October 4, 2012

Mr. Boris Bershteyn, Acting Administrator
Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Mr. Bershteyn,

The undersigned organizations are writing to express our serious concerns with the EPA's proposed rule "Regulation of Fuels and Fuel Additives: Identification of Additional Qualifying Renewable Fuel Pathways Under the Renewable Fuel Standard Program." We are particularly concerned about the approval of *Arundo donax* (giant reed) as a qualified advanced biofuel feedstock.

Arundo donax is a non-native species that is a well-known and well-documented invader of natural areas. At least five published weed risk assessments have determined that *Arundo donax* is a likely invasive species.[1] USDA, in their June 2012 weed risk assessment, concluded with very low uncertainty that *Arundo donax* is a high risk species, noting that it is a "highly invasive grass" and a "serious environmental weed" that can alter the hydrology, nutrient cycling, and fire regimes in areas where it becomes established.[2] *Arundo donax* displaces native vegetation and negatively impacts certain threatened and endangered species such as the Least Bell's Vireo. In the United States, *Arundo donax* is listed as a noxious weed in Texas[3] California,[4] Colorado[5], and Nevada.[6] Additionally, it has been noted as either invasive or a serious risk in New Mexico, Alabama, and South Carolina.[7] Once *Arundo donax* has invaded an area, control is difficult and costly. In California, costs range between $5,000 and $17,000 per acre to eradicate the weed. Other estimates put that cost as high as $25,000 per acre.[8]

Given the high risk of invasion, providing incentives under the Renewable Fuel Standard for the cultivation of *Arundo donax* has the potential for serious unintended ecological and economic impacts. Under Executive Order 13112, EPA should not provide production incentives for high risk feedstocks such as *Arundo donax* without determining that the benefits "clearly outweigh" the costs. Given the difficulty of eradicating *Arundo donax* and the extent of potential environmental damages, it is highly unlikely that the benefits would clearly outweigh the costs.

Therefore, the undersigned organizations believe that EPA should not approve *Arundo donax* as an approved advanced biofuel feedstock under the Renewable Fuel Standard. If OMB moves forward with releasing the rule, we request to see a complete assessment of the costs and benefits, as outlined in Executive Order 13112. Additionally, if EPA approves *Arundo donax* and similarly high risk feedstocks, we believe that the rule must include – at the very minimum— guidelines on stringent best management practices to reduce the risk of escape. These guidelines should be written with the guidance of the National Invasive Species Council and relevant federal agencies.

Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely,

Alabama Invasive Plant Council
Albemarle Conservation & Wildlife Chapter (NC)
Alger Conservation District (MI)
Alliance for the Great Lakes
Altahama Riverkeeper (GA)
American Naturalist Network
Appalachian Ohio Weed Control Partnership
Aquatic Plant Management Society
Association of State Wetland Managers
Blunn Creek Partnership (TX)
Cahaba Riverkeeper (AL)
California Invasive Plant Council
California Native Plant Society
Chattahoochee Riverkeeper (GA)
Clean Air Task Force
Clean Wisconsin
Conservation Voters of South Carolina
Cowlitz County Noxious Weed Control Board (WA)
Ecological Society of America
Environment and Energy Study Institute
Environmental Defense Fund
Environmental Working Group
Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council
Florida Wildlife Federation
Friends of Forest Preserves (IL)
Friends of the Earth
Friends of the Parks
Gaston County Piedmont Area Wildlife Stewards (PAWS) - NC
Georgia Conservancy
Georgia Exotic Pest Plant Council (GA-EPPC)
Georgia River Network
Georgia Wildlife Federation
Grays Harbor County Noxious Weed Board (WA)
Great Lakes United
Greater Raleigh Outdoors and Wildlife (GROW) - NC
Habitat and Wildlife Keepers (HAWK) - NC
Illinois Native Plant Society
Invasive Plant Atlas of New England
Kansas Wildlife Federation
Kentucky Exotic Pest Plant Council
King County Noxious Weed Control Board (WA)
Kornegay Design, LLC
Lake James Area Wildlife and Nature Society (NC)

