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ALLIANCE FOR THE GREAT LAKES RELEASES STUDY ABOUT CHICAGO WATERWAY SYSTEM

Study outlines steps to help stop the spread of invasive species—like Asian carp—through Chicago-area canals

LANSING AND ANN ARBOR, MI—The Great Lakes Fishery Commission and the Great Lakes Fishery Trust today announced the release of a three-year study by the Alliance for the Great Lakes that takes a first look at stopping the transfer of invasive species between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River systems. While an electrical dispersal barrier currently provides some control on the Chicago Sanitary and Ship canal, long term solutions are needed to further reduce the risk of invasions. The report, co-funded by the Fishery Trust and the Fishery Commission, is the first systematic look at commercial and recreational traffic on the waterway and at potential, long term solutions to prevent biological transfers. The study was funded pursuant to a recommendation from an Invasive Species Summit meeting convened in 2003 by Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley that called for a project to examine long-term solutions to reduce the risk of invasive species in the waterway. The complete report produced by the Alliance for the Great Lakes is available on the Alliance's website at www.greatlakes.org/invasivespecies/gateways.

The Chicago Waterway System, a series of canals built in the 1800s that famously “reversed the flow” of the Chicago River to improve sanitation, artificially connects the Great Lakes and Mississippi River basins. The waterway serves as a transportation corridor and provides access for recreational boaters. The connection, however, also is a conduit for invasive species, with zebra mussels and round gobies moving from the Great Lakes to the Mississippi basin and with Asian carp currently threatening to enter the Great Lakes from the Mississippi. With increasing global trade, the threat of invasive species is only expected to grow.

“Invasive species continue to pose one of the biggest threats to the future of the Great Lakes and the Chicago waterway is a direct link for species to enter Lake Michigan,” said Rebecca Humphries, Chair of the Great Lakes Fishery Trust and Director of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. “This study helps establish a course to address this important link,” she said.

“With the benefit of hindsight the Great Lakes and Mississippi systems should never have been connected in so direct a way,” added Great Lakes Fishery Commission chair Michael Hansen, a professor at the University of Wisconsin—Stevens Point. “Our task now is to find permanent and effective solutions to the threat that this waterway poses. The commission calls upon the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to consider the Alliance’s recommendations and launch a full-scale study, with the ultimate goal of achieving long term separation between the two basins.”

*The **Great Lakes Fishery Trust** is an innovative funding program created in 1996 as part of a settlement with Consumers Energy and the Detroit Edison Company for fish losses caused by the operation of the Ludington Pumped Storage Plant on Lake Michigan. The trust provides funding to educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies to improve and protect the Great Lakes fishery.*

*The **Great Lakes Fishery Commission** was established by the United States and Canada through the 1954 Convention on Great Lakes Fisheries. The commission supports fisheries research, controls the invasive sea lamprey, and facilitates the implementation of provincial, state, and tribal fisheries management agreements. For more information about the commission, visit www.glfc.int.*