



# Illinois Department of Natural Resources

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## **ILLINOIS ASIAN CARP CONTROL EFFORTS**

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**Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources  
Subcommittee on Water and Power  
Honorable Debbie Stabenow, Chair  
SD-36 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
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Thank you, Madam Chair and members of the subcommittee, for this opportunity to testify on the role of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources in battling the Asian carp invasion. Since the early 1990's we have been fully engaged in this effort. I will first mention a couple of the recent actions we have taken and then outline our action plans for the immediate future as we work with our Federal, State and local partners to prevent the spread of Asian carp into the Great Lakes.

First I want to be absolutely clear on one point. Our commitment to this task has been and remains unwavering. We have been working closely with our partner states, including Michigan and Wisconsin, and the federal agencies to develop effective control strategies. Illinois has also contributed significant resources to controlling Asian carp. One example is that we served as the local sponsor for the Corps of Engineers' electric barrier system, contributing \$1.8 million to this effort.

Most recently Illinois DNR served as the lead agency for the successful Rapid Response effort last December to prevent the upstream movement

of Asian carp when the electric barrier system was shut down for maintenance. The unified response of the Great Lakes States and Provinces was a shining leadership moment for our region, and a prime example of how a small group of committed people can make a difference.

This unparalleled effort demonstrated that Federal, Provincial, State, and Local partners can work together to help ensure that this invasive species does not establish sustainable populations in the Great Lakes and threaten this globally important ecosystem. Over 400 people worked together with contributions of supplies, equipment and crews from partners throughout the Basin. The Rapid Response team safely applied rotenone to a six mile stretch of the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal. The Corps of Engineers performed critical maintenance on the electric barrier system, and we led the cleanup and removal of 18,000 fish including one Big Head carp. That one fish documented that Asian carp were at the barrier and could have moved past the barrier in potentially large numbers had we not conducted the action.

It is important to note that as we consider additional operations, the cost of this single action was over \$3,000,000 and would not have been possible without the substantial donations of equipment and labor from the states and provinces and financial support of our federal partners. Thank to all for this critical support.

There are several lessons that we learned from this experience that I would like to share with the committee: first, meeting this challenge will require even greater collaboration and levels of partnership. We must enlist the scientific and communication resources as well as the political leadership of every state and province in the basin to join in this effort.

Second, early and sustained outreach to key stakeholders, proactive communication strategies and operational transparency must continue to

be maintained as we move forward with our framework strategy and operations.

Finally the collaborative approach that has been developed with our local, state, and federal partners is working very well and we believe represents the best model for future efforts.

I now wish to now outline the actions to control Asian carp that IDNR is undertaking. These actions will be conducted as part of the Asian carp framework strategy that was announced recently.

- We will conduct a targeted Asian carp removal operation throughout the entire Chicago Area Waterways System. This includes identification, containment and removal of carp using standard fisheries gear including netting, electro fishing, contract commercial fishing, and toxicants such as rotenone. These priority actions will be focused above the barrier in locations most likely to hold carp. This operation began last week.
- IDNR will contract with commercial fisherman to operate below the barrier system to reduce populations and propagule pressure on the barrier system.
- Informed by Corps of Engineers' eDNA monitoring, we will conduct sampling and removal in hotspots of the Cal Sag Channel. This includes the entire length of the Cal Sag below O'Brien Lock & Dam as well as the North Shore Channel below the Wilmette pumping station.
- We will participate with the Corps of Engineers' efforts to refine the E-DNA technology so that it is a better predictor of location and population size.

- In the next 90 days IDNR will conduct a survey of all retail live bait locations to ensure that live Asian carp minnows are not being sold in Chicago area bait shops, something that is currently unlawful in Illinois. This effort is already underway.

We have also identified several longer term actions that we are proposing:

- We will prepare for Rapid Response contingency operations, including training, advance procurement of supplies and necessary equipment.
- We will lead the Asian Carp Management and Control Implementation Task Force along with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This plan outlines 133 different actions that will be deployed nationally in all watersheds where Asian Carp are a problem.
- We will participate in additional research into barrier effectiveness using tagged fish and advanced sonar technology.
- Finally, we will work with our sister state agency, the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, to enhance commercial markets for Asian carp and investigate requirements for use of Asian carp products for humanitarian relief purposes. These efforts will promote commercial fishing on the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers and help reduce population pressures on the electric barrier system.

This is a problem that is not going to be solved by one state, or one agency. As a region we have a long and established history of using a proactive and collaborative approach. When we are divided, solutions to our problems can remain elusive. We believe our Great Lakes

Region is stronger when we work together in partnership to solve common problems, and Asian carp is not an exception to this.

The Illinois DNR looks forward to working with the other Great Lakes States and Federal Agencies in preventing Asian carp from establishing sustainable populations in the Great Lakes and in the larger problem of the exchange of invasives between the Great Lakes and Mississippi basins.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our views.