

COUNCIL OF LAKE COMMITTEES
POSITION STATEMENT
On

Asian Carps

Given legitimate science-based concerns regarding the probable negative impacts of four invasive Asian carp species on the valuable recreational and commercial fisheries of the Great Lakes, and the continued presence of sources and pathways for future Asian carp introductions in all jurisdictions, the Council of Lake Committees (CLC) calls for the prevention of population establishment of all four species of Asian carps in the Great Lakes. This position statement is intended to help guide decisions and actions by First Nation, federal, provincial, state, and tribal groups regarding Asian carp introductions into the Great Lakes in a manner that is consistent with a collective view of effective risk management.

Findings:

- Invasive species can permanently alter natural ecosystems and diminish benefits to people,
- Control of invasive species is especially challenging if they establish viable populations,
- Aquatic invasive species have a repeated history of perturbing Great Lakes ecosystems, jeopardizing native and naturalized species and associated fisheries that are valued at over \$7 billion annually,
- Efforts to prevent introductions or control aquatic invasive species can have broad scale economic impacts, requiring management decisions that consider economic tradeoffs among affected industries and across political borders,
- Combating aquatic invasive species is a complex scientific endeavor that requires regional coordination and cooperation among resource managers from aboriginal, provincial, and state authorities, including the sharing of information and resources,
- Four Asian carp species (bighead, black, grass, and silver) were intentionally introduced into the U.S. several decades ago for beneficial purposes, including parasite control and water quality improvement in aquaculture ponds, sewage treatment, vegetation control, and as potential food for animals and humans,
- All four species of Asian carps have spread through a variety of pathways to natural systems in certain regions of the U.S. and two species (bighead and grass carp) have been reported from Great Lakes waters in Canada,
- Two species have been collected in the Great Lakes, including adult bighead carp in Lake Erie and adult grass carp in all but Lake Superior, with no evidence of natural reproduction by bighead carp to date and recent evidence of grass carp reproduction in Lake Erie,
- Black or silver carp have not been found in any Great Lake (as of October 2013),
- Various studies conclude that all four species are threats to North American ecosystems,
- Several pathways exist for continued introductions of Asian carps into the Great Lakes through all Great Lake states and Ontario, including waterway connections linking the Great Lakes to source populations, releases by humans through the live fish hauling industry, inadvertent stockings with other fish, and intentional releases by individuals,

- Federal, provincial, and state regulations that prevent unlawful movement of live bighead carp, silver carp, and black carp in the Great Lakes basin are not wholly effective given continued occurrences of violations involving bighead carp at the Canada/U.S. border,
- Diploid grass carp have been captured in the Great Lakes basin, despite state or provincial regulations that either stipulate the introduction of only triploid (sterile) grass carp or that prohibit the entry or stocking of any grass carp at all,
- Significant efforts are underway through the Asian Carp Regional Coordinating Committee (ACRCC) to minimize the risk of bighead carp, silver carp, and black carp introduction into the Great Lakes from Canadian and U.S. sources,
- Substantial research has greatly improved our knowledge about bighead and silver carp genetics, biology, ecology, and behavior in North American populations, which has provided important information for early detection and management actions, but comparatively less is known about grass carp and black carp,
- Unlike in their native eastern Asia habitats, wild bighead and silver carp populations in North America are interbreeding and producing fertile hybrids, and
- Through their respective lake committees and natural resource management agencies, CLC members have a responsibility to cooperatively minimize the risk of Asian carp invasion, consistent with principles of the Joint Strategic Plan.

Principles:

The CLC recognizes the following principles as essential to a common strategy to prevent establishment of Asian carps in the Great Lakes:

- 1.) Focusing efforts and funds toward minimizing the likelihood of future introductions of Asian carps at any life stage is more important than attempting to eradicate or control populations that may already exist in the Great Lakes;
- 2.) Eradication or control opportunities should be considered (and/or initiated) only when and where they are deemed likely to be effective by the fishery management agency with jurisdiction, after advising the CLC.
- 3.) Preventive efforts should be guided by the following principles:
 - events of mass entry of any life stage through waterway connections, or through human actions, are more important to address than are rare events involving individual fish,
 - the entry of sexually mature fish poses the highest risk of population establishment, followed by juveniles, and lastly, eggs and larvae, and
 - all Asian carp species are important to address; bighead and silver carp (and their hybrids) should receive urgent attention.
- 4.) Preventive efforts should focus on locating potential sources of Asian carps, identifying all possible pathways to the Great Lakes, and pursuing actions to minimize the likelihood of invasion. These efforts will require
 - capability to detect the presence of fish in low numbers as early as possible,

- research of all potential pathways and the likelihood that fish are using them or being transported through them,
 - consideration of available options to reduce population abundance at an invasion front and/or otherwise deter fish movements beyond the front,
 - options to assess and control or eliminate potential pathways of fish movement across waterways,
 - establishment of laws or regulations to prevent or limit introductions in all Great Lakes jurisdictions,
 - effective enforcement of laws in all jurisdictions and coordination of law enforcement entities across jurisdictions, and
 - timely and factual communication that will foster effective management actions (e.g. prevention, response) that are acceptable to CLC partners and stakeholders.
- 5.) Research is needed to; a) improve our collective understanding of the biology, ecology, and behavior of Asian carps in North America, b) develop effective early detection and surveillance tools for managers, and (c) develop potential control options for areas where Asian carps may have become established.
- 6.) Continued participation in the ACRCC through the Great Lakes Fishery Commission and individual jurisdictions is necessary to; (a) ensure inclusion of CLC interests, (b) facilitate the ACRCC's efforts to minimize the risk of Asian carp introductions through direct and indirect waterway connections to all of the Great Lakes, and (c) minimize the risk of invasion through all other potential pathways that fall under tribal, provincial, and state management authorizations.

Adopted October 23, 2013