

## Asian Carp

Beginning in 2007, The Great Lakes region has faced an ecological threat that could severely damage their ecosystem. Asian Carp began swimming up the Mississippi towards Lake Michigan where the damage of this invasive species would cause would be unimaginable. Michigan as well as many other Great Lakes states have attempted to file lawsuits against Chicago in order to get them to build a permanent barrier between their waterways and Lake Michigan. All lawsuits so far have been dismissed by the Supreme Court, and little action has been taken to help these states.

There has been some action set in motion to attempt to stop the expansion of Asian Carp. One attempt made was to build an electronic barrier that would theoretically halt the Asian Carp. It was placed 25 miles south of Chicago in 2002.<sup>1</sup> Since then, other electronic barriers as well as poison has been placed in the rivers leading to Lake Michigan. Later, in March of 2011, the Army Corp of Engineers acknowledged that the barriers they set up in rivers were only effective at stopping large fish that were at least 5.4 inches or longer.<sup>2</sup> This would mean that any Carp that were not 5.4 inches long could freely swim through the defenses protecting Lake Michigan.

Concerns became greater when in July of 2009 Asian Carp DNA was found north of the electronic barrier in, just 6 miles away from Lake Michigan.<sup>3</sup> This caused even more concern due to the fact that there was now nothing left to stop the Asian Carp from swimming into the Great Lakes. Most recently things have gotten worse for the Great Lake states, in November of 2013, Asian Carp DNA had been found in Lake Michigan. This could mean a collapse of the ecosystem if the Asian Carp were able to start populating Lake Michigan.

The Reason the Asian Carp is such a threat to the Great Lakes is for many reasons. The first reason is that the presence of Asian Carp in the Great Lakes would not only disrupt the fragile ecosystem, but possibly destroy it as well. According to the United States Geological Survey, the establishment of the Asian Carp population in the Great Lakes would significantly reduce the number of native species, including many important to the recreational fishers as well as the commercial fishers.<sup>4</sup> These native species would decline due to the diet of Asian Carp. The Asian Carp would consume large amounts of plankton in the waters, taking the food source away from native species.<sup>5</sup> Not only would the carp out compete native species for the plankton, it is also believed that the Asian Carp would consume the larvae of some fish, including two important ones, the perch and the walleye.<sup>6</sup> The effects on the Great Lakes ecosystem would be

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<sup>1</sup> (Detailed Timeline for Asian Carp in the US n.d.)

<sup>2</sup> (Detailed Timeline for Asian Carp in the US n.d.)

<sup>3</sup> (Detailed Timeline for Asian Carp in the US n.d.)

<sup>4</sup> (USGS Release: Asian Carp Pose Substantial Risk to the Great Lakes 2012)

<sup>5</sup> (Asian carp breed in Great Lakes, threaten fishing 2013)

<sup>6</sup> (USGS Release: Asian Carp Pose Substantial Risk to the Great Lakes 2012)

unimaginable, but the it would also affect the economy generated from the Great Lakes. With the loss of native species that are important to the commercial fishing industry as well as the recreational fisherman, the Asian Carp could cause the seven billion dollar fishing industry of the Great Lakes to collapse.<sup>7</sup> The effects on those involved would be devastating.

Not only would the effects of the Asian Carp affect the ecosystem of the Great Lakes and the fishing industry surrounding it, but it would also affect many cities along the coast of the Great Lakes as well. One city that would be affected if the Asian Carp were to make it into the Great Lakes would be Muskegon. Today, only about thirty-five commercial fishing families remain in Michigan, and of those thirty-five, two of them live and fish out of Muskegon.<sup>8</sup> Not only would commercial fishing in Muskegon be affected, but the sport fisherman would be negatively affected as well. Many of the fish caught in the Muskegon area would be threatened, thus reducing the number of fish allowed to be caught. The fishing industry that resides in Muskegon would defiantly feel the strain that the Asian Carp would put on the Great Lakes ecosystem.

#### References

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<sup>7</sup> (Asian carp breed in Great Lakes, threaten fishing 2013)

<sup>8</sup> (Wolffis 2011)