

National Environmental Coalition on Invasive Species

Great Lakes United, National Wildlife Federation, The Nature Conservancy, The Wildlife Society

February 27, 2012

To: Members of the U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on the Judiciary

Re: HR 511 on constrictor snakes in the Python, Boa, and Eunectes genera

Dear Representative:

The undersigned members of the National Environmental Coalition on Invasive Species strongly support HR 511 to amend title 18, U.S. Code, to prohibit the importation of various injurious species of constrictor snakes. This is scheduled for mark-up by the full Judiciary Committee on Tuesday, Feb. 28.

We applaud Representative Rooney's leadership on the bill to list all nine of the large constrictor snakes as injurious wildlife under 18 USC §42, specifically: Indian python (*Python molurus*, including Burmese python *P. molurus bivittatus*), reticulated python (*Broghammerus reticulatus* or *P. reticulatus*), Northern African python (*P. sebae*), Southern African python (*P. natalensis*), boa constrictor (*Boa constrictor*), yellow anaconda (*Eunectes notaeus*), DeSchauensee's anaconda (*E. deschauenseei*), green anaconda (*E. murinus*) and Beni anaconda (*E. beniensis*). This would stop the foreign importation and interstate movement of these animals except pursuant to special permits for approved uses.

Our organizations together represent millions of Americans concerned about the severe ecological disruption and other harms caused by non-native invasive species. There are two chief threats posed by these snakes that can be reduced by passing this bill:

1) The human safety threat--more than 200 incidents involving constrictor snakes have been reported in 43 states and the District of Columbia since 1980. These incidents have resulted in the deaths of at least 15 people, including seven children, and more than two dozen injuries, according to media reports (and likely many more that were not reported in the media).

2) The threat to native species and ecosystems, including, but not limited to, Federally-listed threatened and endangered species preyed upon by these snakes when they are released or escape. These threats are not limited to south Florida and Puerto Rico, where three of these nine species already have invaded. Clear scientific evidence exists that they could survive in the warmer regions across the southern tier of the United States as well as Hawaii and all of the island territories.

We also bring to your attention the dire need for broader reforms of our regulatory system for imported animals. As a nation we are foregoing major economic and other benefits by not doing

risk assessments before allowing imports of live non-native animals such as Asian carps, African clawed frogs, red lionfish, giant African snails and hundreds of other potentially invasive or disease-carrying species. Modernizing our regulatory system will benefit the environment, health and safety, and animal welfare and at the same time provide a better return for taxpayers.

In conclusion, there is no justification for further delay and we urge you to pass HR 511 to include all nine of the large constrictor snake species. For further information about this letter, please contact our coalition's policy lead on this issue: Peter T. Jenkins, Center for Invasive Species Prevention, tel: [301.500.4383](tel:301.500.4383); email: jenkinsbiopolicy@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Great Lakes United

National Wildlife Federation

The Nature Conservancy

The Wildlife Society