



MICHIGAN UNITED *Since 1937* CONSERVATION CLUBS

Uniting Citizens to Conserve, Protect and Enhance Michigan's Natural Resources and Outdoor Heritage
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October 24, 2017

Written Testimony on HB 5095

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to you today to register our opposition to House Bill 5095.

The members and supporters of Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC) have long supported measures and policies that seek to prevent the establishment of invasive species in the Great Lakes, its connecting waters, and our inland lakes and streams.

Once established, AIS are nearly impossible to control. Take Sea Lamprey for example. We have been working toward sea lamprey control for decades and decades and decades. Yet after all those years and millions of dollars from both state and federal governments, we have fewer lamprey, but we will never have zero lamprey. Zebra and quagga mussels entered the Great Lakes within the last 30 to 40 years, and in that relatively short period of time have fundamentally altered the biology of the lakes by changing the food web that has caused the collapse of the perch fishery in Lake Michigan, to filtering suspended organic material in the lakes which makes them clearer, but less rich of an environment for our sport fish species. The Round goby and Eurasian ruffe are competing with native sport fish for habitat and food and may contribute to the wild swings we have begun seeing in some of our important sport fish species.

Zebra mussels, quagga mussels, Round gobies and Eurasian ruffe all have one thing in common: they all got here in the ballast tank of an ocean going vessel.

Our sport fishery in Michigan is a \$4 billion industry and supports over 40,000 jobs. These jobs support families and small businesses up and down the coast lines in Michigan. Some in the international shipping community suggest they contribute \$100 million to Michigan's economy, a not insignificant amount of money, but still 1/40th the value our sport fishery provides. We cannot know the full cost of what the next AIS will be. We do know that across the region, we spend around \$200 million a year in AIS management and eradication efforts. In short, there is no business case to be made that favors relaxing AIS prevention efforts.

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I have heard it said that relinquishing Michigan's management control over ballast water is necessary because no other state in the basin regulates beyond the federal standard. The facts do not bear that out. In fact, the State of Wisconsin and the State of Minnesota also have ballast water permitting programs that overlay the federal permitting process. Moreover, every state in the Great Lakes basin, with the exception of Pennsylvania, has state-specific conditions that extend beyond the basic federal permit. So, Michigan is not unique in its desire to regulate ballast water discharge, we are in fact, perfectly normal.

Michigan's permitting process requires the employment of one of four different ballast water treatment measures prior to discharging ballast water in Michigan's waters. But, these are not the only methods acceptable in the state. The law passed nearly 12 years ago and the rules that were promulgated to implement the law provided for advancements in alternative technologies to deal with ballast water. Individual permits may be issued to operators seeking to use technologies other than what were provided for in 2005. As you can see, our law is perfectly flexible for incorporating new treatments for ballast water.

As a general rule, my members favor decision making that occurs as close to the issue as possible. In this case, we believe that Michigan's lawmakers and agency professionals know far better than an unelected bureaucrat working for the federal government about what should and should not happen in Michigan's waters of the Great Lakes. Indeed there are comparatively few scenarios under which relinquishing a decision as inextricably linked to our economic future and quality of life to the federal government is preferable to retaining that control right here at home.

Thank you for your consideration of our position in opposition to HB 5095.

Sincerely,

Daniel Eichinger
Executive Director