



SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE TO CONSIDER CONGRESSIONAL BAN OF ALL PYTHONS UNDER THE LACEY ACT

***** ACTION NEEDED NOW ON S. 373! *****

**ANNOUNCEMENT POSTED TODAY, NOV. 30TH,
FOR THURSDAY, DEC. 3RD HEARING**

The Issue.

S. 373 will be heard before the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works' Subcommittee on Water & Wildlife on Thursday, December 3, 2009 at 2:00 p.m. (Room 406 Dirksen Senate Office Building, U.S. Capitol, Washington, DC).

Senator Bill Nelson (D-Florida) introduced Senate Bill S. 373 earlier this year to add the entire Python genera to the "injurious wildlife" list under the Lacey Act (Title 18 US Code Section 42(a)(1)).

As drafted, S. 373 would amend the Lacey Act to add "the constrictor snake of the species Python genera" as an injurious species that would be "prohibited from being shipped or imported into the United States."

Note: H.R. 2811, the House companion to S. 373 introduced by Representative Kendrick Meek (D-FL), was amended in July to ban only the Burmese Python of the species Python molurus bivittatus and the African Rock Python of the species Python sebae.

Historically, PIJAC has testified that the most effective and efficient way to deal with invasive species issues is through Federal/state/stakeholder collaborative initiatives. PIJAC, as a general rule, does not endorse adding species to the Lacey Act "injurious wildlife" list through legislative action unless a species poses a clear, eminent threat to human health or security on a large regional or national scale (e.g., zebra mussels). Rather, PIJAC strongly believes that listings should occur as a result of a science-based risk analysis which takes into consideration not only credible, standardized risk assessments, but also viable risk management and risk communication measures, which is long established under the Lacey Act.

Adding "Python genera", or additional constrictor species, to the injurious wildlife list under the Lacey Act has far broader consequences than indicated by the bill's language, prohibiting specimens of "the constrictor snake" (presumably a reference to Burmese Pythons) being "shipped to or imported into the United States." A Lacey Act listing, in addition to banning importation into the United States, prohibits export and interstate movement. To further compound the proposed listing, it lumps numerous species of Pythons into inaccurate taxonomic nomenclature by referring to "Python genera" rather than referencing a specific species. In short, it is not clear if only "pythons" of the genus Python would be listed or every snake commonly referred to as a python would fall under the umbrella of taxonomic confusion.

As drafted, S. 373 would ban all pythons, including ball pythons – the most popular and widely possessed Python species. If S. 373 goes forward it needs to be amended to address the one species of concern – Burmese pythons



in a scientifically-credible manner. There is absolutely no justification for banning all Pythons.

PIJAC Suggests....

If Congress does decide to go forward with listing the Burmese Python under the Lacey Act, or similar species at the federal level, then PIJAC supports species specific language that would **1) allow interstate movement (subject to certain standards), 2) allow exportation of live specimens to countries which allow importation, 3) allow possession, subject to certain conditions (i.e. caging, recordkeeping, identification and disaster plan) and 4) establish a 120-day grace period, following enactment of legislation, in which owners can, without penalty, take the necessary steps to comply with government standards.**

PIJAC is submitting to the Subcommittee a proposed federal/state mechanism for Burmese Pythons (*Python molurus bivittatus*) listed as injurious under the Lacey Act (which could be used as a model if other python species are included). PIJAC's proposal sets forth standards for possession, transportation, exhibition and aging; as well as, recordkeeping and reporting requirements and identification and escape plans.

What Can You Do?

- Call, email and fax your concerns to every member of the Senate Subcommittee on Water & Wildlife NOW! **HESITATION COULD = BAN!**
- Take time to contact each Committee member's office. You can obtain their contact information at the Committee website:
(http://epw.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=Subcommittees.Subcommittee&Subcommittee_id=47af17cb-6eeb-4fdc-b02d-0abb49d2each).
- Also, to easily contact both members of the Subcommittee, as well as your own Senator, visit PIJAC's [Legislative Action Center](http://www.pijac.org/governmentaffairs) on the PIJAC website (<http://www.pijac.org/governmentaffairs>) to learn how.
- Forward this PetAlert to other like-minded people, and ask them to **ACT NOW!**
- Please send PIJAC copies of any written submissions as well as keep us informed of any responses you receive from Congress.

Points to be highlighted when contacting Subcommittee members:

- If S. 373 is enacted as drafted, tens of thousands of American pet owners, hobbyists, and business owners across the country will be adversely impacted.
- There is no scientific justification at this time for banning any species of Python; not every species is the same and there is a large difference between the Burmese python that is found in the Everglades and other Python species commonly possessed by reptile keepers and pet owners. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has a credible science-based review process underway that should not be circumvented by simply imposing a Congressional ban.
- S. 373 should be amended to address Burmese Pythons in a scientifically credible manner. Priority needs to be given to controlling the existing population in the Everglades – resources are needed for developing baits and traps.
- If the Congress decides to ban Burmese Pythons, it should limit the ban to importation of that species into the United States.
- To prevent release of currently owned Burmese pythons into the environment, provisions should be in final law to permit interstate movement of existing U.S. population of Burmese pythons, subject to housing such animals in secure enclosures and compliance with all applicable State and local requirements and best management practices for housing and maintaining large constrictors.
- The final law should also include provisions for financial support to the USFWS and partners to expand the reptile component of the Habitattitude™ campaign to educate reptile owners not to release their unwanted pets.

Sponsor:

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