

Wisconsin Wildlife Federation

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News Release

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WWF Strongly Applauds DNR Ballast Water Discharge Permit

Poynette: Today, the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, the state's largest conservation organization, indicated its strong support for the proposed Wisconsin DNR water quality permit regulating the discharge of untreated ballast water from international ships into the Great Lakes. The proposed permit is the subject of a public hearing today at 10 am at the DNR's Southeast District Headquarters in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The Wildlife Federation is comprised of 164 hunting, fishing, trapping organizations located throughout the State of Wisconsin.

“International ships have discharged over 180 different invasive species into the Great Lakes over the history of the St. Lawrence Seaway,” indicated Lil Pipping (Elkhart Lake), WWF President. “These species include zebra mussels, quagga mussels, Eurasian Ruff, round goby, white perch, spiny water flea, phragmites and possibly VHS.”

“These species have devastated the ecology of the Great Lakes and have caused great environmental and economic damage,” stated Larry Freitag, (Sheboygan), Chair of the WWF's Great Lakes Committee. “These species have led to the collapse of the salmon fishery in Lake Huron, billions of dollars to clean up clogged intake and discharge pipes, the loss of 93% of the forage base for Lake Michigan's fishery and the severe fouling of our beaches,” continued Freitag.

“Wisconsin sportsmen and women spend over \$80 million a year to the Fish and Wildlife account to protect and enhance Wisconsin's fish and wildlife habitat,” stated George Meyer, the WWF's Executive Director. “The untreated ballast water from international ships are having a devastating impact on the fish and wildlife habitat that sportsmen and women are paying to restore and they are telling the WWF that ‘We are fed up with it and it has to stop now.’”

The WDNR's permit, being issued under the state's Clean Water Act, will require international ships to meet the same standards that have been required by the State of New York.

The Wisconsin Wildlife Federation is dedicated to conservation education and the advancement of strong conservation policies. For further information, contact George Meyer, Executive Director of the Federation at 608-516-5545.