

Thank you for your comment, Lisa Frede.

The comment tracking number that has been assigned to your comment is GLMRIS50609.

Comment Date: March 31, 2011 16:04:53PM

GLMRIS

Comment ID: GLMRIS50609

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Attachment: CICI Comments GLMRIS 03 31 11 FINAL.doc

Comment Submitted:

March 31, 2011

Mr. David Wethington  
Project Manager  
Chicago District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineer  
111 North Canal Street  
Chicago, IL 60606

**RE: GLMRIS: Great Lakes and Mississippi River Interbasin Study  
National Environmental Policy Act Scoping Comments**

Dear Mr. Wethington,

The Chemical Industry Council of Illinois ("CICI") is a statewide trade association representing 209 member companies. These companies employ over 48,000 workers at an average annual wage of \$81,400 at 726 manufacturing facilities and 877 wholesale and distribution facilities in Illinois. Illinois' chemical industry is the third largest manufacturing sector in the state. In addition, Illinois is the fourth largest chemical producing state in the nation. Illinois' large chemical industry presence is primarily because of easy access to Illinois' waterway system (Illinois River, Des Plaines River and Chicago Area Waterway System) and the ability to receive and ship product by barge.

CICI appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Great Lakes Mississippi River Interbasin Study (GLMRIS) that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) released in November. **CICI encourages the USACE to focus their efforts on actions that will protect both the environment and the economic viability of the region.**

CICI has been very involved in a number of Asian carp/electric barrier issues. CICI sits on the dispersal barrier safety committee; attended several of the dispersal barrier meetings, now known as the Technical & Policy Advisory Group, at USEPA Region 5; sit on the Great Lakes Commission study stakeholders group and participated in numerous industry stakeholders' conference calls. CICI has also submitted several comments to USACE and USEPA regarding economic impacts to the chemical industry; USACE Interim III and IIIA reports; Asian Carp Regional Coordinating Committee (ACRCC) draft management report draft 1; and now the GLMRIS report. CICI believes that the best results for suppression and prevention of further movement of the Asian carp into the Great Lakes basin will rely on a multi-tiered approach of technologies throughout the Mississippi/Great Lakes basins' access points.

#### The Scope and Structure of GLMRIS

CICI appreciates that the USACE for carefully following Congress' directive to "study the range of options and technologies available to prevent the spread of ANS between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River basin through the Chicago and Sanitary Ship Canal (CSSC) and other aquatic pathways." The Water Resources Development Act of

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2007 clearly instructs the USACE to investigate the movement of all species, including bacteria, viruses, plants, algae, invertebrates, parasites, and fish, not just Asian carp, and movement from one basin to another, not just from the Mississippi River to the Great Lakes.

CICI agrees with the American Waterway Operators (AWO), who "strongly recommends" that the USACE engage industry on a regular basis, at a minimum before each decision point, to ensure that the study is taking all navigation considerations into account. The USACE should encourage an open line of communication by hosting bi-annual open meetings that solicit public input on the direction of GLMRIS, and should continue to make draft reports available for public comment. A transparent and vigorous process is essential to ensure an extensive, thoughtful, and complete study. The USACE should ensure that all stakeholders have the opportunity to be actively involved in the development of the study "goals, objectives, scope, and alternatives" during this and futures stages of the study.

CICI encourages the USACE not to consider truncating the study to eighteen months. The claim that "nothing is being done" to stop the advancement of Asian carp is simply not based in reality. Last year alone, the ACRCC, a multi-state and multi-agency consortium, spent over \$37 million in an organized and targeted manner to research, monitor, and control the movement of the Asian carp. The ACRCC is positioned to spend another \$33 million in 2011 to continue this important and effective work. The Administration has demonstrated its commitment to ensure the success of this group with the appointment of an Asian Carp Director to lead its efforts. Shortening the GLMRIS timeline would render this study inadequate as a basis for the public policy decisions of Congress or the Administration.

CICI encourages the USACE to continue to use "risk reduction" as a guiding principle for the study. It is the most logical and practical way to evaluate appropriate actions and most effectively allocate the scarce state and federal resources available.

