

Alliance for the Great Lakes – Environment Illinois – Freshwater Future – Great Lakes United –  
Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition – National Wildlife Federation – Natural Resources  
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## **Conservation Groups Praise U.S. Senators for Action on Asian Carp, Invasive Species**

Great Lakes senators urge Army Corps to study how to build physical barrier to prevent  
invasive species from traveling between Great Lakes, Mississippi River

**ANN ARBOR, MICH. (May 24, 2010)**-Conservation groups today praised U.S. senators for taking action to stop the movement of aquatic invasive species like the Asian carp between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River. In a letter to the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, Great Lakes senators are urging Congress to direct the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to study how to build a physical barrier between two of North America's largest freshwater ecosystems.

The letter to committee Chairwoman Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) and Ranking Member James Inhofe (R-Okla.) is signed by Great Lakes Sens. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio), Ronald Burriss (D-Ill.), Bob Casey (D-Pa.), Richard Durbin (D-Ill.), Al Franken (D-Minn.), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.), Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.), Herb Kohl (D-Wis.), Carl Levin (D-Mich.), Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.), Arlen Specter (D-Pa.), Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.) and George Voinovich (R-Ohio).

"Asian carp pose a great risk to the Great Lakes. Other invasive species already in the Great Lakes are a huge problem, causing significant environmental and economic harm," said **Sen. Carl Levin (D-Mich.)**.

"So prevention is the best solution, and I will continue to press federal agencies and Congress to act with urgency to put in place the essential measures to stop Asian carp from entering the Great Lakes."

"I will work to ensure that U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is authorized to conduct a thorough study on building a barrier between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi river and look forward to the results," said **Sen. George Voinovich (R-Ohio)**. "We have worked hard to revitalize the Lakes, and these invasive species are a serious threat to the native fish population, the ecosystem and the fishing and boating community. We need to do everything in our power to help guard against invasive species and protect the fragile ecosystem of the Great Lakes."

"Asian Carp has the potential to do great damage by threatening the native fish and natural wildlife of the lake and in turn, the economy of the entire Great Lakes region," said **Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.)**. "I am glad to join my colleagues from the region in calling for this study to be included in the next Water Resources Development Act. We must continue working together to find a solution that will protect our lakes, while preserving jobs and promoting economic activity in the region."

"Asian carp pose a serious threat to our \$7 billion recreational fishing industry and \$16 billion recreational boating industry," said **Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.)**. "That's why it is critical that as we implement comprehensive short-term solutions to stop Asian carp, we also work on a permanent solution of hydrological separation to protect our Great Lakes and our economy for generations to come."

"We applaud our Great Lakes senators—especially Senators Dick Durbin, Carl Levin, Debbie Stabenow, and George Voinovich—for taking action to protect the Great Lakes and our eight-state regional economy," said **Joel Brammeier, president and CEO of the Alliance for the Great Lakes**. "A physical barrier is the only solution that will protect the people, communities and businesses of the Great Lakes from the continued onslaught and financial toll of invasive species. We urge Congress to quickly empower the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to study how this could be achieved."

The letter from the Great Lakes Task Force comes as state and federal agencies scramble to beat back the Asian carp from taking hold in the Great Lakes. DNA evidence indicates that the non-native fish have breached an electric fence in Chicago-area waterways and are in Lake Michigan.

"This is a great first step from the Great Lakes senators in addressing a significant threat to the economy and ecology of the region," said **Henry Henderson, director of the Midwest Program for the Natural Resources Defense Council**. "The Army Corps of Engineers should focus on the most promising solution to this invasive species problem--separating the Great Lakes from the Mississippi River system. The senators' action helps ensure the protection of resources that millions of Americans rely on for their jobs, drinking water and way of life."

