“Action by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources improves upon the EPA’s inadequate, status-quo permit, but it does not protect the Great Lakes from the threat of invasive species or comply with the Clean Water Act,” said George Meyer, executive director for the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation. “We have no choice but to take this action to protect our lakes and our economy.”

The No. 1 way aquatic invasive species enter the Great Lakes is through ballast water discharge of ocean-going vessels. The EPA’s permit to prevent the introduction of invasive species via ballast water discharge has been opposed by conservation groups as insufficient to protect Great Lakes waters.

Each of the Great Lakes states are authorized under the Clean Water Act to issue water quality certifications that would impose higher treatment requirements for ship discharges to assure that each state’s water quality standards are met.

On October 23, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources certified the EPA permit while adding additional requirements for ballast water discharges for ships in Wisconsin waters. The requirements, although an improvement over the EPA permit, would still allow the discharge of invasive species into Wisconsin waters, violating state water quality standards and putting the Great Lakes at risk. The Wisconsin Wildlife Federation and the National Wildlife Federation have filed a legal challenge to the DNR certification in a contested case hearing before an administrative law judge.

“The bottom line is that under action by the EPA and Wisconsin DNR the Great Lakes remain at risk to invasive species,” said Marc Smith, state policy director for the Great Lakes office of the National Wildlife Federation. “The millions of people who depend on the Great Lakes deserve a solution to this serious problem to protect our drinking water, economy and way of life. We can do better and need to do better before the problem gets worse and more costly.”

More than 185 aquatic invasive species have entered the lakes, disrupting the food chain, fouling beaches and damaging infrastructure—costing citizens, industry and businesses at

least \$200 million per year. One new non-native species enters the Great Lakes, on average, every 28 weeks.

“The Great Lakes fishery is critically important to the millions of anglers that use the lakes on an annual basis,” said Meyer. “The unregulated ballast water discharge has had a devastating impact on the Great Lakes and has caused major financial losses to lake shore owners, and Wisconsin municipalities and industries.”

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**Contact:**

George Meyer, Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, (608) 662-9374, [georgemeyer@tds.net](mailto:georgemeyer@tds.net)

Marc Smith, National Wildlife Federation, (734) 887-7116, [msmith@nwf.org](mailto:msmith@nwf.org)

Jordan Lubetkin, National Wildlife Federation, (734) 887-7100, [lubetkin@nwf.org](mailto:lubetkin@nwf.org)