#### Focus Area I

To properly assess all aspects of the potential actions being considered on the CAWS, the USACE needs to have a complete economic study regarding the financial impacts if water borne transportation is hindered in any way. This should focus on both basins. The transportation industry is very incestuous and cannot simply be split into two separate basins. There are many accessory issues that come into play when discussing transportation, be it via barge, rail or road. Several issues that come into play are air quality issues, idling of vehicles, excessive truck traffic, fatalities due to increased road traffic, cost to companies and the cost passed on to consumers, federal money needed to maintain roads and rails, the sheer number of trains that will be added, job loss, tax dollars lost, companies leaving the basin area, decrease in property values, etc. All of these issues must be thoroughly addressed in the final GLMRIS report.

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Two recent studies may well help to inform the type of economic study needed. A study by the Ports of Indiana, released in September 2010, found that 17,655 jobs and \$1.9 billion in economic activity in northwest Indiana alone were attributable to barge movements through the O'Brien Lock in 2008. Another study by DePaul University, published in April 2010, concluded that the conservative and preliminary economic value of the commercial navigation to the region is \$4.7 billion.

Another recent study by the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI), sponsored by the U.S. Maritime Administration and the National Waterways Foundation, offers some insights into the environmental and human costs of a modal shift from waterways to rail or trucks. As an example, TTI found that a cessation of waterborne commerce in the smaller metropolitan area of St. Louis would increase the region's traffic delays by almost 500%, increase injuries and fatalities on the region's highways by up to 45%, and increase the amount of carbon dioxide pollutants from 2.1 million tons (rail) to 14.2 million tons (trucks).

CICI strongly opposes the use of the Great Lakes Commission's *21<sup>st</sup> Century Waterway Study* into GLMRIS. This document does not meet the criteria of an unbiased scientific study. Its conclusion has been laid out in its objectives: to "develop and evaluate scenarios for separation." CICI would like to remind the USACE that the GLMRIS report should be based on a full scientific analysis and not be influenced by quickly assembled "studies" that may not have taken the entire scope of the basins and the issues associated in those basins in their reports. CICI also opposes the use the Natural Resource Defense Council's (NRDC) *Re-Visioning the Chicago River: Adopting Comprehensive Regional Solutions to the Invasive Species Crisis*. Again a document that that CICI feels does not reach an unbiased scientific conclusion.

It is understandable that there may be some valuable information in other studies that the USACE had not accounted for, such as the above mentioned transportation studies, but there should be a complete vetting process before including any "outside" information into GLMRIS. To ensure that the USACE has solid and complete information included in the report, CICI encourages the USACE to engage more individuals from the Mississippi basin. CICI members range not just from Illinois but all the way down to Houston and New Orleans. Industry input on the interim and GLMRIS reports are essential to the quality of the report's final outcome. For example, given the relatively low profile of the towing industry, it is easy to forget that the removal of just one barge from the waterways would add 58 trucks to the highways. CAWS and its critical waterways infrastructure must be preserved.

The USACE has laid out an inventory of historic and existing conditions within Table 1. While the Table seems to be complete for most of the major impacts, CICI finds an oversight of the flooding issue. The USACE has listed flooding as Hydrology & Hydraulics but neglected to list flooding as an economic issue. The last major rainfall event in the Chicago Metro area, July 2010, produced more than 7 inches of rain. At least

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11 towns and villages were declared disaster areas and were eligible for FEMA assistance. This shows that the flooding issues needs to also be addressed as an economic issue along with being addressed as a hydrological issue. This is an area of oversight were USACE can benefit from other stakeholders. The CAWS needs to remain pure for its vital use as a stormwater runoff venue.

#### Focus Area II

Every state surrounding the Great Lakes, with the exception of Michigan, contains at least one of the 36 potential surface water connections and at least one of the 18 locations at “significant risk” for transfer along the 1,500-mile continental divide identified in GLMRIS’ *Other Pathways Preliminary Risk Characterization Report*. Due to the active work directed by the ACRCC *Framework*, the CAWS is the “Fort Knox” of potential pathways, with three electric barriers, targeted rotenone applications, a variety of widespread and targeted fishing, and flood barriers preventing ANS movement between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River basins through the CAWS. Other actions that are underway or have taken place have dramatically decreased the risk of ANS transfer. Concentrating on Focus Area II, not Focus Area I, will be the most impactful way to stop the movement of the full range of ANS between the two basins.

