



Conservation Coalition

Friday, February 5, 2010

Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
United States House of Representatives
111th Congress

Chairwoman Johnson, Ranking Member Boozman, and Members of the Subcommittee,

Michigan is a state defined by the Great Lakes geographically, economically, and culturally. With one-fifth of the world's fresh surface water and more freshwater coastline than any other state, the Great Lakes provide Michigan residents with unparalleled recreational and business opportunities that define our outdoor heritage and economic vitality.

Our state's second and third largest industries (agriculture and tourism) depend heavily on the health of the Great Lakes. With the scenic backdrop and recreational paradise of our Nation's "Third Coast," Michigan's \$12.8 billion tourism industry is supported primarily by the Great Lakes. Each year, anglers flock to Michigan's world-class sportfishery, reeling in \$4 billion annually to our state's economy. Boating on the Great Lakes is a treasured pastime that generates roughly \$21 million in economic benefits while sustaining a \$2 billion marina and harbor business annually.ⁱ Collectively, studies suggest that the Great Lakes provide for nearly 823,000 jobs in Michigan.ⁱⁱ

Michigan's hunting, fishing, and trapping traditions also depend on the diverse ecosystem and habitat of the Great Lakes, its rivers, wetlands, and uplands. With one out of six Michigan residents being a hunter, angler, or both, Michigan has a strong outdoor heritage supported by the diverse recreational opportunities in our natural resources. Sportsmen and women in Michigan spend \$3.4 billion each year in our state, providing \$1.7 billion in salaries and wages, which yields an additional \$5.9 billion ripple effect on the state's economy annually.ⁱⁱⁱ This provides \$406 million to federal and \$378 million to state and local tax rolls each year. Two billion of this spending comes from fishing alone, placing Michigan with the fifth largest expenditures on recreational fishing pursuits out of all fifty states.^{iv}

After pollution and aquatic invasive species have depleted home values, water quality and water-based recreation in and around the Great Lakes, federal, state, and local officials have demonstrated a desire to restore and maintain a healthy Great Lakes in order to improve the region's economy, public health and outdoor heritage. In 2006, the Brookings Institution issued a report showing that implementation of the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy originally prompted by President George W. Bush would yield nearly a 4:1 return on investment to the Great Lakes basin's tourism and fishing industries, reduced costs to municipalities, and increased property values.^v President Obama and this Congress last year committed an investment in this opportunity

with a \$475 million down-payment on the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. For the next fiscal year, the President has proposed to continue this investment with an additional \$300 million.

While we applaud this Congress and Presidents Barack Obama and George W. Bush for supporting Great Lakes Restoration, the recent administrative gridlock on solutions to prevent Asian Carp from invading Lake Michigan through the man-made navigational canals in Chicago is counterintuitive. The \$9 million electric barriers that were constructed to prevent the Asian Carp from invading and devastating the Great Lakes ecosystem has not been adequate; scientists have proven through eDNA tests that Asian Carp may have already breached these barriers. In response, federal agencies and the State of Illinois have opposed proactive solutions that would prevent the carp's migration to Lake Michigan through the Chicago Sanitary Ship Canal. Despite support from the states of Ohio, Wisconsin, Indiana, Minnesota, New York, and the Canadian Province of Ontario, Michigan's petition to the U.S. Supreme Court seeking an injunction to force such measures has also been denied. Absent a legal remedy and the apparent refusal to act by relevant administrative agencies, Congressional solutions to stop Asian Carp from invading the Great Lakes and its tributaries are necessary.

Asian Carp has the proven ability to inflict irreparable damage on the Great Lakes ecosystem and injure boaters, which would severely affect Michigan's economy and recreational pastimes if immediate solutions are not undertaken to stop the fish at Lake Michigan. Rarely do we have an opportunity to prevent the damage of an invasive species before it begins, yet in this circumstance such an opportunity exists. As such, we respectfully ask for your support in passing H.R. 4472 (CARP ACT). With its companion S.2946, this bi-partisan, bi-cameral legislation introduced by Rep. Dave Camp and Sen. Debbie Stabenow is a dynamic approach to ensure all variables are considered while providing immediate safeguards and developing long-term solutions to keep Asian Carp out of the Great Lakes.

While we fully support the spirit of the CARP ACT as introduced, we recognize that a temporary lock closure may not fully prevent fish migration into Lake Michigan. In the interim, we also encourage the following solutions as supplemental preventative measures to closing the locks:

- Operation and management of the locks leading to Lake Michigan in a way that reduces the further transfer of Asian Carp as much as possible, including rapid response and flood management plans;
- Completion of the Dispersal Barrier Efficacy Study by August with immediate implementation Study's first interim report recommendations as soon as possible;
- Operation of the Dispersal Barrier System at optimal power and frequency
- Expedition of both the completion of Barrier II and upgrade of Barrier I;
- Closure of the sluice gates at the Wilmette Pumping Station and immediate installation of interim barriers in the Grand Calumet and Little Calumet Rivers; and
- Expeditious completion of the Great Lakes and Mississippi River Interbasin Transfer Study

Respectfully submitted,

Bowfishing Association of Michigan – Steve Winters, President
Delta Waterfowl – Scott Berg, Regional Director
Michigan Association of Conservation Districts – Lori Phalen, Executive Director
Michigan Bear Hunters Association – Phil Hewitt, Vice-President
Michigan Bow Hunters Association – Bruce Levey, President
Michigan Charter Boat Association – Denny Grinold, Federal and State Government Affairs
Michigan Conservation Foundation – Bob Jacobsen, President
Michigan Trappers and Predator Callers Association – John A. Caretti, President
Michigan Trout Unlimited – Bryan Burroughs, Executive Director
Michigan United Conservation Clubs – Erin McDonough, Executive Director
Upper Peninsula Sportsmen’s Alliance – Dale McNamee, President

References

-
- ⁱ Office of the Great Lakes – Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. 2009. MI Great Lakes Plan: Our Path to Protect, Restore, and Sustain Michigan’s Natural Treasures. www.michigan.gov/deqgreatlakes
- ⁱⁱ MI Great Lakes Plan: Our Path to Protect, Restore, and Sustain Michigan’s Natural Treasures.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Congressional Sportsmen Foundation. 2006. Sportsmen - The Broader Picture: A Report for Michigan Legislators and Policy Makers. www.sportsmenslink.org
- ^{iv} Sportsmen - The Broader Picture: A Report for Michigan Legislators and Policy Makers.
- ^v Brookings Institution. 2007. America’s North Coast: A Benefit – Cost Analysis of a Program to Protect and Restore the Great Lakes. Washington D.C.