Lake Norman Wildlife Conservationists (NC)
Lower Columbia Cooperative Weed Management Area
Lower Mississippi Riverkeeper
Mid Atlantic Invasive Plant Council
Midshore Riverkeeper Conservancy (MD)
Midwest Invasive Plant Network
Milwaukee Riverkeeper
Missouri Prairie Foundation
Mountain Island Lake Wildlife (NC)
Mountain Wild! (NC)
National Association of Exotic Pest Plant Councils
National Environmental Coalition on Invasive Species
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
National Wildlife Federation
Native Plant Society of Oregon
Natural Resources Defense Council
NC Camo Coalition
North Carolina Conservation Network
North Carolina Wildlife Federation
North Central Weed Science Society
North Cook County Soil & Water Conservation District (IL)
Northeast Illinois Invasive Plant Partnership
Northeastern Weed Science Society
Northwest Weed Management Partnership
NY/NJ Baykeeper
Ohio Invasive Plant Council
Oklahoma Invasive Plant Council
Pacific Northwest Invasive Plant Council
Pamlico-Tar River Foundation (NC)
Pollinator Partnership
Protecting, Advocating, and Conserving Together (PACT) in the High Country (NC)
Purple Martin Conservation Association
Quinault/Queets Cooperative Weed Management Area (WA)
River Network
San Diego Coastkeeper
Shaw Nature Reserve (MO)
Sierra Club
South Carolina Coastal Conservation League
South Carolina Wildlife Federation
South Dakota Wildlife Federation
South Texas Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas
Southern Alliance for Clean Energy
Southern Weed Science Society
Southwest Washington Cooperative Weed Management Area
Spokane Riverkeeper
St. Croix River Association (WI)

Tennessee Riverkeeper
Texas A&M Society for Ecological Restoration Student Guild
The Invasive Plants Association of Wisconsin
The Mid-Coast Invaders (TX)
Union of Concerned Scientists
Waterkeepers Carolina
Weed Science Society of America
Western Society of Weed Science
Wisconsin Wetlands Association
Wisconsin Wildlife Federation
Yadkin Riverkeeper (NC)

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[1] Gordon, D.R., K.J. Tancig, D.A. Onderdonk, and C.A. Gantz. 2011. Assessing the invasive potential of biofuel species proposed for Florida and the United States using the Australian Weed Risk Assessment. *Biomass and Bioenergy* 35: 74-79; Buddenhagen, C.E., C. Chimera, and P. Clifford. 2009. Assessing biofuel crop invasiveness: A case study. *PLoS ONE* 4 : e5261; Gassó N, Basnou C & Vilà M (2010). Predicting plant invaders in the Mediterranean through a weed risk assessment system. Biol. Invasions 12:463-476; Barney JN & Ditomaso JM (2008). Nonnative species and bioenergy: are we cultivating the next invader? BioScience 58: 64-70; USDA APHIS. 2012. Weed risk assessment for *Arundo donax* L. (Poaceae) – Giant reed. Version 1.

[2] USDA APHIS. 2012

[3] USDA NRCS. "Invasive and Noxious Weeds." http://plants.usda.gov/java/noxious?rptType=State&statefips=48 (accessed March 8, 2012).

[4] California Department of Food and Agriculture. "Encyloweedia: Data Sheets." http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/plant/ipc/weedinfo/winfo_list-pestrating.htm (accessed March 8, 2012).

[5] Colorado Department of Agriculture. "Noxious Weed Management Program." http://www.colorado.gov/cs/Satellite/Agriculture-Main/CDAG/1174084048733 (accessed March 8, 2012).

[6] Nevada Department of Agriculture. "Noxious Weed List." http://agri.nv.gov/nwac/PLANT_NoxWeedList.htm (Last modified February 2, 2012).

[7] Florida Native Plant Society. "Florida Native Plant Society Policy Statement on *Arundo donax*." http://www.fnps.org/committees/policy/pdfs/policyarundo_policy_statement1.pdf (Last updated November 6,2006).

[8] Giessow, J., J. Casanova, R. Leclerc, G. Fleming, and J. Giessow. 2011. *Arundo donax* (Giant Reed): Distribution and Impact Report. *California Invasive Plant Council*.