

National Environmental Coalition on Invasive Species

National Wildlife Federation
Natural Areas Association, The Nature Conservancy
The Wildlife Society

April 11, 2014

Rep. Dan Benishek
Invasive Species Caucus Co-Chair
514 Cannon HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Rep Mike Thompson
Invasive Species Caucus Co-Chair
231 Cannon Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Benishek and Thompson,

The above-listed member groups in the National Environmental Coalition on Invasive Species (NECIS, see www.necis.net) welcome the role of the Invasive Species Caucus and are happy to support bipartisan efforts in this critical area of environmental, economic and public health protections. Established in 2003, NECIS is a national partnership of major environmental organizations and scientific and professional societies that provides a united expert voice on invasive species issues. Our mission is straightforward: promoting sound policy to prevent harmful non-native, invasive species from being introduced, becoming established, and spreading in the United States. Our mission mirrors the purpose of the Invasive Species Caucus.

Several of us have met recently with your staff and offered support for events and legislation of interest to Caucus members. We would like to now ask you to sponsor bipartisan legislation that captures key points in current bills addressing invasive animal problems and packages them together in an “omnibus invasive animal bill” aimed at passage in this Congress.

Based on our consultations with stakeholders over the last several months, we urge you to package together provisions in current bills to:

- a) list quagga mussels as “injurious” under the Lacey Act;
- b) strengthen Federal efforts aimed at keeping Asian carps from invading into the Great Lakes;
- c) authorize a new Federal grant program to aid States in preventing harmful animal invasions;

- d) provide limited emergency Lacey Act listing authority to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service;
- e) provide clearer authority to the Service to prevent emerging diseases that impact our native fish and wildlife; and
- f) exempt individual pet owners and all government officials from prosecution for innocent interstate movements of Lacey-listed specimens.

The number of bipartisan Representatives who have supported these scattered bill provisions can together provide the needed critical mass in support of an “omnibus” approach to give the bill better prospects for passage than the individual bills have alone.

NECIS endorses HR 996, the Invasive Fish and Wildlife Prevention Act of 2013, a comprehensive reform to our current animal import laws. At this stage in this Congress we also endorse the proposed “omnibus” approach as a pragmatic way forward. We would be happy to assist with reaching out for cosponsors if a bipartisan bill is introduced. In doing so, we also would urge other Representatives to join your important new Caucus, which we hope to help grow. Please contact us if we can provide more information.

Sincerely,

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