

Subject: VHS: Another reason to regulate ballst water

Action Alert 11/29/2006

This alert:

- [Regulate ballast water in the Great Lakes NOW!](#)

Fish disease gives us yet another reason to start regulating ballast water in the Great Lakes NOW!

Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia (VHS), a fish disease that causes death through internal bleeding, has been discovered in the Great Lakes. First confirmed in Lake Ontario in 2005, VHS has also infected Lake Erie, Lake St. Clair, St. Clair River and the St. Lawrence River. VHS has yet to be found in Lakes Superior, Huron and Michigan. The movement of infected ballast water is a prime vector that could spread the virus, or infected fish, to these uninfected Lakes. While there are no concerns with respect to human health, VHS creates an immense risk to the continued management of the multi billion dollar Great Lakes fisheries. Since its initial discovery, VHS has produced massive fish kills throughout the Great Lakes, killing thousands of muskellunge, yellow perch, and freshwater drums.

In response to the discovery of VHS, the United States Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA APHIS) has enacted regulation to help control the movement of live fish. These regulations will hopefully help the state and the federal governments slow the spread of VHS via the live fish vector, but they do nothing to control the continued spread of the virus through ballast water exchange. Ships moving within the Great Lakes can pick up the disease from one Great Lakes port and transport it to another Great Lakes port.

Under the Animal Health Protection Act (AHPA) the Secretary of Agriculture is authorized to “prohibit or restrict the importation or movement in interstate commerce of any animal, article, or means of conveyance if the Secretary determines that the prohibition/restriction is necessary to prevent the introduction or spread of any pest or disease.” The unregulated exchange of ballast water within the Great Lakes by large freighters, both those operating only within the Great Lakes basin and those entering the Great Lakes from the ocean, is the likely means by which many of our current invasive species have spread throughout the lakes. Since Congress refuses to do its’ job and protect the Great Lakes by passing legislation that would regulate ballast water, the Department of Agriculture must step to the plate and get the job done. They must use their authority under the AHPA to regulate ballast water on ships and keep VHS from spreading around the Great Lakes.

TAKE ACTION:

Write the Secretary of Agriculture and tell him how important a healthy fishery is to you.
Tell him:

- VHS is already causing massive fish kills in Great Lakes waters where it is present.
- We need to stop the spread of VHS around the Great Lakes via ballast water. Lakes Michigan, Huron and Superior must be kept free from VHS!
- He has the authority under the Animal Health Protection Act to regulate all ships carrying ballast water and must do so NOW!

[Click here for a letter you can personalize and send.](#)

The Secretary of Agriculture can be reached at:

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Secretary of Agriculture

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