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Contact: Marc Gaden
734-669-3012 (o)
734-417-8012 (c)

FISHERIES AND OCEANS MINISTER GAIL SHEA PROPOSES CRITICAL INVASIVE SPECIES REGULATIONS

New regulations needed to prevent the introduction and spread of harmful species

ANN ARBOR, MI—The Great Lakes Fishery Commission today congratulated Fisheries and Oceans Minister Gail Shea for proposing new regulations to prevent the introduction and spread of harmful invasive species. The regulations, proposed last week, would prohibit the importation, possession, transportation, and release of more than 100 species like Asian carp, zebra mussels, round goby, and sea lamprey, all of which are known to cause considerable economic and ecological harm to ecosystems they invade. The regulations, which also bolster law enforcement authority, bring Canada and the United States closer together in harmonizing the approach to the trade of live organisms and attacking the problem from a North American perspective.

The Great Lakes Fishery Commission was established in 1954 by the Convention on Great Lakes Fisheries. Under the treaty, the two nations agree to coordinate their fishery research; help the provincial, state, U.S. tribal, and federal agencies work together; control the invasive sea lamprey; and make recommendations to government about steps needed to protect and restore the fishery.

“The Great Lakes Fishery Commission is deeply concerned about the impact of invasive species on aquatic ecosystems,” said Robert Lambe, the Commission’s executive secretary. “Invasive species cost us billions of dollars each year and inflict unquantifiable, permanent damage to ecosystems they invade. Each new invader hurts the livelihoods of those who depend on the fishery for food and income and degrades the resource, depriving ourselves and future generations of what we enjoy today. The trade of live fish—like Asian carp, snakeheads, and many others—is a major way in which harmful organisms can be introduced into new ecosystems. The new regulations are badly needed to stop such trade.”

Lambe continued: “Invasive species are difficult, if not impossible, to eradicate once they make a new ecosystem home. The Great Lakes Fishery Commission is extremely pleased with Minister Shea’s announcement to enhance significantly Canada’s efforts to prevent the introduction of harmful species and to thwart their spread.”

Lambe added: “Minister Shea’s actions also acknowledge the key role law enforcement plays in addressing the invasive species problem. The new regulations will allow officers to enforce the ban on the movement of harmful species. Given enforcement officers are on the front lines of this battle, and given their proven track record of spotting harmful species and arresting lawbreakers, it is gratifying to see added powers in the regulations for this important component of invasive species management.”

Lambe concluded: “We know all too well how adept invasive species are at spreading. An introduction in one part of the continent will eventually lead to the spread to other parts of the continent. Canada, the United States, provinces, states, and tribes have been working for years to stop the movement of harmful species and to harmonize their laws. Minister Shea’s proposed regulations are a major step forward in instituting a North America-wide approach to the problem.”

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GREAT LAKES FISHERY COMMISSION

2100 Commonwealth Blvd, Suite 100 • Ann Arbor, Michigan 48105-1574 • 734-662-3209 • www.glfc.int