

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 29, 2022

The Honorable Deb Haaland
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Haaland,

We sincerely appreciate the work you and the entire team at the Department of the Interior have done to protect and restore public lands, support tribal communities, and find new ways to address impacts of the climate crisis on our environment. Across the U.S., our healthy ecosystems and native species represent not just iconic symbols of our regions, but also serve as essential economic, social, and for some, spiritual pillars of daily life.

That is why the exponential growth of invasive pests, plants, animals, and pathogens in recent years is so concerning. Invasive species pose a massive threat to our environment, infrastructure, outdoor recreation, and agriculture. They can cause substantial harm by decimating native ecosystems, lowering crop yields, clogging water pipes, spreading disease, and outcompeting native species. And managing invasive species can take a severe toll on local and state budgets.

In western Washington, the European Green Crab in our coastal waters and within Puget Sound is of great concern. This small shore crab with a voracious appetite eats macro algae, smaller native shore crabs, and young shellfish like oysters and clams. Governor Inslee, aware of the damage European Green Crab has wrought in other states and the exponential growth we have seen in Washington state in the past two years, issued an emergency order in January of this year. With the risks to native and endemic species in Puget Sound from habitat loss and predation, the exponential growth of this invasive crab could fundamentally reshape the marine environment of the Puget Sound, one of America's greatest national treasures.

And this pattern repeats itself in many of our communities. In the Great Lakes and surrounding water bodies, the introduction of over 180 aquatic species has substantially changed the ecosystem and squeezed the economy. Invasive sea lamprey, alewife, dreissenid mussels, and round gobies impact Great Lakes fisheries, and zebra and quagga mussels are clogging water pipes and costing industry and water treatment plants millions. There are 51 known nonnative and invasive species in Lake Champlain including Asian clam, water chestnut, and spiny water flea, and efforts are underway to prevent the spread of invasives like round goby into the watershed. The Southeast, whose climate is hospitable to many invasive species, faces threats from land and sea including feral hogs, Burmese python, lionfish, lygodium, and hydrilla.

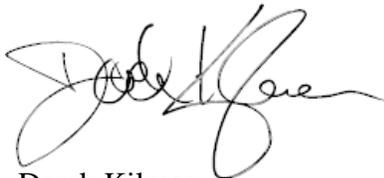
Forests across the country are under threat from roughly 450 non-native insects including emerald ash borer, spotted lanternfly, hemlock wooly adelgid, cogongrass, and Asian long-horned beetle. These pests are particularly damaging to forests in the northeast region. And with the ongoing establishment of new invasive species - nutria, Asian carp, Asian giant hornets - the list seems almost endless.

The historic \$100,000,000 in funding for invasive species in the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act can help address the challenges outlined in this letter. These resources are urgently needed in communities across America to protect our environments, our native species, our fishermen and farmers, and our tribal communities.

We respectfully request that the Department of the Interior continue to partner with state and tribal authorities to tackle this ongoing emergency, as well as prioritize the distribution of invasives species funding through the IIA. The information posted on your website is instructive, and we encourage you to update it frequently so our communities can assess the progress that is being made across the country to detect, contain, and eradicate invasive species before they inflict more harm. We also request you ensure open communication channels to disseminate information related to Notice of Funding Opportunity announcements (NOFO), so our Congressional districts are aware of the opportunity to apply for these resources.

These funds are critical to help our communities across the country respond to both emerging and existing invasive species threats. Thank you again for leading efforts to address this critical and increasingly prominent issue, and we stand ready to partner with you in whatever way you need to protect our native ecosystems and species.

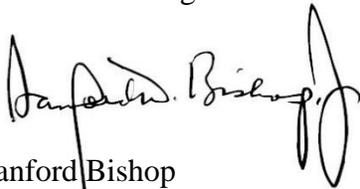
Sincerely,



Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress



Madeleine Dean
Member of Congress



Sanford Bishop
Member of Congress



Suzan DelBene
Member of Congress



Steve Cohen
Member of Congress



Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress

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