

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 20, 2026

The Honorable Lee Zeldin
Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Zeldin:

This letter expresses concern regarding the growing number of invasive species establishing themselves across the Great Lakes. We are concerned that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) may be putting the entire Great Lakes ecosystem at risk by exempting existing Lakers from its rule requiring ballast water management systems on cargo vessels.

In April 2026, bloody red shrimp were determined to have officially established themselves in Lake Superior.¹ This was the last Great Lake to be free from invasive shrimp. The bloody red shrimp, native to Europe and Asia, were first introduced to the lower Great Lakes over twenty years ago through ballast water discharge. While the shrimp themselves are small they, like all invasive species, can have an outsize and unpredictable impact on their ecosystem. The Great Lakes region will have to manage the changes resulting from their establishment for generations. Red bloody shrimp are not the first invasive species to spread through ballast water and, with the current EPA rule exemption in place, they will probably not be the last.

EPA's rule to require ballast water management systems for ocean-going vessels and new Lakers should be lauded and is an important step towards preventing the continued transfer of invasive species. However, the Lakers that are exempted from the rule account for 92% of the U.S. fleet.² Ballast water management systems kill living organisms before discharging the ballast water to prevent invasive species spread and Lakers can be retrofitted to support these systems, as Canada has proven with their Laker fleet. Exempting the existing Lakers from the rule leaves the Great Lakes unprotected.

The Great Lakes are the largest surface freshwater system in the world, holding nearly 21 percent of the world's fresh water supply and 90 percent of the United States' fresh water supply. They are a key economic engine for the region that generates billions of dollars. Invasive species put all of this at risk, and we ask the EPA to keep this in mind. It is far less expensive to invest in preventative actions than to manage the fall out of continued invasive species establishments, particularly when it is unknown what risk each new invasive species will pose to the Great Lakes.

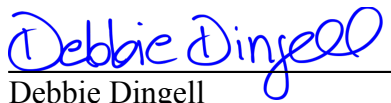
¹ Branstrator, Donn. "First evidence of *Hemimysis anomala* (bloody red shrimp) establishment in Lake Superior." *Journal of Great Lakes Research*, vol. 52, no. 2, Apr. 2026, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jglr.2026.102779>.

² Bloom, Wendy. "Bloody Red Shrimp: Lakers Spread New Invasive Species into Lake Superior | ELPC." *Environmental Law and Policy Center*, 30 June 2026, elpc.org/blog/bloody-red-shrimp-lakers-spread-new-invasive-species-into-lake-superior/.

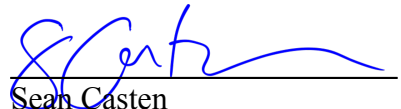
The Vessel Incidental Discharge Act of 2018 marked a historic step forward in combating invasive species in ballast water. We encourage the EPA to apply their rule equally to all cargo vessels, requiring ballast water treatment systems to be implemented no matter when a ship was built or how long it operates, and to maintain its commitment to safeguarding the Great Lakes from invasive species.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress



Sean Casten
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



Haley M. Stevens
Member of Congress



Shri Thanedar
Member of Congress