

National Wildlife Federation sues EPA over Great Lakes ballast water

Group says restrictions don't do enough to block invasive species

By [Dan Egan](#) of the Journal Sentinel
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The National Wildlife Federation announced this week it is suing the federal government over what it claims is a failure to protect the Great Lakes from invasive species.

The environmental group is taking the Environmental Protection Agency back to court over the agency's new rules requiring overseas vessels to treat their ship-steadying ballast water before discharging it in the Great Lakes, the world's largest fresh water system.

Contaminated ballast water is blamed for some of the most troublesome species to invade the lakes, including zebra and quagga mussels as well as the round goby, a voracious predator of the eggs of native fish.

The group claims the EPA's new discharge permit for the shipping industry, adopted this spring, isn't stringent enough to stop future invasions of the lakes, which are now home to at least 186 non-native species.

The permit is the result of a lawsuit filed by conservation groups over a decade ago to force the EPA to end its exemption of ballast water from requirements of the Clean Water Act.

"The EPA's permit will not adequately protect the Great Lakes and other U.S. waters from ballast water invaders," the Wildlife Federation's Marc Smith said. "This weak permit leaves the door open for future harm to our environment and economy. We can do better — and need to do better — if we are to protect our fish and wildlife and their habitat for future generations."

The lawsuit was filed in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia.

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