

BALLAST MANAGEMENT POLICY: A SLOW RESPONSE TO A GROWING INVASION



1990 U.S. Congress enacts the Nonindigenous Aquatic Nuisance Prevention and Control Act (NANPCA) to control zebra mussel infestations. This law was the world's first to establish ballast water management requirements for ships. The Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force examines the need for national program.

1989 Quagga mussels are discovered in eastern Lake Erie.

1989 Canada releases guidelines for vessels entering the Great Lakes to perform voluntary ballast water exchange.

1988 A graduate student performing field work discovers zebra mussels in Lake St. Clair.

1981 An Environment Canada report predicts a zebra mussel invasion to North America. Both countries fail to respond and the alarm bell rings unheeded.

1993 Stemming from the 1990 NANPCA, U.S Coast Guard issues rule, Ballast Management for Vessels Entering the Great Lakes, requiring mandatory ballast water exchange.

1996 U.S. Congress reauthorizes NANPCA as the National Invasive Species Act, extending the regulatory scope beyond the Great Lakes to the national level and setting up a program to advance ballast treatment development. NISA reauthorizes the Great Lakes ballast management program and expands applicability to vessels with ballast tanks, as opposed to vessels which just carry ballast water.

2008 U.S. St. Lawrence Seaway Corporation develops new rule requiring salt water flushing by NOBOBs. This harmonizes with Canada Shipping Act requirements.

2008 Minnesota announces development of new ballast regulations under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System program. Regulations to come into force by October 1.

2008 Canada's Environment Commissioner finds "unsatisfactory progress" by Canada to respond to the threat of aquatic invasives.

2008 The Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2008 (H.R. 2830) passes by a vote of 395 to 7. This legislation requires installation of technology meeting current IMO ballast discharge standards by as early as 2009. By 2012, ships would need to begin installing treatment equipment to meet a standard one hundred times more stringent than the IMO's.

2007 Michigan's state law requiring ballast water permits comes into force on January 1.

2007 Quagga mussels cross the continental divide, being found in Nevada and California.

2005 U.S. Coast Guard releases voluntary NOBOB flushing requirements for vessels entering the Great Lakes that declare 'no ballast on board' and which are exempt from ballast water exchange regulations.

2002 NISA comes up for reauthorization. Comprehensive legislation to address all vectors, from ballast to species-in-trade, is proposed but goes nowhere.

1999 Environmental, conservation and fishing groups file petition to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to remove an exemption for ballast water under the Clean Water Act. West coast groups carry the EPA petition to federal court.

2004 International Maritime Organization (IMO) negotiates ballast water convention and sets an international ballast discharge standard.

2004 New York State Attorney General leads a petition, along with six Great Lakes states and Great Lakes United, to the U.S. Coast Guard to close the NOBOB loophole.

2004 Canada creates the Invasive Alien Species Strategy for Canada.

2004 U.S. Coast Guard issues mandatory ballast water exchange requirement nationwide, pursuant to NISA requirements.

2006 Federal court rules that U.S. EPA must regulate ballast and develop a program by September 30, 2008. The ruling is currently under appeal.

2006 The Canada Shipping Act is updated to require salt water flushing for NOBOB vessels and accepting the IMO standard as Canada's national standard for ballast discharges. However, no deadline for implementation of the standard is set.

1980 1985 1990 1995 2000 2005 2010