Testimony of
J. Michael Hayden, Secretary
Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks

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Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
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Chair Stabenow and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to share our perspective and experience with the growing problem of invasive species. I want to emphasize this is growing problem. Every week, every month, every year, we are faced with new invasive species throughout this nation and unfortunately, Kansas is no exception.

The focus of what you will hear today, several invasive species of fish collectively known as "Asian Carp", is important. The threat these fish pose to the Great Lakes is real. Asian Carp will impact commercial fisheries, tourism, the ecosystem associated with the Great Lakes and the associated local and regional economies. We urge you to consider this carefully and act to prevent the further spread of these species.

Asian carp have spread throughout the Mississippi River basin and at this time only being stopped where there are obstructions such as dams large enough to prevent them from passing. They have and continue to impact native fisheries throughout the heart of the nation and their numbers continue to increase. In addition, they are a threat to public safety because of the silver carp's habit of jumping out of the water when boats pass. Imagine an entire school of fish that may weigh 60 pounds jumping six or eight feet in the air when a motorboat, water skier or jet ski passes. People have been injured and unfortunately, more will be in the future.

Again, we urge you to act now to prevent the spread of Asian Carp into the Great Lakes. But, just as the Great Lakes are only part of the problem with the spread of Asian Carp, Asian Carp are only part of the invasive species problem. Invasive Fish, Plants, Mussels, Snakes, Crustaceans, other Invertebrates and diseases are all part of the problem. Invasive species impact every American and the American way of life. We are talking about Asian carp today, but what will it be tomorrow? You can build electric barriers or install fences along the flood areas as outlined in the Federal Framework but these are measures that address one small component of the invasive species problem and successes may be limited.

We have heard discussions about the potential Asian carp impacts on native species in the Great Lakes but we are ignoring the non-native interchange of water, waste, and species between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River Basin through the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal. Sources indicate there are roughly 180 non-native species currently in the Great Lakes. There are several invasive species such as the snakehead fish in the Mississippi River Basin moving upstream. Which one will be the next species to invade the Mississippi River Basin, Great Lakes or somewhere else in the nation? As long as

there is a direct connection between these two large basins we will continually be fighting this battle.

Abraham Lincoln once said, "If I were to go west, I would go to Kansas". While Lincoln never took residence in Kansas, several invasive species have. Coincidentally, one of them, the Zebra Mussel, was transported in the ballast water of a ship and became established in the Great Lakes in the 1980's. It has since spread across the nation, including Kansas, and has become a very large problem. Zebra Mussels now inhabit 6 federal reservoirs in Kansas and many other smaller lakes and streams. Simalarly to Asian carp, they pose a threat economically, environmentally, and directly to human health. They clog water intakes, kill native mussel species, damage boats and cut the feet of swimmers. Asiatic Clams, or Corbicula, are another problem invasive. One example is a local fire department attempted to use a "dry hydrant" at a lake to replenish their water supply on the fire truck. The fire trucks intake became completely clogged with these small clams or mussels effectively making the truck unusable to fight fire and protect the public.

The opportunity for new invasive species seems almost endless and the different ways these organisms are spread is almost as big a problem. However, there are some solutions. First and foremost, preventing the introduction of invasive species is always cheaper and easier than removing them. In fact, getting rid of them is often impossible once they become established. Zebra Mussels are a good example. Once they are established, removing them from a large lake such as a federal reservoir would require measures so extreme that it just isn't practical. We must do more to prevent Invasive Species from coming to the nation. Current law makes it too easy to bring non-native species to the U.S. and we often end up chasing one species after another after they have become established. We lose the opportunity to prevent invasive species from becoming established by banning species AFTER they have become a problem rather than BEFORE. National policy needs to move toward proving a species will not become a problem BEFORE it is imported. Further, management of invasive species already present in U.S. waters is extremely difficult with the current level of federal funding support. Resources need to be directed to current management efforts such as the Asian Carp Management and Control Plan or the Quagga/Zebra Mussel Action Plan.

Chair Stabenow, we need the Committee's help. Asian Carp and the hundreds of other Invasive Species will damage our native fisheries, water supplies, tourism and economy of the Great Lakes and resources across the nation unless more is done. National policies need to change to make it harder for Invasive Species to come here. And more needs to be done to implement existing programs to prevent the spread of Invasive Species.

Invasive Species in Kansas

Asian Carp in the Kansas River near Kansas City.

Zebra Mussels in El Dorado Reservoir, Kansas three years after first being found.

Asiatic Clams (Corbicula) clogging fire truck intake near Wichita, Kansas

White perch that had clogged municipal water intake for the City of Wichita.