

**NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL COALITION ON INVASIVE SPECIES**  
American Lands Alliance, Defenders of Wildlife, Environmental Defense, Environmental  
Law Institute, Great Lakes United, International Center for Technology Assessment,  
National Wildlife Federation, The Nature Conservancy, Union of Concerned Scientists

**Position Statement: Reducing Introductions of Invasive Species**

*The Problem: Continued Introductions of Damaging Species*

U.S. efforts to stop the introduction of invasive species have not fully utilized existing authorities and have largely focused on creating a short list of known harmful species to regulate. This approach has not adequately protected our lands, waters and biological diversity. By waiting until species' potential to damage our ecosystems and economy manifest themselves, we miss the most cost effective – and in some instances the only – window of opportunity to prevent their establishment or eradicate them.

*Recommendations:*

**All species intentionally imported into the United States must be evaluated for invasiveness prior to import, and those known to be invasive or those likely to harm native biodiversity, ecosystems and other important resources should be kept out.**

Screening programs can and should be based on science and not impose unnecessary trade barriers or protectionism. Screening programs can be designed to exempt clearly safe species from review, and many widely used species, such as livestock, crop plants, and clearly non-invasive organisms could be cleared after a simplified review. These approaches work elsewhere, for example in western Australia, and they have been successfully tested in Hawaii. Such a screening system could be implemented through the Lacey Act, the Plant Protection Act and the proposed National Aquatic Invasive Species Act. Trade in exotic species should be restricted where imports of exotic species present significant threats to human health or the environment far beyond their ornamental value or other social benefits.

**The federal government must also do a more thorough job to prevent inadvertent introductions through major pathways.** Unwelcome “hitchhikers” that arrive unnoticed include forest pests like the Asian long-horned beetle, aquatic invaders like the zebra mussel, diseases like monkeypox, and a myriad of others. Pathways that allow invasive species to enter the country undetected include the ballast water and hulls of ships; solid wood packaging, logs and lumber; live plants and animals imported for food, nursery stock, aquaculture, pets and aquaria; and plant and animal products. Despite years or even decades of regulation of these pathways, damaging invasive species continue to be introduced via incoming ships, packaging and products. For example, the rate at which new aquatic invasive species are colonizing the Great Lakes has not declined despite implementation of Canadian ballast water exchange guidelines in 1989, followed by mandatory U.S. requirements in 1993. This suggests we need to redouble our efforts to identify and implement effective safeguards that reduce the risk of invasion via ballast water, wood packing material and other pathways to as close to zero as is feasible. In some cases, these safeguards will need to be implemented at the country of origin, to stop potential invaders before they cross borders.