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Contact: Emily Marthaler
202-367-1112

MGA Hosts Regional Aquatic Invasive Species Summit

MINNEAPOLIS, MN – The Midwestern Governors Association (MGA) convened a meeting in Minneapolis this week to discuss strategies for combating aquatic invasive species in the Midwest region's inland lakes and rivers. The meeting brought together policy advisors, state agencies, federal agencies, academic experts, and other interested stakeholders from Midwestern states to discuss the challenges posed by aquatic invasive species, and collaborative tactics to slow the spread of those species throughout the region.

As Chair of the MGA, Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton is focused on bringing states together to collaborate in the fight against invasive species in our region. Every year, invasive species cause huge economic losses and dramatic ecological changes. The National Invasive Species Information Center estimated that these pests, at the low end, cause \$138 billion annually in damages and reduced production.

The meeting provided an opportunity to concentrate on the urgent need to address aquatic invasive species. Participants heard from federal partners and discussed best practices from current state programs in the Midwest. The structure, priorities and challenges of these programs were discussed as a way to share ideas and increase collaborative opportunities within the region.

"Midwesterners love to spend time fishing, swimming and boating on our inland lakes and rivers. By working together, we can make sure all of our beautiful waters are free of invasive species and enjoyable now and for future generations," said Jesse Heier, executive director of the MGA.

The meeting was convened as part of Governor Dayton's agenda as the 2013 Chair of the MGA. This agenda focuses on coordinating state responses to invasive species, with a primary focus on Asian carp and zebra mussels.

The MGA's efforts this year are geared toward complementing current ongoing efforts to combat invasive species within the Great Lakes by focusing on the Midwest's significant inland waterways, including the Mississippi, Missouri and Ohio Rivers as well as the abundant inland lakes.

More information and updates on Dayton's agenda are available by visiting www.midwesterngovernors.org/chairagenda.htm. To learn more about the Midwest, and why it's considered America's Smartland, check out and share the winning entries from the MGA's recent video contest by visiting <http://www.youtube.com/user/MidwesternGovernors>.

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The MGA is a nonprofit, bipartisan organization that brings together the governors of Midwestern states to work cooperatively on issues of importance to the region. Current members of the MGA are Gov. Pat Quinn (Ill.), Gov. Mike Pence (Ind.), Gov. Terry Branstad (Iowa), Gov. Sam Brownback (Kansas), Gov. Rick Snyder (Mich.), Gov. Mark Dayton (Minn.), Gov. Jay Nixon (Mo.), Gov. John Kasich (Ohio) and Gov. Scott Walker (Wis.).