

Alliance for the Great Lakes • Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition • Great Lakes United • National Wildlife Federation •

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National Wildlife Federation

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**Groups Declare Asian Carp Emergency,
Call on Feds, Illinois to Seal Lake Michigan Gateways**

(CHICAGO) -- Conservation groups called for immediate closure of all Illinois gateways and locks leading to Lake Michigan this morning in a last-ditch attempt to keep the destructive Asian carp from invading the Great Lakes.

New testing shows the presence of Asian carp DNA past the electric barrier and adjacent to the O'Brien Lock just 6 miles south of Lake Michigan in the Calumet River, nearly 20 miles closer than previous tests had shown.

The groups demand that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and state of Illinois close the O'Brien, Chicago River and Wilmette locks until monitoring results show the waterways are completely clear of bighead and silver carp and that an electric barrier built to keep them out of Lake Michigan and the other Great Lakes has not been breached.

"Today, there are no second chances," said Joel Brammeier, acting president of the Alliance for the Great Lakes. "We cannot miss this opportunity to protect the lakes from these fish and their devastating legacy. It's imperative we put the health of the Great Lakes -- the world's largest surface freshwater system -- first."

Andy Buchsbaum, regional executive director of the National Wildlife Federation's Great Lakes Regional Center, said: "The stakes are too high -- we have to act now. Getting this wrong will be catastrophic for the Great Lakes."

Groups have warned of the potential need for such a drastic remedy for a number of years now.

"If we don't close the locks, we are waving the white flag and allowing one of the greatest ecological tragedies to occur," said Jennifer Nalbony, campaign director of Invasive Species and Navigation for Great Lakes United. "If the Asian carp make it to Lake Michigan, the damage to fisheries in the Lakes and tributaries will be profound and irreversible."

Just last week the U.S. Coast Guard announced plans to close the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal for four to five days beginning Dec. 2 to perform routine maintenance on an electric barrier built to keep the carp at bay. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources still plans to treat 6 miles of the canal between the barrier and the Lockport Lock and Dam with rotenone, a fish-killing poison.

Known to batter boaters and even knock them into the water at the sound of a passing motor, Asian carp are voracious filter feeders that can grow to more than 4 feet long, weigh up to 100 pounds and quickly dominate a body of water by gobbling up the same food that sustains native fish populations.

If the carp make their way into the Great Lakes, they could devastate the region's \$4.5 billion fishing industry and permanently alter how recreational boaters, anglers and tourists use and enjoy the lakes and their many tributaries.

"This is an emergency that calls for swift action to protect the Great Lakes," said Jeff Skelding, national campaign director for the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition. "People, businesses and communities will pay a steep price if government inaction allows the Asian carp to enter the Great Lakes and upend the world's largest source of fresh water."

Link to map of the area: http://www.lrc.usace.army.mil/projects/fish_barrier/index.html

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Formed in 1970, the **Alliance for the Great Lakes** is the oldest independent Great Lakes citizens' organization in North America. Its mission is to conserve and restore the world's largest freshwater resource using policy, education and local efforts, ensuring a healthy Great Lakes and clean water for generations of people and wildlife. More about the Alliance for the Great Lakes is online at www.greatlakes.org.

The National Wildlife Federation is America's largest conservation organization inspiring Americans to protect wildlife for our children's future.

The Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition consists of more than 100 zoos, aquariums, museums, and hunting, fishing, and environmental organizations representing millions of people, whose common goal is to restore and protect the Great Lakes.

Great Lakes United is an international coalition dedicated to preserving and restoring the health of the Great Lakes St. Lawrence River ecosystem.