



## Great Lakes Fishery Commission

ESTABLISHED BY CONVENTION BETWEEN CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES TO IMPROVE AND PERPETUATE FISHERY RESOURCES

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### ELECTRICAL “ASIAN CARP” BARRIER ON CHICAGO CANAL PASSES FINAL LEGISLATIVE HURDLE

*Great Lakes Congressional delegation praised for perseverance in seeking full  
authorization for critical invasive species defense*

**ANN ARBOR, MI**—The Great Lakes Fishery Commission lauded today’s enactment of legislation that fully authorizes the electrical dispersal barrier on the Chicago Sanitary Ship Canal. The authorization, contained in the Water Resources Development Act of 2007 (WRDA), paves the way for the completion of the essential invasive species barrier. The barrier—whose completion was largely motivated by the migration of Asian carp toward the Great Lakes—is designed to keep invasive species from spreading between the Great Lakes and Mississippi watersheds. Enactment of WRDA, which came in the form of a presidential veto override, was the last remaining legal hurdle for the barrier, though funding from Congress will be required to complete the project.

“The enactment of WRDA has been long in coming and is outstanding news for the Great Lakes,” said Gerry Barnhart, vice-chair of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission. “A temporary electrical barrier was activated on the canal in 2002 to block the migration of fish, but the barrier has passed its expected life and is failing. This beleaguered barrier is currently the only thing standing between the Asian carp and Lake Michigan. A permanent, federally funded and operated barrier is desperately needed to replace the ailing structure. With WRDA now law, we have the authority to construct a strong, permanent barrier system ahead of the arrival of Asian carp.”

The Great Lakes are connected to the Mississippi River through the Illinois Waterway System, which includes the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal, a man-made corridor constructed to manage waste water and to serve vessel traffic. The canal artificially connects the two watersheds and serves as a pathway for unwanted invasive species. It is believed that round goby and zebra mussels—two particularly noxious invaders—made their way into the Mississippi system from the Great Lakes through the canal. Asian carp, as they continue their drive northward, have access to the Great Lakes through the canal.

“Asian carp must absolutely be kept out of the Great Lakes,” said David Ullrich, a member of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission. “The carp are well-suited to the Great Lakes environment,

are voracious eaters, and reproduce in massive numbers. Their impact on the Mississippi River, as they migrated northward, has been devastating. Biologists and policy-makers alike are deeply concerned that Asian carp could have a similarly destructive impact on the lakes, the environment, and the economy.”

Barnhart added: “The Great Lakes Fishery Commission is grateful to the Congressional delegation—in both chambers and from both parties—for their dogged interest in this project. Many people, both inside and outside of government—have worked very hard to support and promote the dispersal barrier. The commission particularly appreciates the hard work of the Congressional Great Lakes Task Force and Senator Richard Durbin and Representative Judy Biggert, both of Illinois, who introduced the stand-alone legislation that ultimately appeared in WRDA.”

Specifically, the barrier provisions of WRDA:

- Authorize the experimental barrier to be upgraded and made permanent;
- Authorize the construction of a second, permanent barrier;
- Mandate operations and maintenance of the barrier project by the federal government (as opposed to the State of Illinois);
- Provide credits to states which contributed to the barrier project in the past;
- Authorize study about biological separation; and
- Consolidate the experimental barrier and the to-be-completed permanent barrier into a single federal project.

The barrier project is still dependent on funding. Currently, Congress is discussing whether to provide \$7.65 million, as requested by the president and appropriated by the House, or to provide \$3.75 million, as provided by the Senate. Reconciliation of the House and Senate appropriations are expected in the coming days.

In addition to the barrier project, WRDA also includes other Great Lakes-related reauthorizations including:

- The Great Lakes Fishery & Ecosystem Restoration program
- The Great Lakes Remedial Action Plans & Sediment Remediation
- The Great Lakes Tributary Model
- The John Glenn Great Lakes Basin program

*The Great Lakes Fishery Commission is an international organization established by the United States and Canada through the 1954 Convention on Great Lakes Fisheries. The commission has the responsibility to coordinate fisheries research, control the invasive sea lamprey in the Great Lakes, and facilitate implementation of A Joint Strategic Plan for Management of Great Lakes Fisheries, a provincial, state, and tribal fisheries management agreement.*