Asian Carp

Invading our lakes and rivers

Prairie Rivers Network is working toward the only viable solution to the threat of invasive species: restoring the natural divide between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River

Prairie Rivers Network is Illinois' advocate for clean water and healthy rivers. The 120,000 miles of rivers and streams flowing through Illinois provide drinking water to our communities, homes for fish and wildlife, buffers for flood waters, and natural areas for hikers, canoeists, anglers, and families.

For rivers to remain healthy, citizens must stand up for them—for 45 years, Prairie Rivers Network and our members have done just that, protecting our rivers and streams for people, fish, and wildlife.

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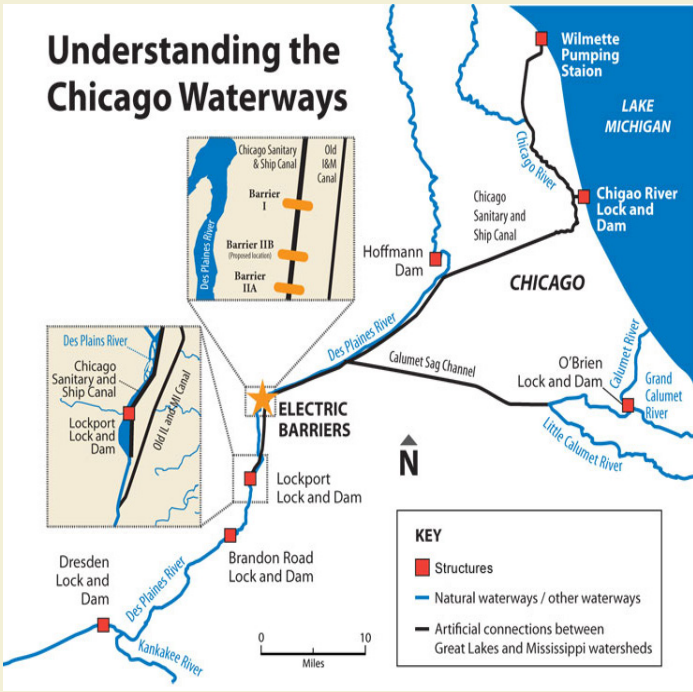
Two species of Asian carp, Bighead carp and Silver carp, were imported to the Southeastern US in the 1970s to control algae in aquaculture ponds. They escaped and have spread throughout the Mississippi River basin.

THE CANAL CONNECTION PROBLEM

- The man-made Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal connects the Mississippi River to the Great Lakes via the Illinois River and Des Plaines River.
- The Chicago canal allows invasive species to move between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River basin.
- Asian carp could colonize all of the Great Lakes and sustain high density populations.
- Currently, the last line of defense is an electric barrier, which, according to lab tests, may not be effective at deterring Asian carp of less than 6 inches.
- The electric barrier was originally built to prevent the Round Goby from reaching the Mississippi. It failed.



IT GOES BOTH WAYS

The artificial connection is a revolving door for wave after wave of invasive species to infest the 31 states of the Mississippi River basin and do untold ecological and economic damage. Permanent physical separation of the two basins is the only viable, long-term solution.

Effects on the Great Lakes

- Asian carp could alter the ecosystems of lakes and rivers throughout the Great Lakes watershed by outcompeting native species.
- Could lead to further invasive species occupying the watershed.
- Could devastate sport and commercial fisheries.

Great Lakes Industries at Stake

- Fisheries industry generates $7 billion a year.
- Boating industry generates $16 billion a year.
- Hunting, fishing, and wildlife observation generate $18 billion a year.
- Inaction puts the Great Lakes economy at risk, threatening jobs across the region.

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For more information on invasive species and how you can help, please contact:

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ASIAN CARP
PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS & BEHAVIOR

- Bighead carp can grow up to 60 inches and 110 pounds.
- Silver carp can grow up to 40 inches and 60 pounds.
- Asian carp are voracious filter feeders, eating up to 40% of their body weight in a day. They feed on plankton, the foundational food source for native species, disrupting the entire food web in a water body and outcompeting indigenous fish.
- Asian carp are prolific spawners, spawning multiple times annually, with up to 1 million eggs per spawn.
- Asian carp populations in the Upper Mississippi River are doubling every year.
- Silver carp can jump 10 feet out of the water, and are easily disturbed by watercraft, resulting in thousands of leaping fish. This behavior has resulted in injuries and diminished appeal of recreational activities in carp-infested waters.

Other Invasive Species

- There are at least 162 known invasive species in the Great Lakes.
- New species are found approximately every 8 months.
- The cost of managing just one species, the invasive Zebra mussel, in the Great Lakes has been calculated at $500 million per year.
- The US Army Corps of Engineers has identified 39 high-risk invasive species poised to transfer between the Mississippi River and Great Lakes via the Chicago Waterway System.

Future of the Waterway

- The Chicago Waterway System was planned and built in the 1800s and cannot be expected to meet the needs of the 21st Century.
- Permanent separation is just one piece of a greater plan for: improved water quality, flood control, recreation, and transportation.