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Chair: Jim Grazio, Pennsylvania DEP
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August 19, 2009

USEPA Great Lakes National Program Office (G-17J)
Attention: Anthony Kizlauskas
77 West Jackson Blvd.
Chicago, IL 60604

Dear Mr. Kizlauskas,

On behalf of the Great Lakes Panel on Aquatic Nuisance Species (Panel), I am writing to express the Panel's strong support for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) investment in aquatic invasive species (AIS) prevention and control. In support of this effort, the Panel is pleased to submit for your consideration the following two documents 1) *Aquatic Invasive Species Information and Education Priorities for the Great Lakes* and 2) *Aquatic Invasive Species Research Priorities for the Great Lakes*. These documents have been developed by the Panel's Information/Education and Research Coordination Committees to assist entities in prioritizing educational outreach and research activities for funding to advance AIS prevention and control in the Great Lakes region. The priorities identified in these documents are presented in topical areas including, but not limited to, prevention, rapid response, information management, education, economics and evaluation.

It deserves mention that the priority documents have proven to be a valuable resource for providing consensus-based input from the Great Lakes region for recent NOAA Sea Grant AIS research and outreach grants competitions. We believe that the documents will also serve as valuable guidance in making funding decisions for implementation of the GLRI action plan. We request that the identified priorities be considered by GLRI funding partners in the development of funding guidelines and requests for proposals. Note that both the information/education and research priorities documents are available online (www.glc.org/ans/panel.html#committees). We also bring to your attention the effort currently underway by the Panel's Policy Coordination Committee to develop a similar document identifying policy priorities for AIS prevention and control.

Since 1991, the Great Lakes Panel has worked diligently to coordinate the prevention and control of AIS in the Great Lakes region. Panel membership is drawn from a cross-section of U.S. and Canadian federal agencies, the eight Great Lakes states, the provinces of Ontario and Québec, regional agencies, user groups, local communities, tribal authorities, commercial interests, and the university/research community. Based on its collective expertise, experience, and mission, the Panel is well positioned to coordinate on a regional basis the implementation of a number of GLRI initiatives including AIS surveillance programs and rapid response initiatives. Unfortunately, the Panel has seen its federal funding diminish progressively over time to the point where it has become difficult to convene meetings and execute our mandate under federal statute. Therefore, I specifically recommend that the GLRI multi-year action plan be revised to more fully take advantage of the institutional capacity of the Great Lakes Panel. As a well-established coordinative body, the Panel could be especially useful in working with the eight states to coordinate and assist in implementation of state management plans, as well as providing a means for states and federal agencies to collaborate on management activities that would benefit from a multi-state, lake-basin or regional approach. Further, the Panel provides a recognized forum for the exchange of best practices and an opportunity to enhance the states' success.

In summary, I strongly encourage that the priorities and the capacity of the Great Lakes Panel be utilized in the implementation of the GLRI. Should you have any questions or comments, please contact me by phone at 814-217-9636 or email at jagrazio@state.pa.us or Kathe Glassner-Shwayder, Panel Coordinator, at 734-971-9135 or shwayder@glc.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James L. Grazio". The signature is written in a cursive style.

James L. Grazio
Chair, Great Lakes Panel on Aquatic Nuisance Species
Pennsylvania Dept. of Environmental Protection