



May 6, 2005

Docket Management Facility (USCG-2004-19842)
U.S. Department of Transportation, Room PL-401
400 Seventh Street S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590-0001

JIM DOYLE
CO-CHAIR
Governor of Wisconsin

RE: USCG-2004-19842 Ballast Water Management for Vessels Entering the Great Lakes that Declare No Ballast Onboard

BOB TAFT
CO-CHAIR
Governor of Ohio

Dear Sir or Madam:

ROD BLAGOJEVICH
Governor of Illinois

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on ballast water management for vessels entering the Great Lakes declaring no ballast on board (NOBOB), as published in the January 7, 2005 issue of the Federal Register (Vol. 70, No. 5). The Council of Great Lakes Governors strongly urges you to adopt strict, mandatory regulations for these vessels to protect the Great Lakes, one of our national treasures.

MITCH DANIELS
Governor of Indiana

JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
Governor of Michigan

The Great Lakes Governors have collectively been addressing the persistent threat of aquatic invasive species (AIS) through the Council's Aquatic Invasive Species Task Force since 2001. The Task Force coordinates State efforts to combat AIS through advocacy, coordination and the identification of best practices. The Task Force has spearheaded efforts to build regional support for a consistent federal strategy to combat AIS. Ensuring mandatory regulations that prevent all AIS introductions through ballast water, including water released from NOBOB vessels, is a key objective.

GEORGE E. PATAKI
Governor of New York

TIM PAWLENTY
Governor of Minnesota

ED RENDELL
Governor of Pennsylvania

The Great Lakes Governors have developed nine priorities to protect and restore the Great Lakes. These priorities, including the urgent priority of stopping the introduction and spread of AIS, have been adopted by the Great Lakes Commission and the Great Lakes Cities Initiative. They are also being used as the organizing principle for the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration which resulted from President Bush's May 18, 2004 Executive Order establishing the Great Lakes Interagency Task Force. There is clearly broad-based support for working together to address this critical issue.

DAVID NAFTZGER
Executive Director

Stopping the introduction and spread of AIS is perhaps the most urgent of the Great Lakes Governors' nine priorities for regional restoration and protection. Recently, the Governors took action in response to the imminent threat posed by the Asian carp, an AIS approaching the Great Lakes through the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal. In an unprecedented example of regional cooperation, the Great Lakes Governors contributed an additional \$475,000 in funds to complete the construction of a permanent dispersal barrier to help prevent Asian

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carp from entering the Great Lakes. This contribution supplemented \$1.8 million from the State of Illinois and \$6.825 million from the federal government.

AIS introductions have had enormous ecological and economic consequences for our region. The Great Lakes have been stricken by sea lampreys, zebra mussels, round gobies and many other invading species. Cost estimates related to AIS impacts range well into billions of dollars annually. Among other impacts, AIS threatens the Great Lakes sport and commercial fishing industry, which alone is valued at nearly \$4.5 billion annually and supports 81,000 jobs. The impacts are real, affecting a major share of our nation's industrial output and threatening the well-being of 25 million Americans who depend directly on the Great Lakes for water, recreation and food. While waterborne transportation is an important element of the Great Lakes economy, steps must be taken to ensure that any associated environmental and economic risks are effectively addressed.

Because AIS are difficult to control, and almost impossible to eradicate once established, preventing their introduction must be the primary focus of management strategies. While ballast water introductions are the primary vector for AIS introductions, the majority of vessels entering the Great Lakes declare no ballast on board. Although these vessels have no pumpable water in their ballast tanks, they contain a substantial volume of residual water and sediments that can harbor AIS. When these vessels unload cargo, ballast water is pumped aboard to compensate for the lost cargo weight and mixes with the residual ballast material. Therefore, without strict management requirements for these vessels, AIS can be discharged into the Great Lakes through routine loading and unloading operations. In the Great Lakes, ballast operations may take place several times during a single ship transit, resulting in several opportunities to discharge harmful AIS into the Lakes. Thus, mandatory management practices for these vessels are critical to the overall effort to prevent AIS introductions.

While technology continues to emerge, the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) must make enacting mandatory regulations for NOBOB vessels an immediate priority. Mandatory regulations will encourage the development of technology and help achieve the goal of zero discharge of living organisms from vessels entering the Great Lakes as soon as possible. We encourage the USCG to expedite working with shipping and research interests to develop effective technology and practices for ballast water management in NOBOB vessels as a central priority.

In summary, the Council of Great Lakes Governors recommends a NOBOB ballast water management plan that:

- 1.) Establishes a strict mandatory standard for controlling operations that result in the discharge of any water or materials from ballast tanks into the Great Lakes with the goal of achieving zero discharge of living organisms as soon as possible;
- 2.) Requires vessels to employ an effective treatment protocol before discharging any water or materials from ballast tanks if NOBOB vessels cannot safely flush their ballast tanks in the open seas; and,
- 3.) Strictly enforces compliance by vessels entering the Great Lakes declaring NOBOB status.

The USCG is on the front line of this battle. We encourage you to provide the strong leadership necessary in the fight against AIS by exercising your full authority to limit introductions and spread of AIS. Enacting mandatory ballast water management practices for NOBOB vessels is a critical and necessary step to protect the ecological integrity and economic future of the Great Lakes region.

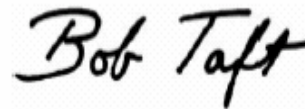
The Great Lakes Governors recognize the importance of regional collaboration. We urge you to consider the comments of the individual Great Lakes States, as well as those submitted by the Great Lakes Commission as you develop management guidelines for NOBOB vessels.

The Council's AIS Task Force continues to examine this issue of critical importance and will provide oral comments at your public meeting in Cleveland on May 9. Meanwhile, please do not hesitate to contact Dave Naftzger, Executive Director of the Council, at 312-407-0177 with questions.

Sincerely,



Jim Doyle
Council Co-Chair
Governor of Wisconsin



Bob Taft
Council Co-Chair
Governor of Ohio