



NEWS

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**SERVICE FUNDS RESEARCH TO PREVENT ALIEN INVASIONS:
GRANT MONEY WILL BE USED TO FIND WAYS TO PREVENT ACCIDENTAL
INTRODUCTION OF NUISANCE SPECIES**

Many of the Nation's most notorious invasive alien species, such as the zebra mussel, ruffe, and round goby, arrived in U.S. waters as stowaways in the ballast tanks of ships entering U.S. ports from overseas. On September 30, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will award nearly \$150,000 to a team of scientists at the University of Buffalo in New York to begin studying the treatment of ballast water and residue with peracetic acid to kill potentially invasive species surviving in ballast tanks.

This 2-year study, led by principal investigator Dr. Jim Jensen, will be conducted in Buffalo, New York, and Guelph, Ontario. The researchers will attempt to determine the effectiveness of peracetic acid in killing species in both fresh- and saltwater ballast residue in tankers and cargo ships. The team will document the rate at which the acid breaks down into harmless chemicals, explore safety issues related to its use, and investigate impacts to water quality when the treated residue is discharged.

"Invasive species are now recognized as one of the most dire threats to the Nation's wildlife and ecology," said Service Director Jamie Rappaport Clark. "This research will provide important insight into options for preventing invasions when exchanging ballast water on the high seas is not possible."

Invasive alien species, introduced outside their natural range, thrive in the absence of natural predators or disease and quickly infest suitable habitats--devouring or crowding out native wildlife. It has been estimated that there are at least 4,000 non-native plants and 2,300 non-native animals now established in the United States. Some biologists believe that alien species invasions may be second only to habitat loss as a leading cause of extinction in the United States. Some species choke waterways used for navigation and recreation while others clog intake pipes or smother edible grasses used by grazing cattle; and all together, invasive alien species are estimated to cost the Nation upwards of \$120 billion in prevention and damage control.

This new research will complement ongoing work funded by the Service to study alien species populations and their origins in vulnerable waters such as the Great Lakes, San Francisco Bay, and the Chesapeake Bay. This information is crucial as policy-makers and the shipping industry develop a strategy to cope with this

threat. The Service has also identified two additional research projects for funding pending the availability of grant money in FY 1999. One effort would compare the effectiveness of various methods for exchanging ballast water on the high seas. The other would explore the feasibility of treating ballast in dockside facilities in San Francisco Bay.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish and wildlife and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 93-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System comprised of more than 500 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands, and other special management areas. It also operates 66 national fish hatcheries and 78 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state wildlife agencies.