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**GREAT LAKES CITIES INITIATIVE DIRECTOR TESTIFIES IN SUPPORT OF
FEDERAL LEGISLATION TO ADDRESS BALLAST WATER DUMPING**
*Ballast Water From Ships is Most Significant Source For Aquatic Invasive
Species in the Great Lakes*

The Great Lakes Cities Initiative executive director, Dave Ullrich, testified today at a joint hearing of two United States House subcommittees of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure to support federal regulation of ballast water being released from ships into waterways including the Great Lakes.

In his testimony, Ullrich called on the federal government to pass the National Aquatic Invasive Species Act (NAISA) this year, which includes uniform ballast water management controls to prevent the introduction of new invasive species, and elements to control the spread of the more than 160 non-native species that are already present in the Great Lakes.

"With ballast water as the primary pathway of invasive or non-native species to the Great Lakes, the time for action by the federal government is now to prevent future disasters like the zebra mussel," said Ullrich. "The Great Lakes mayors are prepared to work with the Governors and the Federal government to protect the security of our drinking water and the quality of the Great Lakes."

Ballast water is water that is taken up and released by ships to provide stability for trips across oceans. In some instances a ship can take in ballast water from one port and dump the water along with various plant and animal species into a different waterway. When non-native species are introduced into a new area, they can have a negative effect on that ecosystem.

International shipping transports 50 million tons of cargo through the Great Lakes annually and nearly 50 percent of this cargo travels to and from overseas ports including those in Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

"The impact of invasive species on waterways is a serious environmental concern that has caused and will continue to cause significant environmental damage and major economic burdens to our cities," said Ullrich.

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The Great Lakes represent nearly 20 percent of the fresh surface water in the world. Over the last 40 years, a new invasive species has been identified every eight months. The increasing number of invasive species that have entered the Great Lakes is of concern because of the impact on quality of life for millions of people.

“Cities bear the responsibility for resolving problems such as invasive species, because they affect our quality of life,” said Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley. “Mayors make critical decisions almost every day on issues regarding the lakes: providing safe beaches, repairing the shoreline, managing wastewater discharges, conserving drinking water, controlling invasive species and regulating lakefront development.”

“The lakes are tremendously important to our cities, and the cities have a vital interest in seeing that the lakes are protected for future generations.”

Examples of invasive species include lamprey eels, which decimated the population of trout in the Great Lakes and crippled the commercial fishing industry, and the zebra mussel, which was introduced in the 1980s and disrupted the biological balance of the lakes while also clogging municipal water intake channels. Annual maintenance costs associated with removing zebra mussels from water intakes and other structures in the Great Lakes alone total \$250 million.

"Invasive species from ballast water in ships have been a concern for the people of Cleveland for some time. As just one example, the zebra mussel in many ways has threatened the full recovery of Lake Erie, which is so important to all Ohioans," said Mayor Jane Campbell of Cleveland. Mayor Campbell is a member of the Great Lakes Cities Initiative Steering Committee.

The most recent threat to the Great Lakes is the Asian carp that were released into Mississippi River from fish farms during a flood. These carp are traveling north up the river and are within 50 miles from Lake Michigan. Because they are known as voracious eaters, they could have a devastating effect on the \$4.5 billion commercial and sport fishing industries of the Great Lakes.

Mayor Daley is working closely with state and federal officials to keep the Asian carp out of Lake Michigan through an electric barrier on the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal, which needs funding to continue operation after September 2004.

The Great Lakes Cities Initiative is a growing coalition of U.S. and Canadian mayors from cities and towns along the Great Lakes. Mayor Daley created the Initiative in 2002 in an effort to give mayors a voice with regard to issues and federal legislation surrounding the Great Lakes.

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