



March 15, 2007

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Animal and Plant
Health Inspection
Service

Washington, DC
20250

Bobbi M. Walker
Executive Director
National Association of Charterboat Operators
P. O. Box 2990
Orange Beach, AL 36561

Dear Ms. Walker:

Thank you for your letter of March 6, 2007, to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) regarding viral hemorrhagic septicemia (VHS) and the potential role that ballast water may play in the movement of this pathogen.

APHIS appreciates and understands the vital role of the members of the National Association of Charterboat Operators to the sport fishing industry and the economy of the Great Lakes region. In addition, we applaud the Charterboat Operators for their support of our actions regarding the presence of VHS in fish in the Great Lakes basin.

Our Centers for Epidemiology and Animal Health are in the process of conducting a risk assessment on various mechanisms that may contribute to the spread of VHS. In this regard, APHIS would be interested in receiving any information that could support us in the development of the risk assessment. We are also working with the U.S. Coast Guard on these issues.

Under the Nonindigenous Aquatic Nuisance Prevention and Control Act of 1990, the Coast Guard is the lead Federal Agency in reducing or preventing the introduction of nonindigenous species via shipping activities in U.S. waters. The Coast Guard has been developing ballast water discharge standards since 2002, and expects to complete them soon. APHIS recognizes the Federal authority of the Coast Guard to regulate ballast water and supports them as a cooperating Agency.

Thank you again for writing. We appreciate your interest and support as we consider measures against VHS.

Sincerely,

John R. Clifford
Deputy Administrator
Veterinary Services



Safeguarding American Agriculture

APHIS is an agency of USDA's Marketing and Regulatory Programs
An Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer

Federal Relay Service
(Voice/TTY/ASCII/Spanish)
1-800-877-8339