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Carp Captured: Invasive Bighead Carp Caught Near Lake Michigan

*Fish finding affirms eDNA testing and points to need for
aggressive action to stave off fish invaders*

CHICAGO (June 23, 2010) – The nightmare scenario of Asian carp entering the Great Lakes through Chicago waterways is closer to reality as the Asian Carp Regional Coordinating Committee announced today that they had captured an invasive bighead carp in Lake Calumet, 6 miles away from Lake Michigan. The fish's capture bolsters repeated environmental DNA tests which have shown that the carp have evaded an electrical barrier intended to prevent their movement out of canals artificially connecting the Great Lakes and Mississippi River system. Scientists and government regulators agree that the invasive fish pose a dire threat to the Lakes because of their size and voracious appetites.

Environmental groups throughout the Great Lakes have been advocating for quick action to impede the carp's headlong swim towards Lake Michigan, even as federal officials and business interests have questioned the validity of cutting edge science that pointed to the invasive species' presence. Today's news brings a renewed call for more agile efforts to prevent the carp's movement. Many organizations have called for hydrologic separation of the two systems to ensure the movement of the carp and other invasive species is stopped. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recently said that a study of this solution will take five to seven years.

Following are statements from regional NGOs engaged on the carp issue:

"Asian carp are like cockroaches, when you see one, you know its accompanied by many more you don't see," said **Henry Henderson, Director of the Natural Resources Defense Council's Midwest Program** (and a former Commissioner of the Environment for the City of Chicago). "Now we can stop arguing about whether the fish are in Chicago's canals and start moving as quickly as possible toward

permanently separating the Great Lakes and Mississippi River watersheds. We just cannot wait five to seven years for the Army Corps of Engineers to complete its own studies before deciding to solve this problem.”

“This live Bighead carp was caught well beyond the electric fence that was supposed to stop them, only six miles from Lake Michigan. There are no other physical barriers before these monsters reach Lake Michigan,” said **Andy Buchsbaum, Director of the Great Lakes Office of the National Wildlife Federation**. “If the capture of this live fish doesn’t confirm the urgency of this problem, nothing will. We need to pull out all the stops; this is code red for the Great Lakes.”

"A year of DNA testing has shown the Asian carp are in the Chicago waterways, and now we know they're a hop, skip and jump from Lake Michigan," said **Joel Brammeier, president of the Alliance for the Great Lakes**. "Invaders will stop at nothing short of bricks and mortar, and time is running short to get that protection in place."

“This underscores the urgency of measures to stop the carp from entering the Lake, and of beginning as soon as possible with an analysis and plan for separating the Lake Michigan and Mississippi/ Illinois River watersheds,” said **Jack Darin, Director of Sierra Club’s Illinois Chapter**. “That’s the only way to permanently stop the Asian Carp, and other alien invaders, from getting into our Great Lakes. The sooner we are able to break the artificial connection between these two waterways, the sooner we will be able to stop killing off fish in the Chicago River system.”

“The question is not whether – but exactly where and how – to restore the natural divide between the Mississippi basin from the Great Lakes,” said **Clark Bullard of Prairie River Network**. “It’s time to think big and replace our obsolete 19th century infrastructure with a modern intermodal freight terminal and 21st century sewage and storm water treatment technologies.”

"This is a great example of how as we talk about possible solutions the fish keep on swimming," said **Jill Ryan, Executive Director of Freshwater Future**. "Now is the time to move to hydrologically separate the Great Lakes watershed from the Mississippi watershed. To make this happen we need everyone to demand action."

“This discovery underscores the urgent need to act quickly to solve the Asian carp crisis,” said **Jeff Skelding, director of the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition**. “Great Lakes restoration and economic recovery hinge on preventing invasive species like the Asian carp from getting into the Lakes. We are urging the U.S. Congress to direct the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to study—and complete in short order—the most efficient and effective way to build a barrier between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River.”

IDNR’s statement about the fish caught yesterday is available at <http://asiancarp.org/documents/FINALRCCCarpDiscoveryLakeCalumetJune232010.pdf>