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GLMRIS

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Silver Carp were imported for phytoplankton control in 1973. By the mid 1970's, they were being raised at federal, state, and private facilities and were stocked in several sewage lagoons. In 1980, they were discovered in the Ouachita River in Louisiana.

In the seventies, bighead carp were imported by a private aquaculturist to help improve water quality in culture ponds. They first appeared in the Ohio and Mississippi rivers in the 1980s.

Today, these two species, collectively referred to as Asian carp, have invaded the Mississippi River basin and occupy an area stretching from Louisiana to South Dakota and Ohio in the North. Today, they literally stand on the doorstep of the Great Lakes. They threaten to enter Lake Michigan through the only link between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River Basin, the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal.

Asian carp are filter feeders eating primarily plankton. Because they have been so prolific, and because the Great Lakes would provide them with a habitat that is similar to their native range, it is of paramount importance that we keep them out. Introducing such ravenous species that feed at the bottom of the food chain could have a dramatic, if not devastating, effect. Asian carp could push out native fish populations such as perch, whitefish, and walleye and become the dominant species.

We are at a key juncture in keeping Asian carp out of the Great Lakes. Prevention should be the goal rather than a "reduction of risk."

Laws that permit non-native species to be imported into our Country should be rescinded. There are other laws in place that provide for the importation of tropical fish that can be detrimental to our natural waterways should they be released either by accident or design. These should also be more strictly enforced.

The United States of America has a very rich history complete with the sad results of unintended releases and intended but poorly planned releases of non-native species with no controls. This must be corrected to protect the fisheries enjoyed by our Nation.

Commercial netting of non-game fish has proved to be a viable control when concentrated. Free commercial permits and liberal limits must be set on these non-game invasive species to help control the spread and positive means must be provided to deny the invasive non-native species access to the Great Lakes.