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1955–2005

Great Lakes Fishery Commission

For Immediate Release
July 12, 2004

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GREAT LAKES FISHERY COMMISSION LAUDS TODAY'S GROUNDBREAKING FOR "ASIAN CARP" BARRIER

Barrier designed to protect Great Lakes from Mississippi River invasions

ANN ARBOR, MI—The Great Lakes Fishery Commission lauded today's groundbreaking for a dispersal barrier on the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal as a major step forward in the ongoing effort to protect the Great Lakes from invasive species. The canal, which artificially connects the Great Lakes to the Mississippi River (via the Illinois River), is a prime corridor for the transmigration of species between the two systems. Without an effective barrier on the canal, three species of Asian carp (among other invaders) would have a clear path to the Great Lakes. During today's ceremony in Romeoville, Illinois, officials from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the State of Illinois are to join with Congresswoman Judy Biggert and others to kick-off the construction of the new, more-permanent electrical barrier on the canal. This new barrier is designed to complement an existing (though deteriorating) electrical barrier. The commission used today's groundbreaking as a reminder of the serious threat of invasive species and to call upon government to fully fund the construction and operation of an effective barrier system on the canal.

"The immediate construction of an effective barrier on the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal is imperative if we want to protect the Great Lakes from Asian carp," said former Chicago Alderman Bernard J. Hansen, Chairman of the commission's U.S. Section. "These Asian carp are swimming

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toward the Great Lakes as we speak; we must have a way to stop them. Although the carp are still several miles downstream from the site of this new barrier, construction cannot happen fast enough. With today's groundbreaking, the barrier should be complete by the end of the summer, expectedly ahead of the carp."

Commission Chairman Gerry A. Barnhart, Director of the Division of Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources for the State of New York remarked: "The urgency of this project cannot be overstated—these carp must not be allowed to enter our Great Lakes. These fish are voracious eaters, they reproduce and spread quickly, they out-compete native fish, and they are well-suited to the climate of the Great Lakes. Based on the havoc these carp have wreaked on the Mississippi River, we have every reason to believe they would devastate the Great Lakes ecosystem as well, should they enter the lakes. Moreover, we need to redouble our efforts to ensure that species do not invade the Great Lakes through other vectors, such as through ballast water or the importation of live food-fish. One thing that would be a tremendous help in our efforts would be the immediate passage of the pending *National Aquatic Invasive Species Act*, a bill in Congress that would address these and other vectors."

Hansen added: "The barrier for which we break ground today has been a true cooperative effort, with many officials at all levels of government working together to make it happen. In particular, we commend the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for its work to design and shepherd the construction of this critical barrier. We are also grateful to the State of Illinois for partnering with the corps to fund this barrier and to Congresswoman Judy Biggert [IL], Senator George Voinovich [OH], and Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley for their work to ensure congressional support. While construction of this barrier is progressing, full funding to construct, operate, and maintain the barrier has yet to be identified. It is our hope that Congress can pass the necessary legislation to complete this project."

The Great Lakes Fishery Commission is a binational agency established by the 1954 Convention on Great Lakes Fisheries to coordinate fisheries research, control sea lampreys, and facilitate implementation of the Joint Strategic Plan for Management of Great Lakes Fisheries. For more information about Asian carp, visit the commission's website at www.glf.org/carp.