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*Ensuring environmental and
economic prosperity for the Great
Lakes-St. Lawrence region through
communications, policy research and
development, and advocacy.*

**Testimony to the
Michigan Senate Outdoor Recreation & Tourism Committee**

Hearing on Aquatic Invasive Species Legislation: Senate Bills 508-510

**Presented by the Great Lakes Commission
September 8, 2011**

Introduction

The Great Lakes Commission is pleased to convey its support for Senate Bills 508-510 being considered by the Senate Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Committee. The Commission is a public agency established by the Great Lakes Basin Compact in 1955. Its mission is to help its member states and provinces speak with a unified voice and collectively develop regional strategies to protect and maintain the ecological and economic health of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin. Given their impacts on this region's environment and economy, preventing the introduction and spread of non-native aquatic invasive species (AIS) has been an organizational priority of the Commission for more than two decades.

The Great Lakes Commission applauds the introduction of Senate Bills (SB) 508-510 targeting Great Lakes aquatic invasions. The proposed legislation wisely recognizes the fundamental need for institutional support in addressing AIS prevention and control through the establishment of a state Aquatic Invasive Species Council. Also to be commended is the leadership role that Michigan is taking to coordinate with the other Great Lakes states and provinces on a consistent regional approach to protect the basin from pervasive AIS impacts that are so harmful to our shared economic and ecological health. The legislation provides the foundation for systematically and aggressively addressing the sources of AIS problems with an appropriate focus on ballast water discharges and the trade of live organisms.

Ecological and Economic Impacts of Great Lakes Aquatic Invasions

The need for a strong legislative platform to facilitate AIS prevention and control on both a state and regional level has intensified with the mounting ecological and economic impacts from Great Lakes aquatic invasions. These impacts began with the introduction of the sea lamprey in the early 1950s, followed by the zebra mussels, first detected in the 1980s. Senate Bill 509 correctly recognizes that "AIS are a threat to public health and safety, the environment and natural resources, and the economy. AIS are [also] a serious threat to the ecological integrity and uses of the Great Lakes." Great Lakes stakeholders have been dismayed by the parade of more than 180 non-native aquatic species that have been introduced into the basin. These species have been transported from all corners of the globe by a spectrum of vectors, including ballast water discharge

from ships; canals and waterways; the trade of live organisms; and recreational activities, among others. Frustration continues to grow among public stakeholders over the perceived lack of progress in preventing AIS introduction and spread and ameliorating the wide range of problems they create.

Once established, aquatic invasive species can cause significant ecological impacts to the Great Lakes system. These include disruption of the complex food web; declines in fishery populations due to changes in water quality and clarity; and competition with native species for food and habitat that support the aquatic ecosystem, among many others. The most recent concern is the potential invasion of Asian carp from the Mississippi River basin into the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin through connecting waterways. If the invasion of Asian carp does occur and self-sustaining populations become established in the Great Lakes basin, the potential impacts could be devastating. As demonstrated in the infested Mississippi River basin, Asian carp aggressively compete with native fish, given the overlap in dietary needs and habitat, and ultimately dominate the ecosystem.

Along with ecological impacts, the economic costs imposed by aquatic invasive species have raised the profile of this issue across all sectors in the Great Lakes region. In Michigan alone, the state travel industry is valued at nearly \$13 billion, coupled with a world-class commercial and sport fishery valued at \$4 billion annually. Assets such as these are highly threatened by AIS. The disruptions AIS impose on the Great Lakes food web—such as increased competition for prey fish and declines in native prey fish populations—can directly lead to declines to the commercial and sport fishery. The tourism industry is directly impacted by the degradation of beaches resulting from decaying non-native macrophytes (aquatic weeds) and the litter of zebra and quagga mussel shells creating aesthetic and public health concerns along with decreasing recreational and property values. The clogging of waterways caused by invasive weeds can impede navigation and also affect water quality, restrict recreational, industrial (e.g., power generators and municipal water suppliers) and agricultural water uses. Another problem is the fouling of water infrastructure by zebra and quagga mussels, affecting public drinking water supplies and increasing maintenance costs for industries that rely on this infrastructure.

Michigan's Proposed AIS Legislation: A Prime Opportunity to Expand Efforts to Stop Aquatic Invasions

Both the ecological impacts and the economic cost of aquatic invasions provide compelling justification for enactment of Senate Bills 508-510. Aggressive steps must be taken to control established AIS populations and prevent future invasions. The Great Lakes Commission supports the proposed legislation and offers our impressions on how key components of the legislation will contribute to AIS prevention and control on a state as well as regional level.

