

OPINION

Carpe Die 'Em

By Richard Daley

From the Windy City to the White House, there has been much discussion recently about the presence of Asian carp in the Chicago Area Waterway System and the potential damage their migration could cause to the Great Lakes.

Government agencies are rightly concerned about the introduction of Asian carp into Lake Michigan. The carp, which can weigh up to 100 pounds, would dramatically disrupt the environment, threatening local fish species.

States including Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin are arguing that their local economies hang in the balance until there is a solution to this problem. In the meantime, Michigan has sued Illinois in an effort to close the navigational locks in the Chicago area.

Thirty years ago, Asian carp were viewed as an opportunity, not a threat. They were legally introduced into United States waters in order to improve water quality by cleaning the algae in Southern fish farms. But during periods of exten-

sive flooding in the early 1990s, the carp escaped from the fish ponds and made their way to the Mississippi River.

After adapting to the favorable habitat of the inland waters, the carp populations grew exponentially. Today the fish make up nearly 90% of the biomass in portions of the Illinois

Another invasive species threatens the Great Lakes.

River. As the Asian carp continue to migrate toward northeastern Illinois, my city, Chicago, now finds itself on the frontlines in the effort to keep these fish out of Lake Michigan.

For the last decade, while Asian carp continued to make their way through multiple states, I worked with many partners to stop their migration. Together with local and state partners we advocated for funding to build electric barriers to prevent further migration, hosted a summit with American and Canadian experts, and instituted a law banning the possession or transfer of Asian carp in Chi-

cago. We have made progress, but I firmly believe we can do more.

Considering the history of the Asian carp in the U.S., no one should accept the notion that the governments and their citizens who happen to reside closest to Lake Michigan should be forced to assume all the responsibility for this problem, or take on the environmental and economic costs associated with solving it.

Nor should this region be expected to simply agree to Michigan's proposed "solution" of closing the navigational locks on Chicago's waterways. First, this action will not stop the advancement of the carp. Second, it will impact 700,000 boaters and tourists, and nearly seven million tons of goods that pass through the locks on an annual basis. Finally, it ignores the fact that this waterway is just one of a large number of passageways by which invasive species enter the Great Lakes.

The canal system in question—built 70 years before the Asian carp were brought to the U.S.—is an essential part of the region's storm-water and wastewater infrastructure, as well as

our commercial and recreational navigation network. The complexity of this system means that you cannot simply flip a switch and declare it closed.

History shows us that the Asian carp issue is one that has crossed many states and many regions. This is a national problem that requires national solutions.

Working together, we need to find strategic solutions to eliminate the serious threat that Asian carp pose to the Great Lakes. Last month, the Obama administration outlined a plan to address this issue safely and responsibly. Under this plan, \$78.5 million would be spent to further restrict the movement of Asian carp by, among other measures, building an additional electric barrier in the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal. Even so, we will not be successful until the entire Great Lakes region unites around effective solutions.

The city of Chicago stands ready to work with all our government partners to do just that.

Mr. Daley is the mayor of Chicago.