Can we contain the Aquatic Outlaws?

Have you heard about the 23 foot long, 200 pound Burmese python that was caught in Florida? Now that's a big snake. Unfortunately, the snake isn't native to Florida and is causing a huge environmental and economic impact on the Florida Everglades Ecosystem. This snake will eat anything from birds, to alligators to people's pets and is a top predator.

Sadly, the Florida Everglades is not the only place that you will find exotic invasive species. The Chesapeake Bay watershed is also home to over 200 species that aren't native. Because the Bay is a great place to visit and it is the hub of many economical products, our waters have been affected by a growing trend of nonnative species. These species are taking over our bay and have had a huge impact on our aquatic habitats as well as our native species such as crabs, rockfish, menhaden, shad, oysters and mussels.

The Maryland Scientific community has identified 12 aquatic plants and animals as the primary threat to the Chesapeake Bay. They have called them the Maryland Aquatic Outlaws. These "outlaws" include Flathead catfish, Zebra and Quagga Mussels, Purple Loosestrife, Mute Swan, Nutria, Snakehead, Water Chestnut, Chinese Mitten Crab, The Asian Carp Gang (Black, Silver, Grass, and Bighead Carp) and the Mud Bug Mob (Rusty, Red Swamp and Virile Crayfish). Many of these have been found around the state in various bodies of water. Some haven't been found as of this time but are a threat based on how they are known to spread.

Grant money has become available to work on the education, control and eradication of aquatic invasive species within the bay. Unfortunately, there is only enough money to target two species. Your team has been assigned to sit on the scientific committee to identify which of the Maryland Aquatic Outlaws will receive the money. You will report to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources aquatic research team who will be heading the grant application. In your report to the MDNR you must include the following information:

1. Background knowledge about your two targeted species – including names, origin of species, and how long it has been in Maryland
2. Identify the reasons for your choices
3. Identify the effects that they are having on the local economy, the ecosystem and the local society – include stakeholders or interests groups and ties to soils, wildlife, aquatics, and forestry
4. Potential methods of eradication or methods to slow the spread of the species
5. How will you educate the community about the organisms and your project
6. What sort of laws would you propose or are in affect to control these species

http://dnr2.maryland.gov/Invasives/Documents/md_aquatic_outlaws_poster.pdf