

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD
STATEMENT OF
CAPTAIN MICHAEL W. BROWN
ON THE
NONINDIGENOUS AQUATIC NUISANCE PREVENTION AND CONTROL ACT
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON FISHERIES CONSERVATION, WILDLIFE AND OCEANS
COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
NOVEMBER 14, 2002

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Subcommittee. It is a pleasure to appear before you today to provide our views on H.R. 5395 and H.R. 5396.

The Coast Guard is a leader in ensuring America's marine environment and precious natural resources are protected. As a lead federal agency for protecting the marine environment, we take great pride in providing valuable services to the American people to ensure our nation is cleaner, safer, more mobile, and more secure. Today, the spread of non-native aquatic species throughout our waterways as a result of vessel operations remains a serious and growing national problem. We know all too well that once introduced, many of these species are capable of disrupting native ecosystems, resulting in lost natural resources in mitigation costs.

In reauthorizing and amending existing federal aquatic nuisance species (ANS) legislation, the combination of H.R. 5395 and H.R. 5396 would provide detailed guidance and requirements for the conduct of a federal ballast water management program and establish a research program to support the battle against all ANS. While we fully agree that these bills appropriately identify significant issues related to improving the nation's defense against the introduction of ANS, and that reauthorization and amendment of the legislation is necessary to effectively address this growing environmental problem, we believe that implementing these bills in their current form.

Working under the broad ballast water management authorities granted by current legislation, our ongoing regulatory efforts are addressing many of the ballast water management provisions contained in H.R. 5396. As detailed in the transmittal letter accompanying the Secretary of Transportation's June 2002 voluntary ballast water management assessment report to Congress, mandated by the 1996 reauthorization process, the Coast Guard is in the midst of establishing a mandatory national ballast water management program. These efforts include: (1) the setting of an enforceable and scientifically supportable ballast water treatment standard, and (2) establishing a process that will facilitate the development, testing and evaluation of promising experimental treatment systems. We believe that our current regulatory strategy is both sound and aggressive, especially when viewed in the light of the current state of ballast water management technology, which is best described as being in its infancy. We further believe that the detailed requirements and new management arrangements contained in H.R. 5396 would unnecessarily complicate our work and inevitably delay the implementation of an effective mandatory federal regime.

We would like to work with the Committee regarding the bill's proposed interim ballast water treatment standard. In consultation with other federal agencies, the Coast Guard is currently looking toward standards

that would be expressed as allowable concentrations of organisms in discharged ballast water. Working under a cooperative arrangement between the Coast Guard and the Environmental Protection Agency to develop verification protocols for ballast water treatment technologies, technical experts from a wide range of U.S. federal agencies and research institutions are considering the appropriate organism concentrations and the methods for their detection and enumeration. We are also tracking several complementary international efforts to develop effective management technologies and will use their findings as appropriate in developing our domestic program

We agree that there is a need for research efforts. The technical challenges to preventing, evaluating the effects of, and responding to aquatic invasions are extensive and costly.

While the Coast Guard is not assigned responsibilities for conducting the ecological surveys described in H.R. 5395, the results of these surveys will likely be used to evaluate the efficacy of our and other federal agency efforts in reducing the rate of invasions by aquatic nuisance species.

Thank you for the opportunity to present some of our views on these bills today. The Coast Guard looks forward to working with Congress on the reauthorization of ANS legislation while we continue our ongoing efforts to implement an effective ballast water management regime. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.