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RECYCLED PAPER

Congressman Norm Dicks' Statement to the National Wildlife Refuge Association October 10, 2002

For as long as people have been traveling and merchandise has been traded, living organisms have inadvertently gone along for the ride. And sometimes, these accidental imports can devastate local ecosystems, which is why we call such environmental pests invasive species.

Invasive species affect all regions of the United States and we pay a great price measured in unemployment, damaged goods and equipment, power failures, food and water shortages, environmental degradation, increased frequency and severity of natural disasters, disease epidemics, and even lost lives. With the rapid global expansion of trade and travel, invasive species and their costs to society are increasing at an alarming rate.

For example, my home state of Washington has suffered from Spartina grass in and around the Willapa Bay National Wildlife Refuge. Spartina grass chokes out native vegetation without providing food or habitat for many native animals. Traditionally, the Bay has supported abundant shellfish and fin fisheries. However, Spartina has begun to affect native species of fish, clams, shorebirds, migratory waterfowl, and the shellfish aquaculture industry thereby diminishing diversity in biological communities and undermining the local human economy.

As the Ranking Member on the House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee, I was able to include in the FY 03 bill \$1 million to assist in the eradication of Spartina grass in the Willapa Bay National Wildlife Refuge. The Senate has included \$400,000 for Spartina grass programs. If and when the House and Senate conference committee meets, I hope we can work together to address the not only the problem in Willapa Bay, but of invasive species all over the country.

I am very pleased that the Administration and Congress are combating the immense threat of invasive species. We all have seen the devastating effects of invasive species and I look forward to working with all of you on this enormous task to battle invasive species.