



For Immediate Release
February 26, 2015

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GREAT LAKES FISHERY COMMISSION LAUDS NEW LEGISLATION AIMED AT PREVENTING MIGRATION OF ASIAN CARP AND OTHER INVASIVE SPECIES

Legislation introduced by Senator Debbie Stabenow (MI) and Representative Candice Miller (MI) focuses on short- and long-term solutions to invasive species transfer through Chicago waterway

ANN ARBOR, MI—The Great Lakes Fishery Commission today lauded Senator Debbie Stabenow (MI) and Representative Candice Miller (MI) for the introduction of bi-cameral, bi-partisan legislation aimed at preventing the migration of invasive species between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River watersheds through canals in the Chicago area. The bill, entitled “Defending Our Great Lakes Act,” is motivated by the relentless movement of Asian carp toward the Great Lakes region, but it would also address many other species that threaten the Great Lakes and Mississippi River basins. The bill directs the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to work with other authorities to take immediate steps at the Brandon Road Lock and Dam—a suitable location for invasive species control—while continuing to drive toward long-term, permanent solutions to the waterway as a vector.

Last year, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers released the “Great Lakes Mississippi River Interbasin Study” (GLMRIS), which outlined options to prevent the movement of species between the two basins through the Chicago Area Waterway System, or “CAWS.” In 2012, the Great Lakes Commission and the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative produced a plan (“Restoring the Natural Divide”) which also contained options for the canal. The Brandon Road Lock and Dam, which is downstream of the current electrical barrier system, is widely seen as an appropriate point to install some of the technologies envisioned in GLMRIS and other reports.

“Senator Stabenow’s and Representative Millers’ legislation recognizes that action consistent with GLMRIS and Restoring the Natural Divide can and must occur immediately, while there is still time to prevent an Asian carp invasion,” said Michigan State University professor William Taylor, the Great Lakes Fishery Commission’s U.S. Section Chair. “Consensus is growing that immediate steps at the Brandon Road Lock and Dam is not only possible, it is also essential if the movement of harmful invasive species like the Asian carp and snakehead are to be stopped.”

“The Stabenow-Miller legislation is necessary to keep the momentum moving forward in our collective efforts to address invasive species in the CAWS,” Taylor continued. “Most stakeholders agree that an invasive species inhibiting structure at the Brandon Road Lock and Dam can and should be achieved as soon as possible. This legislation seeks the art of the possible by addressing the most immediate opportunities first while not easing up on the pursuit of innovative, permanent, long-term solutions.”

Taylor concluded: “We must protect both the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River basins from destructive invasive species. Although Asian carp motivate this bill, the GLMRIS study pointed out that the Great Lakes are potentially the source of at least 22 harmful species that could invade the Mississippi River and the Mississippi River is the potential source of at least 10 species, including three species of Asian carp, that could invade the Great Lakes. The Army Corps must address the CAWS pathway to protect the \$7 billion Great Lakes fishery. I commend Senator Stabenow and Congresswoman Miller for their unrelenting work to stanch the tide of invasive species that cost billions of dollars in damage to the U.S. and Canada each year.”

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 promote measures that protect and improve the multi-billion-dollar Great Lakes fishery.

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GREAT LAKES FISHERY COMMISSION

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