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**Visible Progress Toward Battling Invasive Species in the Great Lakes:
Five Applicants Respond to Offer of Ballast Treatment Testing**

Washington, D.C. –Aquatic pest species, a top environmental problem in the Great Lakes and elsewhere, threaten to permanently damage the nation's water resources. Ballast discharges from commercial vessels are the leading source of aquatic pest species in the Great Lakes and other United States waters. The Great Ships Initiative, a collaborative effort to end the problem of ship-mediated invasive species in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Seaway System, offered preliminary research services to qualified vendors of treatment systems designed to thwart pest species before they reach the Great Lakes. Five qualified applicants responded by the submission deadline yesterday. Testing services will be awarded by September 17, 2007.

Managed by the Northeast-Midwest Institute, a non-profit research organization, and supported by federal and Great Lakes Ports dollars, the initiative's immediate objectives are to increase monitoring of Great Lakes ports, and accelerate the identification, verification and use of ballast treatment tools. Ballast treatment is considered the best solution, but candidate systems are difficult to assess for performance and durability in the ship-board environment.

The preliminary GSI research services will be performed for the dual purpose of trialing GSI project review and equipment evaluation protocols, and providing usable information on treatment system performance. The GSI will award bench-scale testing services to up to two candidate treatment services, and full-scale testing services at the GSI shore-based test facility to one candidate treatment system.

The House of Representatives earlier this month approved \$1 million for the GSI's ballast water research in next year's transportation appropriations bill, at the request of Rep. Dave Obey (D-WI). The bill must now be approved by the Senate and signed by the President to become law.

“We are very encouraged that the GSI fills a useful niche in the overall effort to make ballast treatment a routine and effective means of preventing new ship-borne pests in the Great Lakes and elsewhere,” said Allegra Cangelosi, Senior Policy Analyst at the Northeast-Midwest Institute, who is responsible for overall GSI leadership.

For more information about the GSI and the solicitation offering research services, go to www.greatshipsinitiative.org; for more information about the Northeast-Midwest Institute, go to www.nemw.org.

The Northeast-Midwest Institute is a Washington-based, private, non-profit, and non-partisan research organization dedicated to economic vitality, environmental quality, and regional equity for Northeast and Midwest states.