113TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. RES. 67

Expressing the need to raise awareness and promote capacity building to strategically address the lionfish invasion in the Atlantic Ocean.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 13, 2013

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources

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RESOLUTION

Expressing the need to raise awareness and promote capacity building to strategically address the lionfish invasion in the Atlantic Ocean.

Whereas two species of venomous lionfish, the red lionfish (Pterois volitans) and devil firefish (Pterois miles), were likely introduced into the Atlantic Ocean via the United States aquarium trade in the 1980s;

Whereas lionfish are now established throughout the coastal southeastern United States, the Caribbean, and many regions of the Gulf of Mexico;

Whereas lionfish may live for decades in high densities and reproduce at an alarming rate by spawning over 2,000,000 eggs per year per female;

Whereas lionfish inhabit most coastal marine reef habitats up to 1,000 feet deep;

Whereas in the Atlantic Ocean, lionfish consume over 50 species of fish, some of which are commercially, recreationally, and ecologically important;

Whereas lionfish may impact species of concern such as the Nassau grouper and Warsaw grouper, speckled hind, striped croaker, and key silverside;

Whereas the economic impacts of lionfish may include hindering stock rebuilding efforts for commercially and recreationally important species;

Whereas economic losses for fishermen from lionfish may include loss of fishing days when painful envenomation occurs and reduced catches of some commercial species;

Whereas predation on herbivores by lionfish can result in cascading impacts such as increased macroalgae and decreased coral biomass which would threaten ecosystem integrity and ecosystem services provided by coral reef ecosystems;

Whereas lionfish may impact Atlantic Ocean biodiversity by consuming fish species critical to maintaining healthy and viable coral reef and hard-bottom ecosystems;

Whereas interactions with other reef stressors such as ocean acidification, warming temperatures, and other factors could exacerbate lionfish impacts;

Whereas the destruction of coral reefs and increased human health hazards from lionfish may have devastating impacts on the tourism industry, which is critical to the economies of coastal communities;

Whereas current technology suggests lionfish eradication at the regional scale is likely not feasible given the expansive depths and geography of lionfish habitat;

Whereas control plans that support sustained removals of lionfish can significantly reduce local lionfish densities; and

Whereas tools for local lionfish control in some communities may include commercial harvesting as a food fish, harvesting juveniles for the aquarium trade, sport tournaments, and citizen-based removal programs: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) urges development of a comprehensive, scientifically based, region-wide strategy to address the lionfish invasion in the Atlantic Ocean, that includes actions such as local management plans and international partnerships;

(2) supports scientific research and capacity building to develop and implement responses to the lionfish invasion; and

(3) encourages raising public awareness about the lionfish invasion across the United States and its territories, especially in coastal communities, through outreach and education.

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