Michigan Chamber of Commerce and Michigan United Conservation Clubs Applaud Legislative Work Controlling Exotic Species

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The Michigan Chamber of Commerce and Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC) applaud State Senator Ken Sikkema (R-Grandville) and the Michigan Legislature for their work on Senate Bill 152 -- legislation that addresses the management of ship ballast water to prevent the spread and introduction of invasive non-native species in the Great Lakes.

(Photo: http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20000320/DEM039)

"The unwanted introduction of non-native species into the Great Lakes is a major ecological, economic, and public health problem," said Jim Goodheart, Executive Director of Michigan United Conservation Clubs.

Exotic species include zebra mussels, Russian water fleas, European ruffe and round goby. With nearly 150 known non-native species in the Great Lakes, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimates that the economic impact of the zebra mussel will reach upwards of $5 billion in the Great Lakes region, and nationally the total cost of exotics in about $138 billion.

"Businesses spend millions of dollars every year in Michigan in control technologies and clean up to manage the problem," said Jim Barrett, President & CEO of the Michigan Chamber. "Quite simply, we cannot afford additional harm to the ecological integrity of the Great Lakes or a greater threat to Michigan's economic future, including agriculture, shipping, manufacturing, tourism, and countless recreational opportunities that are all dependent on the vitality of the Great Lakes."

With the introduction of House Resolution 1680 -- The Great Lakes Ecology Protection Act of 2001 by U.S. Congressman Pete Hoekstra (R-Holland) -- the Michigan Chamber and MUCC are pleased that this issue will receive the attention it deserves at the Federal level. "The reality of the situation requires a regional compact or national solution to halt the introduction of exotics before they even can enter the Great Lakes Basin," noted Goodheart.

The need for action was underscored at MUCC's Annual Convention last week when the membership voted unanimously to endorse a policy that would require treatment of ballast water before it is discharged in the Great Lakes.

The Michigan Chamber of Commerce is a statewide business organization representing approximately 7,000 employers, trade associations and local chambers of commerce. The Michigan Chamber of Commerce was established in 1959 to be an advocate for Michigan's job providers in the legislative, political and legal process.

The Michigan United Conservation Clubs has worked since 1936 at uniting citizens to conserve Michigan's natural resources and protect OUR outdoor heritage.

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