

Asian Carp barrier project gains key support

Update on Asian Carp

Time is running out. For years scientists have been raising concerns about the four species of Asian Carp native to Russia and China: Bighead, Silver, Grass and Black Carp entering the Great lakes and its tributaries. Twenty-eight Grass Carp have been caught in the Great lakes since 2013.



Though not yet established in Canadian waters, all four species of carp have been sighted in lakes and rivers in the United States, particularly in parts of the Mississippi River where, according to scientists, Bighead and Silver Carp make up 80% of the biomass.

Should Asian Carp, particularly Silver and Bighead establish themselves in the Great Lakes, the results could cause significant losses to native species and threaten local tourism and businesses including the \$7 billion commercial and recreational fishing industries. So far, a series of electric fences in American waters has kept both species of carp from reaching the Great Lakes in large numbers.

Brandon Road Lock and Dam Project
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The project, according to the Army Corps of Engineers, is costly with an estimate exceeding \$700 million for structural work including building an electric barrier, creating a "curtain" of air bubbles to remove fish in the spaces between barges, and installing underwater speakers generating noise to deter fish from traveling beyond the lock and dam.

Although in the preliminary stages, Michigan and several other Great Lake states and Canadian provinces are in discussions as to the possibility of forming a partnership agreement to assist in some of the cost-sharing components of the project such as operations and maintenance costs estimated at \$7.7 million annually. Both the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative (a coalition of CDN and US mayors) and the Great Lakes Commission support the project.

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It would likely be the case that any agreement on substantial cost-sharing would be subject to the State of Illinois' willingness to sign off on an agreement with the Army Corps of Engineers for the pre-construction, engineering and design phase of the project. On April 26, 2019, in an exciting turn of events, the new Governor of Illinois issued a Press Release authorizing the State of Illinois to proceed with initial engineering work on the Brandon Road Lock and Dam. In light of the previous support given to the project by the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, the Great Lakes Commission and the Alliance for the Great Lakes, the Governor intends to work with his "Great Lakes neighbours, who also recognize the urgency of the issue and are critical strategic and financial partners".

The Georgian Bay Association's Fisheries Committee will continue to monitor this project and report on its progress as it unfolds. This is a unique opportunity to stop Asian Carp. Hopefully there will be an active commitment of federal, state and provincial support to advance this infrastructure project. In the meantime, any angler catching Asian Carp in Georgian Bay and Northern Lake Huron is urged to contact Ontario's Invading Species Awareness Program at 1-800-563-7711 or email: info@invasivespecies.com.