

**Alliance for the Great Lakes - Great Lakes United - Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition
National Wildlife Federation - Natural Resources Defense Council - Sierra Club**

Administration Misses Opportunity to Protect Great Lakes from Asian Carp Threat

ANN ARBOR, MICH. (January 6)—The Obama Administration yesterday opposed taking emergency measures to protect the Great Lakes from the threat of Asian carp— including the temporary closure of two Chicago locks —siding with defendants in a court case that will be taken up by the U.S. Supreme Court on Friday.

The administration’s action is in response to a lawsuit brought in December by Michigan Attorney General Mike Cox—and since supported by the attorneys general in Indiana, Minnesota, New York, Ohio and Wisconsin and the Canadian province of Ontario. The lawsuit calls for measures to separate Lake Michigan from Asian-carp infested rivers and canals, including an emergency and temporary closure of two Chicago navigational locks that are the last barrier preventing the invasive fish from entering Lake Michigan and the other Great Lakes. The emergency measures would buy time to develop a permanent solution to the problem.

DNA evidence taken by University of Notre Dame researchers suggest that the invasive Asian carp - specifically the silver and bighead carp species - have breached an electric fence in the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal and are within 6 miles of Lake Michigan.

Bighead and silver carp are large filter-feeders that out-compete native fish for food and habitat. Individuals can weigh up to 110 pounds for bighead carp and 60 pounds for silver carp. Boaters have been injured by silver carp because the fish is easily startled and hurls itself out of the water and into or over boats in response to boat motors.

Conservation groups criticized the Obama Administration’s actions:

“By aiming for the status quo, these filings miss the real target,” said **Joel Brammeier, president and CEO of the Alliance for the Great Lakes**. “Five states have spoken loudly and clearly that the connection between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi has already become a liability. Separating these systems is the only pathway to protection.”

“The Obama Administration has miscalculated the threat Asian carp pose to the Great Lakes,” said **Andy Buchsbaum, regional executive director of the National Wildlife Federation’s Great Lakes Regional Center**. “Without immediate action, an invasion of Asian carp will unravel many of the President’s Great

Lakes initiatives. Regardless of what happens in the Supreme Court, the Obama administration needs to do the right thing.”

“The Asian carp pose an immediate, very significant threat to the entire Great Lakes region, and we have a limited window of time in which to act to prevent their entry into the Lakes,” said **Emily Green, director of the Sierra Club’s Great Lakes Program**. “We are counting on the Obama Administration to take the lead in addressing this threat and to take all actions necessary to prevent the carp from entering the Great Lakes, including an emergency closure of the locks. The stakes are too high for anything less.”

“Illinois and the federal government are walking away from a huge opportunity to fix real problems in the region, and instead favor the easier embrace of the status quo,” said **Henry Henderson, director of the Midwest program for the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC)**. “Asian carp are now knocking on the door of the Great Lakes precisely because the state and federal agencies in charge have responded slowly and ineffectively. They cannot now argue that they have this problem under control when they are the ones who allowed this emergency to develop in the first place. Whether they like it or not, the State of Illinois and Army Corps of Engineers are on the hook with responsibility to protect the Great Lakes.”

“DNA says that least a few carp have breached our only line of defense,” said **Jennifer Nalbene, director of invasive species and navigation for Great Lakes United**. “If DNA evidence is good enough to put criminals in jail, DNA evidence should be good enough to pull out all the stops to protect the Great Lakes and close those locks.”

“The Obama Administration has made Great Lakes restoration a top priority, which is why we are disappointed that it has chosen not to pursue closing the locks to protect the Lakes from the Asian carp,” said **Jeff Skelding, campaign director for the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition**. “Failure to confront the threat of the Asian carp threatens to undermine the progress the nation is making to restore the Great Lakes and revive the economy.”

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