#### Asian Carp Science

The Asian carp issue should not become the driving force of GLMRIS. There is no reason to conclude that there is an imminent threat of Asian carp bypassing the electric barriers and moving into the Great Lakes. Both the Supreme Court and the District Court of Illinois have rejected preliminary injunctions to close the O’Brien and Chicago locks, ruling that states and environmental groups provided no evidence that harm was imminent. In addition, the FWS believes breeding populations of Asian carp to be at least 100 miles from Lake Michigan. Most important, the single Asian carp that was caught above the electric barriers in Lake Calumet, according to mircochemical analysis, appears to have been placed there by humans.

With the large number of possible pathways for introduction of Asian carp into the Great Lakes, keeping isolated numbers or single specimens of fish out of the Great Lakes is likely an impossible task, and focusing on such a goal would be an irresponsible diversion of resources. In fact, isolated specimens of Asian carp have been found in Lake Erie for over 15 years. Isolated cases of Asian carp being discovered upriver of the control barriers do not indicate the presence of a self-sustaining population.

As the *Other Pathways Risk Characterization Report* states, recent bioenergetics models of Asian carp metabolism and Great Lakes resources availability conclude that the silver and bighead carp, which are pelagic plankton feeders, would be restricted to nutrient-rich areas of the Great Lakes including embayments and the mouths of tributaries. Additionally, it is well known that the southern portions of Lake Michigan contain limited levels of plankton. An aquatic “desert” is likely to further constrain any carp from surviving and thriving in Lake Michigan. As such, CICI supports an analysis through

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GLMRIS of whether or not isolated numbers of Asian carp could successfully establish self-sustaining populations in Lake Michigan and the other Great Lakes.

Other Considerations

Other comments, questions, and suggestions for the Corps as it moves forward with GLMRIS:

- “Expected Outcomes” is an unlikely and disappointing starting point for a study that should be unbiased and based on scientific information. CICI requests that USACE outline all expected outcomes and allow comments on them before moving forward.
- Although the study cannot evaluate ANS movement across international borders, the potential for movement of ANS through other basins or watersheds should inform all possible recommended actions.
- The study should also look at other, non-aquatic pathways for the transfer of ANS between basins – especially human transfer, either deliberately or by accident – and develop preventative recommendations.
- Attachment F to the Project Management Plan, under the navigation section, includes evaluation criteria for recreational navigation benefits but not commercial navigation benefits. All commercial benefits should be included.
- A more detailed explanation of the Consolidated Command Guidance and the ESC Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) would further inform comments and a better understanding of the study process.
- The USACE should furnish a detailed explanation of how monitoring and adaptive management will be part of the study.
- GLMRIS should promote balanced and co-equal objectives in its examination of how to prevent ANS transfer and preserve waterways uses. However, there are signs that GLMRIS either favors commercial and recreational fishing at the expense of commercial and recreational navigation, or views existing waterways uses as a study restraint. This is reflected by statements in the Appendix 2, which describes the potential trade-off for each ANS alternative. The trade-off depicts the preservation of commercial and recreational fisheries as an economic benefit while commercial and recreational navigation is depicted as an economic cost of ANS mitigation measures.
- The USACE should update all current and future reports and documents to include a key for acronyms used.

CICI believes that using the most accurate economic and scientific information is vital to the purity of the final results for the GLMRIS project. The GLMRIS report should thoroughly address the “ripple” effect of what happens to environmental and transportation issues in the basins should water transportation be hindered. CICI strongly urges the USACE to determine the scope of GLMRIS in a way that ensures a balanced approach to the recommendation of alternative ANS controls – an approach that recognizes the human uses of our nation’s water resources as an intrinsic component of

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the nation's social and economic fabric and is cognizant of the benefits drawn from commercial uses of our water resources and infrastructure.

CICI appreciates the complexity and challenges that are relative in the scope of the GLMRIS report. CICI would like to offer its continued support and interest in the development and implementation of solutions that protect the environment and the economy. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the scope of this important study.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Lisa Frede", in a dark ink.

Lisa Frede  
Director of Regulatory Affairs  
Chemical Industry Council of Illinois

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