

United States Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force

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Invasion of the world's largest fresh water reservoir — the Great Lakes — by zebra mussels was the catalyst for passage of the U.S. Nonindigenous Aquatic Nuisance Prevention and Control Act of 1990 (Act). The Act established an Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force (Task Force) which the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration co-chairs. The Task Force operates as an intergovernmental management mechanism to mitigate the overall problem of nonindigenous species in coastal and inland waters. It has recently developed a nationwide Aquatic Nuisance Species Program to reduce the risk of unintentional introductions and to control, monitor, and study such species. The Task Force has also completed an Intentional Introductions Policy Review which identified and evaluated approaches for reducing the risk of adverse consequences associated with intentional introduction of aquatic organisms. The review contains policy and legislative recommendations and will be submitted to the U.S. Congress in January 1994. The Task Force has also developed a Protocol for Evaluating Research Proposals Concerning Nonindigenous Aquatic Species and implemented ballast water regulations for the Great Lakes.

To assist the Task Force's efforts in determining appropriate management and research activities for estuarine and marine areas, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration convened the first international scientific workshop on Nonindigenous Estuarine and Marine Organisms (NEMO) in April 1993. NEMO assessed the current understanding of the effects of nonindigenous species invasions to estuarine and marine ecosystems globally. Participants were not asked to negotiate resolutions or develop recommendations, but did agree that the number and distribution of exotic organisms has been greatly underestimated and that they are causing ecological change in coastal waters.