

Commentary

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amounts of food. They can weigh up to 100 pounds and grow to a length of more than four feet. They are well-suited to the climate of the Great Lakes region, which is similar to their native Asian habitats. It is widely believed that introduction of Asian carp would have a devastating effect on our Great Lakes fishery. Once carp invade the Great Lakes, they may threaten not only the Lake Superior fishery but also Minnesota's native fish population. Asian carp have been found in the Mississippi River in southern Minnesota. If the carp enter the Great Lakes, they will have access to connecting tributaries and rivers and will continue their invasion of our waterways.

We appreciate your past support for measures aimed at controlling the spread of invasive species. In 2008, the Minnesota Legislature appropriated \$500,000 of bonding money to design a barrier in the Mississippi River to prevent aquatic invasive species from migrating up the river. We hope that you will continue to support efforts such as this.

Other Great Lakes states have begun to respond to the threat. In addition to the actions taken by Illinois, Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm wrote to Michigan Attorney General Mike Cox, "We believe that emergency action to close the Chicago Sanitary and Shipping Canal locks... must be fully explored and appropriate legal action pursued as quickly as possible."

Given this imminent threat to the Great Lakes basin ecosystem, we urge you to move quickly to prevent further movement of Asian carp by taking the following actions:

- Join the state of Michigan to fully explore and take appropriate legal action to close the Chicago Sanitary and Shipping Canal locks to permanently separate the Great Lakes from the Mississippi system;
- Enforce aggressively Minnesota's invasive species laws and regulations, especially those directed at keeping these carp species out of the state's waters;
- Urge the Army Corps of Engineers to take additional actions to protect the Great Lakes by completing the second portion of the electrical barrier, fully utilizing the existing barrier that is now operating at minimal levels, creating a physical barrier that blocks carp from entering via other waterways during times of flood, and using all of their existing authority to block the carp's invasion; and
- Lead in other collaborative efforts to block invasion of Asian carp into the Great Lakes basin ecosystem.

Thank you for your attention to this very important issue. We look forward to working with you.

Signed by legislators: Rick Hansen, Thomas Humtley, Alice Hausman, Erin Murphy, John Ward, Mindy Greiling, Paul Thissen, Sheldon Johnson, Andrew Falk, Jean Wagenius, John Persell, Kate Knuth, Phyllis Kahn, Andy Welti, Karla Bigham, Linda Slocum, Gail Kulick Jackson.

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Commentary

Legislators: Stop Asian carp now!

found Asian carp DNA beyond the electrical barrier, just six miles south of Lake Michigan, and nearly 20 miles closer than previous tests had shown.

After the waterway was treated with rotenone last week, a bighead Asian carp was found in the CSSC. This is the first physical specimen that has been found in the CSSC since DNA testing earlier this year suggested the possibility of their presence.

Asian carp are a substantial threat to the Great Lakes basin ecosystem. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency website, they are large, extremely prolific, and consume vast

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Editor's note: A group of legislators sent this letter to Gov. Tim Pawlenty and Attorney General Lori Swanson on Friday, Dec. 10.

We are writing to request that you work with other Great Lake states officials to take immediate action to stop the invasion of the lakes by two species of Asian carp – the bighead carp and the silver Asian carp.

According to a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service factsheet, bighead and silver Asian carp have been found in the Illinois River, which is connected to the Great Lakes by the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal (CSSC). In 2004, an electrical barrier was placed in the CSSC to keep the carp out of the Great Lakes. However, recent testing has