

Citizens Groups' Call to Action on Invasive Species

Ten years ago, the Office of Technology Assessment of the U.S. Congress detailed the destruction caused by invasive species and recommended a number of solutions. Since then, the damage has become even starker. Invasive species threaten the productivity of the soils and waters upon which we—and our economies—depend. They endanger the conservation gains of the past century. And they imperil the native species that make this country unique. In sum, the devastation caused by non-native, invasive organisms is one of the most serious and least-recognized tragedies of our time.

Because the federal government regulates the movement of damaging organisms into the country and between U.S. states, solutions to this problem require strong federal action. Progress in the past ten years has been woefully inadequate. Therefore we call upon the U.S. Congress and the president to immediately take action to drastically slow the introduction and spread of invasive species and to counteract the severe environmental, economic, and other harm these species cause. These actions would provide invaluable and long-lasting benefits to the Nation.

Actions Needed from the U.S. Congress in 2004

We challenge the U.S. Congress to strengthen outmoded laws and to take a comprehensive approach to protecting the Nation's resources. Specifically, we ask that Congress:

- Immediately pass the National Aquatic Invasive Species Act—to reauthorize one of our most important laws and to broaden it in key ways.
- Quickly enact Executive Order 13112 on invasive species into federal law—to ensure that new means for coordinating government efforts have a permanent institutional home.
- Swiftly provide the funds for a program to detect newly-arriving non-native species and to respond to them rapidly—while populations are small and costs are low.

Actions Needed from President Bush in 2004

We call on the president to ensure that federal agencies:

- Promptly undertake both a major research campaign to better understand the impacts of invasive species and to enhance knowledge needed for making critical policy decisions; and also begin an extensive public awareness effort to deter unauthorized or accidental releases of non-native species.
- Immediately begin screening species for potential invasiveness before they are imported.
- Rapidly negotiate strict North American standards to limit pests arriving on shipments of plants.

Furthermore, we ask Congress and the White House to establish a new national center on biological invasions to lead the United States in strengthening public and private efforts at all levels. These measures, taken effectively and with care, will not jeopardize essential international trade nor the livelihoods and rights of responsible business and property owners. Quite the opposite: these steps will contribute to the prosperity of the nation and to the conservation of its most valuable resources well into the future.

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* Also supports greater leadership by the Environmental Protection Agency in addressing the ballast water vector under the Clean Water Act

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