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## Position: Pass the National Aquatic Invasive Species Act

### THE ISSUE

Nonnative, invasive species are an insidious environmental and economic threat in the United States. Aquatic weeds pose a particularly grave threat. They impact our waterways by:

- Impairing recreation and navigation
- Impairing natural flood control mechanisms
- Replacing native plants
- Degrading water quality
- Degrading fish and wildlife habitat
- Depressing property values
- Disrupting utilities and aquaculture
- Providing breeding grounds for disease vectors

Nationwide, managing aquatic weeds is estimated to cost \$100-275 million each year. Western states are especially vulnerable to problems with aquatic invasive species due to their inherent difficulty with reliable water delivery and their desire to protect healthy aquatic ecosystems. Springs and rivers in arid states are home to rare species and support much of the region's wildlife and recreation. In the East, Florida public agencies, for example, spend more than \$70 million per year to manage weeds, which currently infest about 90 percent of the state's public waters.

### CURRENT LAW

Congress passed the Nonindigenous Aquatic Nuisance Prevention and Control Act in 1990 and reauthorized it as the National Invasive Species Act of 1996. While these laws aided the fight against aquatic invaders—especially for species hitchhiking in ballast water into the Great Lakes—they did not address all means by which aquatic pests reach the country, nor all vulnerable areas.

The National Aquatic Invasive Species Act (NAISA) was first considered during the 108th Congress. It was reintroduced in the 109th Congress but has not been acted upon. NAISA would correct the problems of the National Invasive Species Act of 1996 and reauthorize the portions of that law that should remain.

### TAKE ACTION

We urge Congress to support comprehensive legislation to address aquatic invasive species, such as S.770, H.R.1591, and H.R.1592.

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**BACKGROUND: RELATED LEGISLATION IN THE 109th CONGRESS**

The National Aquatic Invasive Species Act (NAISA) is comprehensive legislation that would accomplish the following:

- Better prevention of new aquatic invasive species introductions
- More support for state efforts to control aquatic invasive species
- Better educational tools for recreational waterway users
- Support for research on safe, effective aquatic invasive species control

In recent legislative sessions, the Senate Commerce Committee passed S.363, the Ballast Water Management Act of 2005. An alternative to Title I of NAISA, this bill would preempt stricter state regulation of ballast water, eliminate the applicability of the Clean Water Act and stretch out deadlines for the shipping industry to comply. These are provisions we do not support.

Early next year, the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee plans to introduce its own bill. It is likely to combine some of the ballast water parts of S.363 with Title II of NAISA – the provisions most applicable to freshwater, wetland and marine weeds.

We urge Congress to enact comprehensive legislation on aquatic invaders in 2006. We would like any new, combined bill to be comprehensive, that is, providing the needed tools to all federal agencies and states to prevent and manage aquatic invasive species from a variety of sources. We find that it should significantly improve the nation's ability to prevent new introductions – both intentional and unintentional ones. Also, any new legislation should strengthen, not weaken, existing legal authority to address aquatic weed problems.