"We applaud Sen. Durbin for his leadership in seeking a long-term solution to the threat posed by Asian carp, and other invasive species, to Lake Michigan and our Illinois River system," said **Jack Darin, director of the Sierra Club, Illinois Chapter**. "For right now, we have little choice but to try to find and kill Asian carp, but the study Sen. Durbin and the other senators are calling for gives us hope for a permanent fix that won't require repeated poisonings of the Chicago River system."

In 2007 Congress authorized the corps to look at ways to stop the spread of invasive species between the two waters. The corps' study, however, focuses on a variety of approaches to controlling invasive species—none of which is 100 percent effective—and does not look at the only permanent solution to the problem: building a physical barrier between the two waters.

The letter from U.S. senators asks the corps to study how to build a physical barrier to separate the Great Lakes and Mississippi River.

"Senators from across the region have come together to solve the Asian carp crisis once and for all," said **Jennifer Nalbone, director of Navigation and Invasive Species from Great Lakes United**. "And this vision extends way beyond the immediate carp threat: Hydrological separation will protect future generations from the devastation of future aquatic invaders passing between the Great Lakes and Mississippi regions."

The artificial connection between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River has long been recognized as a major pathway by which non-native species can spread across the country. The two waterways were connected in the early 1900s by a series of Chicago-area canals and channels, which the corps now operates.

Conservation organizations, in a letter sent to Hill offices last week, urged Congress to refocus the corps study— the Aquatic Nuisance Species Interbasin Transfer Feasibility study—to examine how to build a physical barrier that stops the movement of harmful species between the two waters.

"The united support of Great Lakes senators will be instrumental in helping advance a permanent solution to this urgent problem," said **Marc Smith, policy manager for the National Wildlife Federation**. "The Army Corps study can help provide us the best options for how to get the job done."

Building a physical barrier between the two waters, if done right, will involve smart, well-planned investments that will establish new infrastructure in the Chicago area that make the region more globally competitive and upgrade treatment of wastewater and storm water. The result can be a revitalized Chicago Waterway System that not only closes the highway for invasive species, but also enhances Chicago's transportation system, creates local and regional jobs, reduces business costs across the region, and improves water quality, tourism, and recreation.

"Great Lakes senators have opened the door for us to put forward a solution to this problem that is a winner for the entire region," said **Glynnis Collins, executive director for Prairie Rivers Network**. "If we do this the right way everyone comes out ahead: people, communities, businesses and the Great Lakes and Mississippi River basins. But we're not going to get there if we don't have the right information to begin with. Congress needs to direct the Corps of Engineers to look at the best way to build a barrier that stops invasive species and meets the needs of the region."

Severing the artificial connection between the Mississippi River and the Great Lakes will require modifications to the Chicago Waterway System—a series of canals, locks and channels built more than

100 years ago that allowed the city of Chicago to reverse the flow of its namesake river to deal with its sewage and protect Lake Michigan drinking water.

The waterway system has allowed for the movement of goods through the city, and region. But it also diverts massive amounts of water away from the Great Lakes, opened the door to the movement of invasive species between the two ecosystems, and allowed the city to postpone a sustainable solution to deal with its sewage problem.

"Our senators understand that there are solutions to this problem that support all of the many uses that the Great Lakes and Mississippi River provide," said **Max Muller, director of Environment Illinois**.

"Millions of people will benefit from a permanent solution to this problem."

Stopping invasive species is a key tenet of a precedent-setting federal initiative for Great Lakes restoration and economic recovery. The Brookings Institution found that a \$26 billion investment in Great Lakes restoration will lead to at least \$50 billion benefit in economic benefit for the region.

"Great Lakes restoration and economic recovery hinge on preventing the introduction of invasive species into the Lakes," said **Jeff Skelding, director of the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition**.

"Our senators are once again showing that they will lead the effort to protect this global resource. It's now time for Congress to follow through and direct the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to look at the most efficient and effective way to build a barrier between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River."

Read the letter from the Great Lakes Task Force at: [www.healthylakes.org](http://www.healthylakes.org)