

**Apostle Islands Sport Fisherman's Association - Alliance for the Great Lakes - Environment Illinois - Freshwater Future - Great Lakes United - Hoosier Coho Club - National Wildlife Federation - Natural Resources Defense Council - Northwest Indiana Steelheaders - Ohio Environmental Council - Sierra Club**

**For Immediate Release**

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## **Great Lakes Groups to Obama: Address Asian Carp Crisis Now**

Nearly a dozen Great Lakes environmental groups today dropped off more than 10,000 postcards urging President Obama to demand that federal regulators act now on a permanent solution to halt the Asian carp's encroachment on the Great Lakes.

Representatives of the groups traveled to Washington, D.C. to hand deliver the postcards, signed by residents from around the Great Lakes region as evidence of a potential Asian carp invasion mounted this summer.

"Today we delivered over 10,000 post cards collected in just six short weeks and thousands of signatures on petitions, asking President Obama to use his authority to immediately and swiftly work toward separating the Great Lakes from the Mississippi River system -- the main route the carp are taking to reach our Great Lakes" said Cheryl Mendoza, associate director for Freshwater Future.

"Our message from people around the region couldn't be more clear: 'We cannot wait any longer. We want a permanent solution that will protect our Great Lakes way of life,'" she said.

The groups are pressing for construction of a permanent barrier to separate the two major watersheds -- artificially connected a century ago to direct Chicago's wastewater away from Lake Michigan -- as the only guaranteed way to keep Asian carp and other destructive invasives from traveling between the two basins.

Officials in June announced the capture of a live Asian carp just six miles from Lake Michigan in Chicago's Lake Calumet. The 3-foot-long, 20-pound sexually mature male was the first Asian carp found beyond the last locks protecting the Great Lakes, and miles beyond the electric barrier meant to keep the devastating fish out of the lakes.

The carp capture came just months after environmental DNA testing found evidence of Asian carp in the open waters of Lake Michigan -- in Chicago's Calumet Harbor -- as well

as in several locations along branches of the Chicago Waterway System. The body of a single Asian carp was found about 20 miles south of Lake Michigan in December.

The discovery of a spawning population of Asian carp in Indiana's Wabash River earlier this summer showed the crisis advancing on multiple fronts, upping calls for aggressive and immediate action from environmentalists and Great Lakes lawmakers. The Wabash River shares a 1/2-mile floodplain with the Maumee River, a tributary to Lake Erie and prime habitat for Asian carp.

Jennifer Nalbone, director of Navigation and Invasive Species for the binational coalition Great Lakes United, said the Asian carp problem is a national and international crisis. "Citizens from across the United States and Canada are demanding a permanent solution to the Asian carp crisis. This isn't just about Illinois or Michigan," she said. "We are here today on behalf of the thousands of citizens calling on federal leaders to stop the Asian carp once and for all."

Al House, vice president of the Apostle Islands Sport Fishermen's Association, says he fears the region's \$7 billion sport fishery will be forever changed – or worse.

"It's not only the fishery of the Great Lakes that will be affected by the Asian Carp invasion," House said. "It's also the people and the culture that have developed around Great Lakes fish: the sportfishing industry, the fishery-related tourism industry, the commercial fishing industry, and the Native American fishery culture -- all will be irrevocably changed and, perhaps, lost forever."

Mike Ryan, representing Northwest Indiana Steelheaders and the Hoosier Coho Club -- both sportfishing organizations -- echoed that concern. "Asian carp will change the quality of life, not only for the sport fishery, but for everybody who lives, visits or works around what will be the *former* Great Lakes."

The groups praised the Obama administration's recent appointment of John Goss -- former leader of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources and the Indiana Wildlife Federation -- to lead the federal response to the carp crisis. The groups, which urged the administration to create a "federal incident commander" position back in June, said the new federal post is a step in the right direction, but the hard work of resolving the problem is still before us.

"We cannot wait to stop Asian carp and other invasive species from swimming between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River," said Marc Smith, senior policy manager with National Wildlife Federation. "This crisis will only end when their watery path is cut off. We have the solutions to beat back the Asian carp and protect our lakes, our economy and our way of life."

Joel Brammeier, president and CEO of the Alliance for the Great Lakes, said the Army Corps must be directed now to complete a study of how to install a permanent divide between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi basins at Chicago in the next 18 months. "Asian carp are setting the timeline for us," he said. "Asking for an extension means relying on temporary measures that will never solve what threatens to be a permanent problem."

Anything less could jeopardize more than \$10 billion in revenue to the state of Ohio alone, when taking into account sportfishing, wildlife watching, tourism and travel, said Kristy Meyer, director of Agricultural & Clean Water Programs for the Ohio Environmental Council.

"Ohio's portion of Lake Erie produces more fish for consumption than any other place in the Great Lakes, and Ohioans know we have the most to lose," she said. "Ohioans are urging swift but strategic hydro-separation. We know that any other measure will ultimately fail."

Emily Green, Great Lakes program director for the Sierra Club, concurred. "We must act now to prevent Asian carp from entering the Great Lakes, and we must implement a permanent solution," she said. "The stakes are far too high to do anything less."

See postcard at: [www.freshwaterfuture.org/userfiles/file/Post%20card%20final\(2\).pdf](http://www.freshwaterfuture.org/userfiles/file/Post%20card%20final(2).pdf)

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