



News from

Congressman Ron Kind

REPRESENTING WISCONSIN'S THIRD
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

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House Passes Kind's REPAIR Act, Legislation to Combat Invasive Species in Wildlife Refuges

Establishes Comprehensive Approach to #1 Refuge Threat

Washington, DC – The House of Representatives today passed H.R. 767, U.S. Rep. Ron Kind's Refuge Ecology Protection, Assistance, & Immediate Response (REPAIR) Act, advancing the bill that would combat the growing and costly problem of invasive species in the nation's wildlife refuges to the Senate for action.

"For too long, our National Wildlife Refuges have been overlooked and neglected," Rep. Kind said. "Meanwhile, refuges have faced an unanswered march of invasive plants and animals that have literally taken over, crowding out the very wildlife and habitat the refuges are charged with protecting. By providing grants for both immediate response and long-term eradication of invasives, passage of the REPAIR Act brings us one step closer to giving our National Wildlife Refuge System a vital tool in combating the number one ecological and economic threat to their quality and longevity."

The backlog for specifically combating invasive species is the fastest-growing portion of the National Wildlife Refuge budget, reaching nearly \$391 million. These expenses are cutting deeply into already stretched refuge operations and maintenance budgets. The REPAIR Act begins to address this crisis in the nation's refuge system by through a two-pronged approach:

- **Immediate Response Grants** for when a harmful non-native species has been identified as an immediate threat to a refuge at a stage at which rapid eradication is possible. These grants will help prevent new invasive species from taking hold and wreaking havoc on refuge ecosystems.
- **REPAIR Grants**, which will contribute to a more long-term strategy for combating existing invasives. These grants would go to states, local governments, community groups, or individuals to remove harmful non-native species and promote native species and their habitat on lands and waters in and adjacent to National Wildlife Refuges. Additionally, the grants could be used to complete assessment projects consistent with existing state wildlife conservation plans to identify invasive species, assess the needs on the ground, and target resources to address the problem adequately and efficiently.

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All grants would be awarded on a competitive basis and include monitoring and reporting requirements to ensure proper oversight ability by the Fish and Wildlife Service. The federal grants would cover 100 percent of the cost for projects within refuges and for immediate response projects, but a non-federal cost share of at least 25 percent would be required for REPAIR grants on adjacent lands.

“The REPAIR Act brings together the public and private sectors to ensure the future of our Wildlife Refuge System,” Rep. Kind added. “These are special places unlike any other in the world. They are the only federal land system devoted primarily to the preservation of our unique wildlife resources. I know from the countless hours I’ve spent taking in the grandeur of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge, admiring the special beauty of Trempealeau, or proudly watching the whooping cranes take off from Necedah, that these places are an integral part of the American experience that deserve special protection. This bill recognizes that.”

Species that are considered invasive the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish include the purple loosestrife, black locust and zebra mussels.