



Asian Carp Regional Coordinating Committee

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 10, 2010

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Senator Durbin and Congresswoman Halvorson Tour Illinois River with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Illinois DNR to Learn about Asian Carp

On August 9, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) organized a site visit and boat tour of a section the Illinois River near Starved Rock State Park at the request of U.S. Senator Richard Durbin (D-IL) and Congresswoman Debbie Halvorson (D-IL-11). The event was organized in coordination with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and commercial fishermen engaged in ongoing Asian carp population control efforts. The tour allowed both Members of Congress to get a firsthand glimpse of the threat that invasive Asian carp pose to the aquatic systems. From their boat, Durbin and Halvorson were able to observe Service and DNR biologists apply electro-fishing techniques that force Asian carp to breach the surface, as well as gill-netting and other standard sampling practices.

In recent weeks, Service and IDNR biologists have used nets and electro-fishing in the waters of the Illinois River near Starved Rock Park to capture approximately 100,000 pounds of Asian carp, which represents only a small portion the carp population believed to be present in that section of the river. These efforts are supported in large part by the roughly \$15.5 million made available under the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) in the 2010 fiscal year to fund Asian carp removal in the Great Lakes states.



Illinois DNR and USFWS fisheries biologists Vic Santucci (left) and Aaron Woldt (right) show Senator Durbin and Congresswoman Halvorson Asian carp specimens that were recovered from the Illinois River (photo credit: USFWS)

“Asian carp” refers to four species of related fish originating from Asia. Two species of Asian carp—the bighead and silver carp—were imported into the southern United States to manage water quality on aquaculture facilities and sewage lagoons. It is believed that bighead and silver carp began escaping into the wild in the 1960 or 70s and have become invasive throughout the Mississippi River Basin and elsewhere in the United States. The Great Lakes are at serious risk from Asian carp. An artificial connection—known as the Chicago Area Waterway System—connects the Great Lakes to the Illinois River, which connects to the Mississippi River. This waterway system unintentionally provides a pathway for Asian carp to enter the Great Lakes.

In July of 2010, Illinois Governor Pat Quinn announced that the state was investing approximately \$2 million to expand the capabilities of a downstate fish-processing plant that intends to sell as much as 30 million pounds of Asian carp annually to a China-based company for table fare at upscale restaurants in Asia.

Commercial fishing enhancement and overfishing are key components of the *Asian Carp Control Strategy Framework*, which has been prepared by the Asian Carp Regional Coordinating Committee’s (RCC) participating agencies to outline the actions that will be implemented to control Asian carp migration. To view the entire control framework, or to learn more about the Asian carp control strategies and efforts of the ACRCC, visit www.asiancarp.org.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands

and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit <http://www.fws.gov>.



USFWS fisheries biologist, Aaron Woldt points out a leaping Asian carp as Congresswoman Halvorson and Senator Durbin look on during a boat tour of the Illinois River (photo credit: USFWS)

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