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GREAT LAKES FISHERY COMMISSION AND GREAT LAKES FISHERY TRUST REAFFIRM 2008 “SEPARATION STUDY” FOR CHICAGO CANAL

Report, motivated by Asian carp migration toward the Great Lakes, becomes more relevant in light of the detection of carp in the canal and recent rapid response

Ann Arbor, MI: The recent chemical treatment of the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal, designed to allow safe disengagement of the electrical “carp barrier,” has brought new urgency to the need for a permanent solution to stop the threat of invasive species moving into the Great Lakes. The chemical treatment, which confirmed the presence of Asian carp at the site of the electrical barrier, and new DNA testing, which suggests that Asian carp may be within five miles of Lake Michigan, has reinvigorated the call to achieve “biological separation” on the canal, a move that would eliminate the possibility of species-transfer between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River watersheds via the canal. Such separation is the same conclusion reached in a 2008 report, *Preliminary Feasibility of Ecological Separation of the Mississippi River and the Great Lakes to Prevent the Transfer of Aquatic Invasive Species*, conducted by the Alliance for the Great Lakes and funded by the Great Lakes Fishery Commission and the Great Lakes Fishery Trust. The report assesses potential options to prevent invasive species, including the Asian carp, from entering the Great Lakes and concludes that biological separation of the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal from Lake Michigan is the best option.

The report provides a systematic look at commercial and recreational vessel traffic on the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal and notes that with new technology and infrastructure changes, a long-

term solution to prevent species migration between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River is possible. While some impacts to navigation would be unavoidable, biological separation would allow continued use of the system for wastewater disposal and minimize impacts to commodity movements and recreational boaters.

The study was funded pursuant to a recommendation from the Invasive Species Summit 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 study demonstrated that the engineering expertise exists today to protect the Great Lakes from species invading via the canal.

Great Lakes Fishery Commission chair Michael Hansen, a professor at the University of Wisconsin—Stevens Point, encourages swift action: “With the benefit of hindsight, the Great Lakes and Mississippi systems should never have been connected in so direct a way. Our task now is to move forward on implementing permanent and effective solutions to the threat that this waterway poses. The commission calls upon the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to help expedite the completion of this essential project.”

“We know from experience that once invasive species arrive in the Great Lakes they are here to stay,” said Mark Coscarelli, Manager and Secretary of the Great Lakes Fishery Trust. “It’s like trying to put a genie back in the bottle. Preventing the introduction of invasive species is the best option for protecting the Great Lakes.”

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 **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.glfci.org.*