

Les Cheneaux Watershed Council

...protecting, conserving and restoring our water-based resources.



7 February 2011

U. S. Army Corps of Engineers
Detroit District
Attention: Charles M. Simon
Box 1027
Detroit, MI 48231

Re: Les Cheneaux Watershed Council recommendations to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for effective, long term control of aquatic nuisance species moving between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River Basins.

Dear Mr. Simon,

The Les Cheneaux Watershed Council (LCWC) recommends an ecological separation of the Great Lakes and Mississippi watersheds as a preferred and permanent, long-term solution to protect the two watersheds from the transfer of all aquatic nuisance species between the basins. This position is in agreement with and in support of similar recommendations by the Great Lakes Council and Great Lakes United.

Hydraulic separation of the basins is critical. Whereas final reports of the three phase project proposal are scheduled December of 2011, we strongly urge that an implementation schedule is included, the first phase of which will be immediate construction of a temporary total blockage of the Chicago Sanitation and Shipping Canal (CSSC). This is the most probable waterway to permit passage of nuisance aquatic organisms and needs to be dealt with first.

It is not an environmental impact statement that is immediately needed. An action plan to prevent the interbasin transfer of aquatic nuisance species is crucial. Now.

Priorities for the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) in 2011 need to be:

- 1) Immediate temporary hydraulic blockage of the CSSC.
- 2) Complete CSSC hydraulic blockage plan by June 2011.
- 3) Implement aquatic nuisance species prevention plan by September, 2011.

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Following initial blockage of the CSSC more permanent activities can be undertaken to develop the ecological separation plan which should be completed over a maximum of five years.

Our members realize that normal Chicago River traffic will be slowed, but not stopped, by physical total blockage of the river if proper planning is done. One approach is for upbound or downbound commercial vessels to offload their cargo to rail cars and to complete deliveries by rail or truck. Upbound or downbound recreational vessels can use a version of the boat transport used for the Trent-Severn hoist and trolley. During their time out of the water recreational vessels will have their hulls disinfected and cleaned before re-entering the waterway.

Finally, the entire Great Lakes Basin will benefit by elimination of all aquatic nuisance organisms from entering the system. Towards this end we recommend development of a Great Lakes shipping fleet. Such a fleet will carry all goods on the Great Lakes. They will offload/load cargo to/from foreign vessels only in brackish water at suitable locations in the St. Lawrence Seaway. No foreign vessels will be permitted to enter the Great Lakes waterways on a routine basis. Some exceptions may be granted on a one-time basis whereby stringent bilge disinfection procedures must be undertaken.

Officials from states of the Great Lakes and Mississippi River Basin have known of the potential and ecological and economic dangers of invasive aquatic species movement between the systems since the opening of the Welland Canal over fifty years ago. Given the latest Asian Carp threat, failure of the USACE to immediately take less than the above stated action will be very disappointing.

We wish the USACE success with expedient development and execution of a realistic and timely plan to stop the continued aquatic nuisance organism invasion of interior USA waters.

Respectfully,



Robert A. Smith, President
Les Cheneaux Watershed Council

Copy: United States President Barak Obama
United States Senator Carl Levin
United States Senator Debbie Stabenow
USACE Chicago District: Colonel Vincent V. Quarles, Commander