



Protecting Wildlife for our children's future



National Wildlife Federation Supports Strategy to Keep Asian Carp out of Lakes

ANN ARBOR, MICH. (November 14) —The National Wildlife Federation today supported a strategy put forward by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. EPA to prevent the Asian carp—one of the most infamous and destructive invasive species—from entering the Great Lakes.

The fish pose a severe threat to the Great Lakes. The fish can grow up to 100 pounds and can consume large amounts of food—upwards of 40 percent of its weight each day—out-competing native fish for food. In some stretches of the Illinois River, Asian carp now comprise up to 90 percent of the fish.

The non-native fish is within miles of Lake Michigan. After escaping from Southern fish farms, the fish have migrated up the Mississippi and Illinois rivers and into the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal—which empties into Lake Michigan.

The only defense is an electric barrier along the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal that repels the fish. The barrier must be shut down to undergo scheduled maintenance. To prevent non-native Asian carp from circumventing the barrier while it is turned off, fisheries managers will kill thousands of fish in the canal using rotenone—a fish poison.

Andy Buchsbaum, regional executive director for the National Wildlife Federation's Great Lakes Regional Center, said:

“Nobody wants to see a fish kill, but in this case, the agencies have no choice. The Illinois DNR and the federal agencies are doing the right thing. They have to do whatever it takes to keep Asian Carp out of Lake Michigan or the Great Lakes will turn into giant carp ponds.

“The stakes are so high because it only takes one Asian carp – even one Asian carp egg – to get a foothold in Lake Michigan and then it’s all over. The carp would reproduce and infest the lakes and we would all suffer the consequences forever.

“While this move will buy us time in the short-run, we need to look at slamming the door on the Asian carp once and for all, and that means separating the Great Lakes and Mississippi River watersheds.

“Until then, we are playing Russian Roulette with the largest freshwater resource in the world. And that does not make any sense.”

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

For Immediate Release:

November 13, 2009

Contact:

Andy Buchsbaum, National Wildlife Federation, 734-887-7100