

Issue Report

INVASIVE SPECIES THREATENS GREAT LAKES ECOSYSTEM.

How did Asian carp get so close to the Great Lakes?

Two species of Asian carp -- the bighead and silver -- were imported by catfish farmers in the 1970's to remove algae and suspended matter out of their ponds. During large floods in the early 1990s, many of the catfish farm ponds overflowed their banks, and the Asian carp were released into local waterways in the Mississippi River basin.

The carp have steadily made their way northward up the Mississippi, becoming the most abundant species in some areas of the River. They have now made their way through the Illinois river system and are threatening the Great lakes near Chicago.

What effects might Asian carp have on the Great Lakes?

Asian Carp are a significant threat to the Great Lakes because they are large, extremely prolific, and consume vast amounts of food. They can weigh up to 100 pounds, and can grow to a length of more than four feet. They are well-suited to the climate of the Great Lakes region, which is similar to their native Asian habitats.

Researchers expect that Asian carp would disrupt the food chain that supports the native fish of the Great Lakes. Due to their large size, ravenous appetites, and rapid rate of reproduction, these fish could pose a significant risk to the Great Lakes Ecosystem.

Equally devastating is the impact on the regional economy. The Great Lakes fisheries bring in \$7billion annually and would be heavily impacted by a reduction in native species.

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What is being done to keep Asian Carp out of the Great Lakes?

A lawsuit filed by Michigan's Attorney General aims to protect the region by demanding at least the temporary closing of shipping locks on the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal, part of a roughly 300-mile waterway linking the lake with the Mississippi. The move is the latest in a series of efforts to stop the invasive species from advancing into the region. Previous efforts include an electrical grid and fish toxins- both were only marginally successful.

Asian Carp



FACTS

- Asian Carp can consume up to 40% of their weight in plankton.
- Can weigh up to 110 lbs and grow to more than 4 feet long
- Can leap 8 feet out of the water
- Non-native to North America and can survive in many habitats
- Can migrate at the rate of 50 miles per year

Source: Environmental Protection Agency