

**Statement of Nancy H. Sutley**  
**Chair, Council on Environmental Quality**  
**“Federal Framework and Non-Federal Efforts to Prevent Introduction of the Aquatic**  
**Invasive Asian Carp into the Great Lakes”**  
**Subcommittee on Water and Power of the**  
**Committee on Energy and Natural Resources**  
**United States Senate**  
**February 25, 2010 at 10:30am**

Thank you Chairwoman Stabenow and Ranking Member Brownback for holding this hearing.

Invasive species have long been one of the most serious threats to our ecosystems. The Great Lakes in particular have been devastated by invaders such as the zebra mussel and the round goby. For this reason the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) identified combating invasive species as one of its five areas of focus. The Great Lakes now face perhaps their most serious invasive species threat yet from the Asian carp. This time however, we have a chance to stop an invasive species before it becomes established in this important ecosystem. This will require an urgent and coordinated approach across all levels of government – Federal, State, and local – in pursuit of immediate and long-term actions. Federal officials within the Obama Administration are engaging in such an approach and are working urgently toward a single goal – to prevent these fish from establishing in the Great Lakes.

Today we have a unique opportunity to prevent the environmental and economic harm that this invasive species could cause. Recognizing this, earlier this month, four Federal Agencies, including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of the Interior, and the U.S. Coast Guard, in cooperation with state and local agencies, developed the draft Asian Carp Control Strategy Framework (Framework).

The Framework, guided by the latest scientific research, encompasses more than 25 short and long-term actions at an estimated cost of \$78.5 million to keep Asian carp from becoming self-sustaining in the Great Lakes. The scale of the effort described in the Framework is unprecedented for invasive species control, unifying Federal, State, and local action and introducing a multi-tiered defense of the Great Lakes to immediately prevent Asian carp from developing self-sustaining populations in the Great Lakes while longer term control methods are developed.

Federal and State Agencies are taking action right now on netting and fishing Asian carp in the rivers and channels that connect the Mississippi Basin to the Great Lakes. A set of actions are being planned for this spring and summer when fish begin moving again, and long-term planning to deal with Asian carp and other invasive species is underway.

**Short-Term Actions to Combat Asian Carp**

Agencies have outlined several short-term actions for this spring. Operationally, Agencies have already deployed field crews for electro-shocking and netting operations within the waterway, particularly around warm-water discharges where Asian carp may be wintering. Work is also underway to reduce turnaround times for eDNA verification efforts and to double testing

capacity to 120 samples per week, which will provide a more accurate and timely picture of Asian carp migration.

Using GLRI funds from an interagency transfer between EPA and the Corps, a contract will be awarded this spring for construction of structures to block passages between the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal and the Des Plaines River, which will prevent fish movement around the electric barrier in the event of flooding, when the two water bodies mix. Construction and operation of a third electric barrier (IIB) will be funded from both the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and appropriations from the 2010 Energy and Water Bill. The electric barriers remain our best defense and these efforts will fortify them.

Also, the Army Corps, Coast Guard, and the Fish and Wildlife Service are looking at ways to use Chicago's navigational locks to impede carp movement. In the near term, that means looking at how they can be kept closed more frequently, and in the longer term, developing an evaluation of what it would mean to permanently close them. A plan is being developed which will modify lock operations, as appropriate, this spring, and a final recommendation following this assessment process should be presented to the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works in the next several weeks.

As you know, lock closure is a complicated issue. Before any decision is made we need to consider and understand the increased flood risk to northeastern Illinois and northwestern Indiana, reduction in the flow of critical commerce in the Chicago area, and slower local and Coast Guard emergency response on the waterway. While fish movement is limited this winter, agencies are considering all these issues and are developing a recommendation for modified lock operations as quickly as possible. In addition, it is critical to note that even a complete closure of the Chicago and O'Brien locks would not serve as an absolute barrier to fish movement. Alternate river paths to Lake Michigan exist, which are not blocked by locks, and separately the locks are not watertight, which may allow fish passage even when closed.

### **Long-Term Actions to Combat Asian Carp**

The Framework identifies several long-term research efforts that, used individually or in concert, will inform decision makers and provide significant tools for Asian carp management.

What is likely to be the most important long-term research involves the development of control methods by the United States Geological Survey at the Department of the Interior. Researchers are looking at Asian carp-specific poisons and pheromones – as well as methods to disrupt spawning and egg viability using sonic and light barriers.

The Framework also includes the Army Corps Inter-Basin Transfer Study, which examines technologies to reduce invasive species transfer between the Mississippi River and Great Lakes aquatic basins. The Chicago-Area Waterway portion of this study, which includes an analysis of permanent lock closure and of ecologic separation, has been expedited and is expected to be completed in 2012. The Framework also identifies activities to reduce downstream populations of the carp. It calls for educational and enforcement tools to prevent Asian carp from being sold or purposefully transferred, an investigation of Asian carp transfer in ballast and bilge water, and other Asian carp research.

### **Federal, State and Regional Partnerships**

Because regional coordination is critical to this effort, and to the overall health of the Great Lakes, Federal, bi-national, state, and local partners held two public hearings earlier this month in Illinois and Michigan to seek feedback on the draft Framework. In addition, Federal agencies recently met with Great Lakes Governors at the White House to discuss the strategy to constrain the spread of Asian carp and ensure coordination and the most effective response to this potential threat across all levels of government. Finally, efforts to stop Asian carp migration will be strengthened with participation from water users including the commercial and recreational fishing and navigation industries and environmental groups, and their input is being solicited.

### **Conclusion**

Let me close with this: we are making true progress on the challenge that lies before us. Six months ago, Congress made a commitment to the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and provided \$475 million to meet the Initiative's goals. An additional \$300 million is requested for FY 2011. One of the focus areas in the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is the management and control of invasive species in the Great Lakes, including preventing the introductions of new invasive species. The Obama Administration is working in partnership with Congress in this regard and has taken an immediate, aggressive, and coordinated approach to manage and control the Asian carp threat. And, moving forward, while we have a long path ahead, the best scientists have said that we can be successful in this effort and prevent Asian Carp from invading the Great Lakes.

We welcome any input the committee, its members, or your colleagues in Congress would like to provide as we continue to work together and in collaboration with state and local agencies to fight the spread of Asian carp into the Great Lakes.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify this morning and I look forward to your questions.