



**Committee of Advisors
to the
Great Lakes Fishery Commission**



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**GREAT LAKES FISHING INTERESTS URGE ECOLOGICAL SEPARATION
TO COMBAT ASIAN CARP**

***Binational advisory committee to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission
deeply frustrated over inaction***

(April 8, 2010)—The bi-national committee of advisors of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission called upon the U.S. government to seek immediately ecological separation of the Great Lakes and Mississippi basins, acknowledging the imminent threat of the voracious Asian carp. The call – which came in the form of a rare binational resolution, approved during the advisors meetings in Windsor, Ontario – Congress, the administration, and the states to act immediately to achieve ecological separation of the two basins to prevent further aquatic species invasions.

The Asian carp are prolific, can grow as large as 4 feet long and 100 pounds, and eat a large percent of their body weight daily in plankton, which is the base of the Great Lakes' food web. Canadian and U.S. risk assessments have concluded that Asian carp would find the Great Lakes to be an inviting home. This invasive species would likely cause irreparable damage to the \$7 billion fishery.

The Asian carp are currently in the Chicago Area Waterway System, an artificial canal system that connects the Mississippi basin with the Great Lakes basin. While efforts are being undertaken to stop the Asian carp, such as the operation of electric barriers, rotenone treatments, eDNA and traditional sampling, there is a growing support for the ecological separation of the Mississippi and Great Lakes waters. Ecological separation would ensure that no live organisms could move between the two basins, a protection that the natural watershed divide provided.

The Great Lakes have now been invaded by more than 180 non-native species, and the fisheries have paid the price. “We simply cannot tolerate even one more invasion,” said U.S. committee chair Denny Grinold from the Michigan Charter Boat Association. “An Asian carp invasion is preventable, but the federal government must commit to the solution of separating Mississippi waters from the Great Lakes. Otherwise, it is stakeholders like us, and the next generation, that will bear the steep economic and ecological costs.”

The Committee of Advisors consists of both U.S. and Canadian representatives, from First Nation, commercial, recreational, academic, agency, and public fishery interests in the Great Lakes Basin. Advisors provide advice to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission; U.S. advisors are nominated by the State Governors, and appointed by the commission. Canadian advisors are nominated by the Ontario Minister of Natural Resources and appointed by the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

The committee—representing recreational and commercial fishing, Aboriginal communities, public-at-large, academia, and state agencies—also expressed deep concern about the continued influx of aquatic invasive species into the Great Lakes and disappointment over the Canadian and U.S. Governments’ inaction to remedy this serious problem.

“The resolution reflects widespread agreement across two countries that an Asian carp invasion is not just an Illinois crisis, or a U.S. crisis—it’s an international crisis,” said John Jackson, Canadian committee chair from Great Lakes United. “The only permanent solution- separation of the two basins- needs to be pursued, and it needs to be pursued now. Today we join the growing chorus of interests calling for ecological separation. It is our responsibility to ensure the Great Lakes are protected, not only from the Asian carp, but also from tomorrow’s invader that could move through the Chicago Area Waterway System.”

The U.S. Committee of Advisors was created under the *Great Lakes Fisheries Act of 1956* and is constituted to provide citizens with the opportunity to be heard on issues of importance to the health and sustainability of the Great Lakes fishery and to make recommendations pertinent to the commission’s duties. Committee members are nominated to their positions by state governors and represent sport fishing, commercial fishing, and the public-at-large. The Canadian Committee of Advisors was established for similar purposes by Fisheries and Oceans Canada. Canadian members are co-nominated by the Ontario Minister of Natural Resources and the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and represent sport fishing, commercial fishing, the Aboriginal community, environmental interests, and academia.

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US and Canadian Advisors to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission
A Resolution in support of Ecological Separation
of the Mississippi and Great Lakes basins

Whereas four invasive Asian carp species, the bighead (*Hypophthalmichthys nobilis*), silver (*H. molitrix*), grass (*Ctenopharyngodon idella*), and black carp (*Mylopharyngodon piceus*), are established in the Mississippi River basin and pose an imminent threat to the Great Lakes ecosystem, fisheries, and economy; and

Whereas a bighead carp was retrieved below the electric dispersal barrier, 500 feet north of the Lockport Lock and Generating Station in the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal and carp DNA has been detected in water samples from Calumet Harbor of Lake Michigan; and

Whereas if populations of Asian carp become established in the Great Lakes, and in other locations in the Great Lakes region, they will be impossible to eradicate with current technology; and

Whereas the Mississippi River basin and the Great Lakes basin are physically connected by a system of man-made canals and waterways in the Chicago area, called the Chicago Area Waterway System (CAWS); and

Whereas the CAWS creates a two-way pathway between the Great Lakes – currently the site of 186 known aquatic invasive species – and Mississippi basins, between which aquatic invasive species have and will continue to invade each other until 100% ecological separation has been achieved; and

Whereas a wide range of organizations, including the Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin chapters of the American Fisheries Society, the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, the Great Lakes and Saint Lawrence Cities Initiative, the Great Lakes Commission, the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration, the Chippewa-Ottawa Resource Authority, and several others have, in one way or another, endorsed the concept of “ecological separation”; and

Whereas the United States Geologic Survey, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, have all conducted risk assessment studies on Asian carp species and share the goals to prevent an invasion of the Great Lakes by Asian carp species; and

Whereas ecological separation is defined as no inter-basin transfer of aquatic organisms via the Chicago Area Waterway System at any time, and the prohibition of movement or inter-basin transfer of aquatic organisms between the Mississippi and Great Lakes basins; and

Whereas preliminary research funded by the Great Lakes Fishery Commission indicates that separation of the two watersheds is feasible; now

Therefore be it resolved that the advisors of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission support the immediate ecological separation of the Mississippi River basin from the Great Lakes basin; and

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Therefore be it further resolved that the advisors of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission call for congress, the administration, and the states to urgently complete all necessary studies to support and develop a plan for ecological separation and begin implementation immediately thereafter; and

Therefore be it further resolved that the advisors of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission call for the acceleration and support of programs to prevent further introductions utilizing science, technology, and research based management that will prevent the transfer and movement of invasive species into the Great Lakes basin; and

Therefore be it further resolved that the advisors of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission call upon the Great Lakes Fishery Commission to adopt this resolution as their own position, and carry these recommendations to all appropriate parties; and

Therefore be it finally resolved the advisors of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission express their extreme frustration that aquatic invasive species continue to menace the Great Lakes ecosystem after decades of experience with the ecological, social, and economic devastation to the Great Lakes region by exotic species such as sea lamprey, zebra mussels, and the more than 180 other species that have invaded and continue to invade the Great Lakes as a result of legislative and regulatory inaction, and call for immediate implementation of the recommendations of the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration to address all major invasive species pathways.

Passed unanimously with one abstention, *March 25, 2010*

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