

Statement of Nancy H. Sutley
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“Federal Response to the Discovery of the Aquatic Invasive Species Asian Carp in Lake
Calumet, Illinois”
Subcommittee on Water and Power
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
United States Senate
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Thank you Chairwoman Stabenow and Ranking Member Brownback for holding this hearing.

Invasive species pose serious threats to our ecosystems. The Great Lakes in particular have been devastated by invaders such as the sea lamprey, zebra mussel and the round goby. The Great Lakes now face perhaps their most significant invasive species threat yet from Asian carp. This time, however, we have an opportunity to prevent the environmental and economic harm that this invasive species could cause, and are working urgently to do so.

The Obama Administration is executing a robust, coordinated and proactive Asian Carp Control Strategy Framework (Framework), developed in February and updated in May 2010 by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), and the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission (GLFC) in cooperation with state and local agencies. This Framework unifies Federal, state and local actions to combat invasive species with a multi-tiered defense of the Great Lakes from Asian carp while longer-term biological controls are developed. Since I last testified before this Committee in February, the Administration has updated the Framework and has accomplished or is on track to meet the milestones it laid out.

Overview of the Asian Carp Control Strategy Framework

The goal of the Administration’s strategy of 32 short- and long-term actions is to prevent Asian carp from establishing self-sustaining populations in the Great Lakes. In the near term, the Framework focuses on keeping Asian carp out of the Chicago Area Waterway System (CAWS) and Great Lakes, and on removal of Asian carp in the CAWS. Measures to accomplish this

include environmental DNA (eDNA) monitoring, contract commercial fishing, and conventional techniques such as electrofishing and netting.

As part of the Framework, Federal and Illinois State officials have been conducting intensive fishing operations to locate Asian carp along the CAWS since February 17, 2010. On May 25, the Asian Carp Regional Coordinating Committee (ACRCC) completed a week-long sampling and data collection operation on the Little Calumet River in South Chicago that utilized rotenone, a fish toxicant. This operation yielded more than 130,000 pounds of fish, including more than 40 species. No bighead or silver Asian carp were found among them.

Framework Progress and Intensified Response

On June 22, as you are aware, routine sampling under the Framework led to the discovery of a live bighead Asian carp above the electric barrier system for the first time. The aggressive Framework the Administration has in place allowed us to both identify and capture Asian carp in the waterway and to respond quickly and in a coordinated manner to intensify actions to detect and capture any additional Asian carp, if present. The ACRCC's member agencies¹ and contractors immediately increased sampling in Lake Calumet, where the Bighead carp was discovered, and the surrounding area. To date, no additional Asian carp have been found.

We believe that the capture of this live carp as part of our monitoring plan shows that the Framework is working. The plan assumes that a small number of Asian carp may exist in the CAWS, and was designed to pinpoint and remove them. You will hear more today from John Rogner of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources about our actions undertaken in the CAWS since February and the immediate increase in actions taken in Lake Calumet once the carp was captured there. The Illinois DNR has worked seamlessly with FWS and other Federal partners to implement monitoring and control actions for Asian carp in the CAWS.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has also undertaken actions pursuant to the Framework. In April, using authority Congress granted under Section 126 of the Energy and Water

¹ ACRCC members include IL DNR, IN DNR, OH DNR, USFWS, USACE, USEPA, USCG, Great Lakes Fisheries Commission, Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago and city of Chicago.

Development and Related Agencies Appropriations Act of 2010, and funding provided through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), USACE awarded a multi-million dollar contract for construction of concrete and fencing between the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal and Des Plaines River. This is designed to prevent fish passage around the electric barrier in flooding events where the two water bodies mix. We urge Congress to extend in time and geography the USACE's Section 126 authority, which expires in Oct 2010 and appears to be limited only to the CAWS, so that emergency actions to battle invasive carp can continue as needed.

In addition, construction and operation of a third electric barrier is underway and on schedule to be completed in October 2010.

All of these efforts are meant to keep the carp at bay in the short term. However, it is biological controls such as the ones being developed by the USGS that are likely to prevent Asian carp migration over the long-term. As Dr. Leon Carl will describe, USGS is conducting scientific research into additional methods for controlling Asian carp, including Asian carp-specific poisons, methods to disrupt spawning and egg viability, seismic technology, and assessment of Asian carp food sources and potential habitats.

In other longer-term actions, USACE is collaborating with Federal, state, regional, and local agencies and non-governmental organizations on an Inter-Basin Transfer Study to explore all options and technologies for reducing the risk of Asian carp transfer between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River basins. This includes a comprehensive analysis of Asian carp control technologies, including physical or hydrologic separation of the Lake Michigan from the Mississippi River basin.

Asian Carp in Other Vectors

As the Administration indicated in February, we are committed to proactively investigating areas outside of the CAWS that may be vulnerable to Asian carp. A new area of focus is the connection between the Wabash and Maumee Rivers near Fort Wayne, Indiana. In flood events, the Wabash River can hydrologically connect with the Maumee River, which runs into Lake Erie, making Asian carp in this area another potential threat to the Great Lakes. Currently

USGS, FWS, USACE, and Indiana DNR are studying the area to better understand the risk and what next steps should be. We have expanded the ACRCC to include representatives from the States of Indiana and Ohio to ensure an effective and coordinated response on a larger front. In addition, we continue to provide information to and seek input from other Great Lakes states that are not part of the ARCC.

The Administration received a letter from Chairwoman Stabenow and other Great Lakes representatives requesting we name a Federal Coordinated Response Commander for Asian carp to oversee the diverse actions underway to contain the spread of the carp in the region. We are currently evaluating this request.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Administration shares the great concern about this issue and is committed to preventing the spread of Asian carp into the Great Lakes. I would like to reiterate that our management actions to control Asian carp are robust, that Federal, state, and local agencies are effectively coordinating with each other, and that we believe we are succeeding in our aim to keep Asian Carp from establishing themselves in the Great Lakes.

In addition, I want to thank Congress for fully funding the President's FY 2010 request for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, without which many of these actions would not be possible.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and I look forward to your questions.