



# **NEWS** from the Democrats

## **Committee on Resources**

U.S. Rep. Nick Rahall, Ranking Democrat

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**Statement of U.S. Rep. Nick J. Rahall**  
**SPACE Act: A Solution to the "Silent Invasion"**  
**National Wildlife Refuge Association Press Conference**

First, I would like to thank the National Wildlife Refuge Association for heralding a call to action with today's release of their "Silent Invasion" report. Indeed, the report's title is appropriate, as invasive species are stealthy, silent, alien aggressors which drain \$137 billion from our economy each year.

These alien species are truly space invaders. By air, land, river and sea they recognize no borders and hold hostage America's fish and wildlife heritage.

That is why I introduced the Species Protection and Conservation of the Environment Act, or SPACE Act, along with my colleague Wayne Gilchrest. This bill provides real solutions to the problems outlined in the "Silent Invasion" report.

The report urges Congress to provide \$150 million over five years to fight invasive species. The SPACE Act exceeds this goal by authorizing \$375 million in funding for control, eradication, rapid response and monitoring efforts.

The National Wildlife Refuge System faces an operations and maintenance budget backlog topping \$150 million just from these space invaders alone. The SPACE Act directs the Secretary of Interior to consider this backlog when awarding grants to combat invasive species.

National Wildlife Refuges are supposed to be havens for our fish and wildlife, but they are not immune to the assault of invasive species. For example, the Zebra Mussel has migrated from the Great Lakes to the Ohio River Islands National Wildlife Refuge in my home state of West Virginia. It alone is responsible for five native species being listed as endangered and accounts for billions of dollars in unclogging and repairing water pipes and filtration systems throughout the Great Lakes region.

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The only way we can truly achieve success in defeating the space invaders and protecting our native fish and wildlife is to promote partnerships between federal and other public and private land owners.

The SPACE Act authorizes grants for such partnerships and prioritizes projects eligible for grant funding by ranking a project's proposal on finding partners, devising strategies and restoring lands and waterways. These are the very same criteria the "Silent Invasion" report sets forth for Refuge administrators.

With 540 refuges on 95 million acres of land, the National Wildlife Refuge System stands to be a leader in these projects, having already demonstrated efforts to bring private landowners and state and local governments together.

The SPACE Act is bipartisan legislation that reflects several of the recommendations of the National Invasive Species Council. The bill is supported by a dozen conservation organizations, including the National Wildlife Refuge Association. It is simple and science-based legislation, seeking to fund those projects that are most likely to succeed on the ground where it counts.

The House of Representatives is expected to pass this bill before the end of the session. I urge my Senate colleagues to take up this important piece of legislation that will not only restore the environment, but also the economy, as we strive to prevent future invasion catastrophes and mobilize on-the-ground efforts.

The "Silent Invasion" report is a call for help. The SPACE Act answers this plea and, once enacted into law, will turn the report's goals into reality.

Thank you.