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Chair: Jim Grazio, Pennsylvania DEP
Vice Chair: Phil Moy, Wisconsin Sea Grant

Co-Chairs, ANS Task Force
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
4401 North Fairfax Dr., Room 322
Arlington, VA 22203

March 2, 2009

Dear ANS Task Force Co-Chairs:

I am writing to convey the significant challenges faced by the Great Lakes Panel on Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) as well as the other Regional ANS Panels (Panels). Resource constraints make it increasingly difficult for the Panels to fully address ongoing ANS priorities as mandated under federal law (P.L. 101-646). Similar challenges exist for implementation of the ANS state management plans (SMPs) established under P.L. 101-646. The Panels have consistently identified and presented to the ANS Task Force (ANSTF) near-term priorities and tasks on ANS prevention and control, most notably increased coordination on a regional level. There is considerable concern among the Panels that these priorities and tasks cannot be adequately addressed due to significant funding limitations. Namely, appropriated funding for the Regional ANS Panels has remained flat while the number of Panels has increased. Also funding for SMPs has not been sufficient to meet individual state requests, given shortfalls from previously authorized amounts coupled with increasing numbers of approved and funded plans.

I recognize that funding challenges for ANS programs are formally acknowledged in the ANS Task Force Strategic Plan. Namely, Objective 5.2 of the plan is to "Determine if a need exists for new funding mechanisms for interagency activities" and Objective 5.3 addresses the need for federal budget coordination. While funding issues have been discussed at recent ANSTF meetings, we believe further dialogue and action are essential. Therefore, I recommend that the spring 2009 ANSTF meeting include a session with Panel chairs and coordinators dedicated to funding issues. Specifically, we need to better understand opportunities for involvement in the inter-agency budgeting process in order to secure funding that will enable us to effectively advance priorities on a regional panel and state level.

The level of resources invested in ANS prevention and control will determine the extent to which our collective mission can be achieved through the work of the Regional ANS Panels and SMP implementation. If funding is not increased soon, not only will expanded programs be unachievable, but existing programs will become unsustainable. I look forward to hearing from you on how we can work together in taking action on these funding challenges to effectively meet our ANS goals and objectives. Please let us know if the ANS funding issue could be discussed further at the upcoming ANSTF meeting in May.

Sincerely,

Jim Grazio
Great Lakes Panel Chair