**ILLINOIS ASIAN CARP CONTROL EFFORTS**
**John Rogner, Assistant Director**
**Illinois Department of Natural Resources**
**Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources**
**Subcommittee on Water and Power**
**Honorable Debbie Stabenow, Chair**
**SD-366 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building**
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Thank you Chairwoman Stabenow and members of the subcommittee, for this opportunity to update you on the role the Illinois Department of Natural Resources is playing in battling the Asian carp invasion.

First let me assure the Subcommittee that the IDNR has maintained its vigilance and remains fully engaged in this effort. In fact with the financial support of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, we have dramatically expanded our efforts.

In my testimony today I will quickly review the action steps we have taken above the electric barrier, outline some of our plans below the barrier and discuss what lessons we have learned.

Action Steps Above the Electric Barrier

- Beginning in early February and continuing through April we conducted an extensive monitoring operation of warm water discharges from power plants and water treatment facilities. With low water temperatures, biologists determined that these were areas with the greatest potential for finding Asian carp. In areas downstream of the electric barrier with documented Asian carp populations, this strategy proved to be very successful. While we collected many fish, this effort produced no Asian carp above the barrier.

- In March we began developing a comprehensive monitoring and rapid response plan for the Chicago Area Waterways system and Upper Illinois River (MRRP). This plan was designed to systematically determine the distribution and abundance of Asian carp in the waterways, remove any Asian carp in the CAWS, define the location of the leading edge and reproduction of those populations, and identify eDNA triggers for specific response actions in portions of the Chicago Area Waterway System.

- On April 9th we were notified that e-DNA for silver carp was again detected in the Little Calumet River where 2009 monitoring had previously detected multiple positive samples. Plans were developed for a sampling operation including the application of rotenone, to a 2.5 mile stretch of the river in south Chicago and commercial netting in an adjacent 2.5-mile stretch.

- On April 30th we were notified that e-DNA for silver carp was detected in the north shore channel downstream from Wilmette. (see chart) It was decided that given its shallow depth and narrow channel, conventional electro-fishing, combined with commercial fishing gear would be appropriate. Crews were deployed May 11-13th. We recovered many fish but no Asian carp.

- On May 20th the Little Calumet River was closed to all traffic and we initiated Operation Pelican. This effort was designed to better assess the monitoring data we had available to us and was the second time we applied the toxicant rotenone in the Chicago Area. The operation involved participation from all of our federal partners including the USEPA, USCG, USACE, USGS, USFWS as well as state and local partners. The direct cost was approximately $1.7 million, with over 300 individuals participating. We recovered 134,000 pounds of fish from 40 species, but no bighead or silver carp.

- On June 4th we were notified that e-DNA for silver carp was detected in the Chicago River near Bubbly Creek a short distance south of downtown Chicago. We immediately developed rapid response plans to increase monitoring and sampling operations in this zone. Electro-fishing crews and commercial netters were deployed over two days on June 15-16. We recovered no Asian carp.

On June 22nd, commercial fishing crews working as part of our comprehensive monitoring plan, recovered one big head carp in the northwest corner of Lake Calumet.

In response, we immediately increased our electrofishing and commercial netting efforts in both Lake Calumet, and the Calumet River. To aid in our efforts we incorporated small mesh seines and the use of side scan sonar, which provides valuable information on fish distribution in the river channels.

- In an effort to use the full range of sampling gear available to us, on July 1st, our sampling crews worked Lake Calumet near where we recovered the bighead first used a half-mile-long seine. Using this very effective technique they recovered over 40,000 pounds of fish in one haul but no Asian carp. (See Picture)

- In the Calumet River we have spent several days focused on the slips and back channels and have recovered several thousand fish, including ones that our biologists have visually identified several times. We have recovered no additional Asian carp.

- You may have heard about the bighead carp caught last week in a Chicago Park District Lagoon. While this fish had no access to the Chicago Area Waterway System or the Great Lakes, it underscores the need for continued outreach to prevent the unintentional introduction of these fish into new waters. IDNR began a surveillance program directed at bait shops last winter and will continue with this program into the future.

<u>Action Steps Below the Electric Barrier</u>

- Reducing Asian carp populations downstream of the electric barrier is one of the tactics outlined in the Asian Carp Control Strategy Framework. An initiative that we believe will significantly reduce these populations was announced yesterday in Chicago by Governor Pat Quinn. Currently Asian carp is on the menu at some of Chicago's finest restaurants and this agreement to purchase up to 30 million pounds of Illinois River Asian carp annually for consumption in China will greatly reduce over time the large numbers of carp downriver that create pressure on the electric barrier. It will also create 61 direct and 120 indirect jobs.

  IDNR has partnered with the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity who agreed to make the strategic investments necessary to upgrade Illinois fish processing facilities to improve their capacity.

  Working with resources available to us from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative we have developed an incentive program for commercial fisherman. This is a critical piece of our strategy because these areas currently will not support a commercial fishery, yet are an important component in reducing propagule pressure on the electric barrier system.

These crews have begun operations and on their first day they removed 2600 pounds of Asian Carp. (See picture)

Lessons Learned

We are still analyzing the totality of the monitoring and sampling data we have collected over the past year, but one trend in the data has clearly emerged. If an Asian carp population exists above the electric barrier system it is very small.

Since February 2010 we have deployed 3200 hours of labor monitoring and sampling the waters above the electric barrier for Asian carp. We intend to remain vigilant in our monitoring and sampling efforts in the Chicago Area Waterways.

A second lesson we have learned is that the multi-agency coalition that has come together in response to this crisis is working extremely well. We believe that this is a model that should be continued as it has developed an unprecedented level of cooperation, communication, transparency, and flexibility to respond quickly to changing circumstances.

As we now know this is a problem that is not going to be solved by one state, or one agency. As a region the Great Lakes states have a long and established history of using a proactive and collaborative approach. We believe our Great Lakes Region is stronger when we work together in partnership to solve common problems, and Asian carp is not an exception to this.

The Illinois DNR looks forward to working with the other Great Lakes States and Federal Agencies in preventing Asian carp from establishing sustainable populations in the Great Lakes and in the larger problem of the exchange of invasive species moving between the Great Lakes and Mississippi basins. Thank you and I will answer any questions you have.