

Testimony submitted to  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Resources  
Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans.

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by

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Subject: Invasive Species

## Testimony

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, it is a pleasure to be here today.

My name is Roger Mann. I am a Professor of Marine Science and Acting Director for Research and Advisory Services at the School of Marine Science, Virginia Institute of Marine Science, College of William and Mary.

Your invitation requested comment on four subjects: the scope of the invasive species problem, efforts to control or eradicate unwelcome invaders, the adequacy of existing statutory authority, and recommendations to solve the continuing problem.

The scope of the problem is massive on both a national and international scale. In terms of ecological impact The Convention on Biological Diversity considers invasive species the second biggest threat, after environmental loss, to native biodiversity. Non-native species have contributed to the decline of 42% of US endangered and threatened species. The USDA alone spends over \$550 million annually for control of unwanted invasive species. The problem exists and continues because the United States is part of a network of international trade that is also the vector facilitating a continuing supply of invading species to our shores. The problem will not go away.

Efforts to control invasions and existing statutory authority to enable control are intimately linked. While the Lacey Act probably best defines the principles of control at the federal level an abundance of federal statutes illustrate the continuing awareness of invasive species for well over half a century. Lacey recognizes the role of state statute and defaults to state level authority where it is written in state code. My home state of Virginia is such an example.

An important federal statute in this field is the National Invasive species Act of 1996. It is currently under revision for reauthorization. In November of 2002 I appeared before this Committee to provide testimony on the draft revision in the form of House Resolution 5396. I recommended modest changes to the included ballast water treatment standard proposing a 100% kill of all organisms in excess of 50 microns maximum dimension in discharged ballast – a standard that is within reach of current technologies for very large volumes of water.

The draft of HR 5396 contained provision for continual review and improvement in standards as technology improves. I applaud this inclusion.

I urge the Congress to move forward on reauthorization of NISA.

Enabling legislation plays a central role in solving the continuing problem of unwanted invasions. But that legislation must be soundly based in knowledge of how invaders arrived and why they survived. The scientific community has limited ability to predict the numbers and variety of invading species that will successfully become established in

receptor environments. Current levels of research and educational support addressing the threats from invasive species are woefully inadequate. We must do better.

Before concluding I will comment on the subject of intentional introductions of non-native species. Selected non-native species do provide beneficial roles in the ecology and economy of our nation. 16% of the nine trillion-dollar GNP of the United States comes from agricultural production. European settlement of North America included the introduction of wheat, barley, rye, cattle, pigs, horses, sheep, goats and more. Indeed, the majority of US agricultural production arguably comes from species whose genetic origin was not in North America. The draft of HR 5396 addressed intentional introductions. I applaud the inclusion in that it both recognizes a continuing pressure for introductions for commercial production, pest control and environmental restoration **and** the very, very important need to carefully examine and control such actions in an environment of limited understanding and potentially serious, even irreversible ecological impact. However, I urge the final version of this legislation to include text recognizing the role of states rights, in addition to federal responsibility, in debate of this important subject.

This completes my testimony.

Follow up address and summary of testimony.

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Summary.