

The Honorable Ted Stevens
The Honorable Daniel K. Inouye
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

June 16, 2006

Dear Senators Stevens and Inouye:

We are writing on behalf of the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative to commend your efforts to address a serious threat that both the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy and the Pew Oceans Commission addressed in their respective reports: the spread of nonindigenous aquatic invasive species into and throughout waters of the United States via vessel ballast water.

The bill you reported from your committee last November, S.363, the “Ballast Water Management Act of 2005,” is designed to prevent ballast water introductions of nonindigenous species, and address aquatic nuisance species and the significant adverse environmental and economic harm that results from these releases. Congress needs to act expeditiously to pass legislation to prevent introductions of invasive species or limit their impact, streamline programs and increase coordination among agencies, establish and enforce domestic ballast water management standards, educate the public, and provide adequate funding. S. 363 would accomplish these goals, and would implement the specific recommendation of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy calling for the establishment of uniform, mandatory national standards for ballast water treatment.

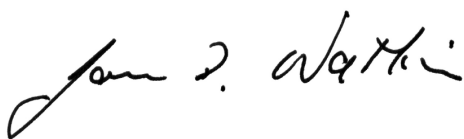
While addressing the larger issue of both terrestrial and aquatic invasive species through a comprehensive approach via the reauthorization of the National Invasive Species Act would be ideal, the passage of such legislation has proven to be difficult. However, we believe that there is an opportunity to address the urgent issue of ballast water discharge of invasive species in the very near term through passage of S. 363, while also remaining committed to supporting action on other aspects of invasive species addressed in other legislation, such as S.770, which is being considered by the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works.

The Joint Initiative strongly supports the Coast Guard’s full consultation with the Environmental Protection Agency during the program’s development and throughout the implementation process. We recognize and applaud the significant role given to EPA in S.363, including providing input on the designation of alternative areas for exchange and discharge of ballast water, identifying additional microbes to be

regulated, developing a process for approving treatment technologies, and establishing regulations for reception facilities for ballast water and sediment. In implementing performance standards under S.363, we also believe there must be a viable, well-defined process for revising the standard with realistic timelines to incorporate new technologies, and to evaluate whether mandated technologies can be met, taking into account factors that include technical performance of available treatment technologies and cost effectiveness.

Again, we commend you for the considerable effort your committee is devoting to this issue, and stand ready to assist you in realizing an expeditious process for solving this problem.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James D. Watkins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'J'.

James D. Watkins
Admiral, U.S. Navy (Retired)
Chairman, U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leon E. Panetta". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'L' and a long horizontal line extending to the right.

The Honorable Leon E. Panetta
Chair, Pew Oceans Commission