

Thank you for your comment, Mark Biel.

The comment tracking number that has been assigned to your comment is GLMRIS50610.

Comment Date: March 31, 2011 16:24:38PM

GLMRIS

Comment ID: GLMRIS50610

First Name: Mark

Middle Initial: A

Last Name: Biel

Organization: UnLock Our Jobs Coalition/Chemical Industry Council

Address: 400 W. Monroe, Suite 205

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City: Springfield

State: IL

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Country: USA

Privacy Preference: Don't withhold my personal information from the website and NEPA documents

Attachment: GLMRIS Information Request FINAL.docx

Comment Submitted:



March 31, 2011

To: Major General John W. Peabody
550 Main Street, Room 10032
Cincinnati, OH 45202-3222

CC: John Goss, Asian Carp Director, White House Council on Environmental Quality

Dear Major General Peabody:

I am writing to inquire about the status of the Corps ongoing Great Lakes and Mississippi River Interbasin study (GLMRIS). My purpose today is not to provide substantive comments for the official docket, but rather to identify specifically what the Corps is doing to improve transparency and stakeholder engagement related to the GLMRIS process.

The Corps initiatives to prevent the migration of Asian carp between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River have demonstrated exceptional interagency cooperation over the last few months. For example, the Asian Carp Regional Coordinating Committee's website – AsianCarp.org – and the working groups regularly updated control frameworks have provided timely and transparent information on the goals and activities of all agencies involved. This free flow of information has allowed for timely, and I hope you would agree, constructive feedback from all interested parties to help guide and improve government response efforts.

This same level of transparency and organized information sharing is not being utilized for GLMRIS. For instance, a number of agencies use Regulations.gov to promote open and interactive public comments on proposed regulations, studies and other docketed processes. The comment period for GLMRIS, as a closed docket with no public access to the content of submitted comments, will end on March 31st without interested parties having had the opportunity to review and respond to recommendations from other organizations. Likewise, I am unclear as to what the next steps and timeline will be for reviewing and acting on comments that have been submitted. This approach severely constrains stakeholders from providing substantive feedback on the scope of GLMRIS or the suggestions and requests of other stakeholders.

The output of complex, long-range studies like GLMRIS is only as good as the information and knowledge and other inputs sought during the design process. I urge the Corps to do everything it can to work cooperatively with stakeholders on this issue to ensure a stronger final study.

In conclusion, I would like to request on behalf of the member organization of UnLock Our Jobs, specific feedback on the following items: First, will the Corps utilize an open docket system for future GLMRIS comments? Second, what are the timeline and next steps for moving forward with the study?

Thank you for your consideration.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark C. Biel". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "M" and "B". The signature is placed on a light-colored, slightly textured background.

Mark Biel
Chair, UnLock Our Jobs Coalition
Executive Director, Chemical Industry Council of Illinois

The UnLock Our Jobs coalition was founded to protect the operation of the Chicago Area Waterways System (CAWS) - the essential waterway connection between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River Basin. The coalition consisting of agriculture, labor, business, river communities and concerned citizens all work toward a comprehensive solution to stop the spread of Asian Carp, while leaving the Chicago locks open to commerce.