

Ballast Water Management

Policy paper

October 2024

OUR VIEW

Danish Shipping is committed to preserving natural ecosystems by supporting the Ballast Water Management Convention. However, we stress the need for flexible implementation due to the technical and economic challenges shipowners face.

Danish Shipping encourages the use of IMO guidelines on challenging water conditions and urges the U.S. authorities to ratify the convention, which would harmonize ballast water regulations globally.

Danish Shipping believes short-sea shipping and ferry traffic should be exempt from unnecessary treatment requirements as the risk of moving invasive species is very limited.

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Danish Shipping's Support for the Ballast Water Management Convention.

Danish Shipping actively supports the Ballast Water Management Convention, a vital initiative by the UN's International Maritime Organization (IMO) to address the threat of invasive species in marine ecosystems. Species like the Chinese mitten crab and zebra mussel can disrupt local ecosystems when transported in ships' ballast water, which is used to stabilize vessels during voyages. The convention, fully implemented on 8 September 2024, requires ships to treat ballast water before discharge to prevent foreign organisms from becoming invasive threats.

The Threat of Invasive Species

Invasive species can significantly disturb the ecological balance of marine environments. When released into non-native waters, these organisms may harm local flora and fauna, potentially impacting industries such as fishing. This ecological disruption can also carry significant commercial consequences.



Invasive species, such as the Chinese mitten crab, can pose a threat to the natural marine environment since the release of invasive species may significantly disturb the ecological balance.

Regulating Ballast Water Treatment Systems

The IMO has approved a wide range of ballast water treatment systems, and nearly all ships are now required to have one installed. The US is not party to the convention and enforces its own regulation. Not all systems approved by the IMO meet these standards. Shipowners also face challenges in installing ballast water treatment systems, particularly on existing and smaller vessels, where space is limited, and installation costs are high.

For short-sea shipping, Danish Shipping advocates for a pragmatic approach. In smaller geographic areas with uniform fauna, the risk of invasive species is minimal, and thus, ballast water treatment may be unnecessary. Danish authorities and Danish Shipping successfully promoted the "Same Risk Area" (SRA) concept within the IMO, leading to amended guidelines that allow exemptions from ballast water treatment in such smaller geographic areas.

Current Challenges and Guidelines

It is important to note that the implementation of the Ballast Water Management Convention is now in an experience-building phase, with ongoing reviews. One major challenge is the effectiveness of treatment systems in high-turbidity waters. In response, the IMO issued a guideline (MEPC.387(81)) on managing ballast water in challenging water conditions, which Danish Shipping actively supports. Danish Shipping recommends using this guidance proactively to mitigate potential issues in ports with poor water quality.

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Danish Shipping supports the data collection during the experience-building phase and the revision of the convention. The updated convention should ensure that new systems are more resilient to challenging water conditions while continuing to prevent the transfer of invasive species.

FACTS

- Annually, 5 to 10 billion tons of ballast water are transferred across oceans.
 - A VLCC (Very Large Crude Carrier) can transport around 100,000 m³ of ocean water in its ballast tanks on a single voyage and the ballast is often discharged in 24 hours, which requires systems with very high capacity.
 - Ballast water treatment systems cost between \$0.2 and \$2.5 million, with installations requiring several days in a shipyard.
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Danish Shipping has continuously supported the Ballast Water Management Convention that requires ships to treat the ballast water before discharging it, so that organisms foreign to the local environment do not become a threat.