- **The Aquatic Invasive Species Advisory Council:** The formation the Aquatic Invasive Species Advisory Council as proposed in Senate Bill 509 is fundamental to the institutional support needed to address AIS problems on a long-term basis. First and foremost, the Aquatic Invasive Species Council to be established under this legislation will be pivotal in the update of the Michigan AIS Management Plan, addressing AIS prevention, monitoring, control and eradication, and rapid response to new infestations. The Council's broad-based membership will provide the wide range of expertise and authority needed to update the plan and ensure its effective implementation. The membership—including state, federal and tribal agencies, public utilities, the private sector, environmental and conservation groups, and regional government agencies—will not only contribute to a multijurisdictional approach to managing AIS within the State of Michigan but also across the region. This approach is critical in addressing the trans-boundary nature of AIS problems. Also, as structured, the Council can play an important role in utilizing institutional knowledge from historical AIS problems and applying the lessons learned to address emerging AIS issues in the future.

- **A Multijurisdictional/Regional Approach to AIS Management:** A regional approach to managing AIS is clearly a very strong asset of this legislation. As stated in SB 509, the Great Lakes states and provinces hold a “shared duty to protect, conserve, restore, improve and manage the Great Lakes for the use, benefit, and enjoyment of all their citizens, including generations to come.” Also recognized is the need for “the joint pursuit of unified and cooperative principles, policies, and programs mutually agreed upon, enacted, and adhered to by the Great Lakes states and by the Great Lakes Canadian provinces.” This vision provides guidance to Michigan as well as Great Lakes jurisdictions across the basin to work toward *regional consistency* in the development and implementation of their AIS management plans, including regulatory programs. The overarching goal of regional consistency will serve Michigan well in the process of updating its state AIS management plan in areas of prevention, monitoring, control and eradication, and rapid response. It will also provide the framework necessary to tackle challenging regulatory issues posed by AIS prevention and control in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence basin. A good example of this is advancing a coordinated and consistent approach to the listing and screening of organisms in trade at both the state and federal level.

The Great Lakes Commission, in its appointment to Michigan’s Aquatic Invasive Species Council, is committed to assisting the Council in establishing a regional approach to AIS prevention and control. To help address AIS challenges on behalf of Michigan, the Commission is well positioned to assist the Aquatic Invasive Species Council develop regional policy among its member states and provinces across the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence basin. It should also be noted that the Commission provides staff support to the Great Lakes Panel on Aquatic Nuisance Species, a regional entity established under U.S. federal legislation (*Nonindigenous Prevention and Control Act of 1990*) to address AIS prevention and control on a regional level. In this role, the Commission has worked with the diverse membership of the Great Lakes Panel in developing AIS management models and providing a forum to build regional consensus on priority AIS issues. The Commission encourages Michigan to utilize the capacity and expertise of the Great Lakes Panel and its members in efforts to reach regional consistency on AIS management issues.

- **Vector-Based Approach to Preventing the Introduction and Spread of AIS:** The Great Lakes Commission fully supports the vector-based approach proposed in SB 510, focused on preventing the introduction and spread of AIS through shipping and the trade of live organisms. Michigan’s recognition of the need to harmonize federal and state laws and regulations in efforts to interrupt these pathways will be extremely valuable to the process. Of particular note is the recommendation to develop a risk assessment process to screen AIS proposed for trade and pathways for introduction and spread. This recommendation, as proposed, would not be developed in isolation from its neighbors, but rather, is to be based on a comparative analysis of relevant laws from other Great Lakes jurisdictions. This approach will lay the groundwork for regional coordination in establishing a screening process that is consistent across jurisdictional lines in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence region, while providing incentives for the other Great Lakes states and provinces to engage in a similar process.

Conclusion

The Great Lakes Commission encourages enactment of SB 508-510. The proposed legislation will spur state action while recognizing the need for regional consistency. This approach is essential to preventing the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence basin. The Commission is extremely pleased that Michigan has continued its leadership position on the AIS issue and offers its support to help execute the legislation upon enactment.

Dear Sir,

I have the pleasure to inform you that your application for the position of [Job Title] has been received and is under consideration. We are currently reviewing all applications and will contact you again once a decision has been reached. We appreciate your interest in our organization and thank you for the time and effort you have invested in the application process.

Should you have any questions or require further information regarding the application process, please do not hesitate to contact our Human Resources Department at [Phone Number] or [Email Address]. We are committed to providing a fair and equitable hiring process for all candidates.

We look forward to the possibility of working with you. Thank you for your patience and understanding during this process.

Sincerely,
[Name]
[Title]