

GLMRIS

GREAT LAKES AND MISSISSIPPI RIVER INTERBASIN STUDY

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Public Scoping Meeting Location: Minneapolis, MN

Date of Comment: 20 Jan 11

Comment Number: 2



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The Great Lakes and Mississippi River Interbasin Study authorized by Congress mandating that the Army Corps of Engineers determine options to prevent invasive species from moving through the Chicago Waterway in both directions is important because without it there will be no authorization of funding for a permanent barrier. However, given the threat to a \$7 billion Great Lakes fishery and the existing available research, the current timeline for the Corps study with the Chicago portion not expected until 2015 is too long.

Asian carp would threaten the more than \$7 billion Great Lakes fishery. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Great Lakes Fishery Commission agree that Asian carp are a significant threat to the Great Lakes because of their size, ability to reproduce prolifically, and ability to consume large amounts of food. They are well-suited to the climate of the Great Lakes region. If they enter the Great Lakes, they would likely become a dominant species and would compete for food with valuable sport and commercial fish.

Asian carp are an immediate threat and require immediate action. Asian Carp are already present in the Chicago Ship and Sanitary Canal that connects the Mississippi River to the Great Lakes, including above the electric barriers the Corps has installed to prevent carp from reaching the Lakes.

The Corps needs to condense the timeline for its study and produce final results for the Chicago portion of the feasibility study within 18 months. The current timeline can be condensed by incorporating results from existing studies rather than repeating work that has already been done on risk assessment, wastewater and transportation, and economic analysis by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Great Lakes Commission and Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Cities Initiative.

The Great Lakes and the Mississippi River are not naturally connected. Moreover, the occurrence of more intense rain/storm events increases the likelihood of flooding in this area and potential for the Asian carp to gain entry to Lake Michigan. This study is intended to prevent invasive species, including Asian carp, from moving between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River basins. It is not acceptable to wait until Asian Carp are already present in the Great Lakes before considering physical separation of the two basins. Clearly, the electric barriers are not enough to prevent aquatic invasive species from moving between the Mississippi River and the Great Lakes. Therefore, a permanent hydrologic separation is needed.

Physical separation must include mitigation to those with long- or short- term economic losses, if those losses can be verified.

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