

August 25, 2014

Dear Members of the Great Lakes Congressional Delegation:

This letter is written on behalf of the Advisory Committee for the Chicago Area Waterway System (CAWS). The committee includes representatives from 32 public and private stakeholders that benefit from and have responsibilities related to the CAWS, as well as regional stakeholder groups representing commercial, recreational, and environmental interests. We ask for your support to 1) direct the Army Corps of Engineers to take action on the requests below, and 2) to fund those actions. Further, we request that the studies outlined below result in decision-making documents that provide an actionable path forward for short-term measures that will reduce the risk of aquatic invasive species including Asian carp (AIS) reaching the Great Lakes from the Mississippi River system.

As a follow up to the Great Lakes and Mississippi River Interbasin Study (GLMRIS), the Advisory Committee is committed to finding a two-way, long-term solution that prevents the inter-basin transfer of AIS while also maintaining or enhancing transportation, maritime commerce, water quality, recreation, and flood protection in the region. The Advisory Committee is working to develop consensus recommendations on a long-term solution by December 2015. The Committee also supports the ongoing work of the Asian Carp Regional Coordinating Committee (ACRCC). The investments we are proposing below will develop and demonstrate control technologies for near-term actions to reduce the risk of transfer of AIS into the Great Lakes.

The Advisory Committee believes that the Brandon Road lock and dam is an important site for a demonstration of additional one-way measures to reduce the risk of upstream movement of AIS into both the CAWS and the Des Plaines River, while maintaining efficient navigation.¹ Control measures at Brandon Road can provide a degree of risk reduction now, and may be consistent with the ultimate long-term solution. This site can also serve as a valuable national proving ground to demonstrate technologies that can be used in other areas – such as the Ohio and Upper Mississippi rivers – to prevent the expansion of AIS. To be effective, an engineered channel at Brandon Road will be required and a full set of control technologies to be deployed there will need to be evaluated.

In addition to the consideration of short-term measures at Brandon Road, the Advisory Committee requests that additional studies be initiated now to evaluate the potential for new lock configurations and gate systems that are identified in the GLMRIS report. While any new lock configuration would be considered as part of a long-term solution, more work is required to fully understand this possibility.

The Advisory Committee asks that Congress support and fund the following:

1. **Design of a new engineered channel to be constructed in the approach to the Brandon Road lock.** The existing approach channels to the Brandon Road lock may lend themselves to construction of a new engineered channel. Such a channel would enable deployment of control technologies with greater effectiveness due to the narrower and more concentrated area on which they would be implemented.

¹ Efficient navigation means that the flow of traffic will not be significantly hindered during construction or after completion of construction by the new structures or technologies.

2. **Evaluation, engineering, and design of control technologies to deploy in the approach channel and the Brandon Road lock structure.** Several “add-on” control technologies are being evaluated as part of the Asian Carp Control Strategy Framework. These technologies could be used in the approach channel to deter AIS from entering the lock along with other control technologies in the existing lock to prevent AIS moving further upstream towards Lake Michigan. The Army Corps of Engineers, in collaboration with other federal and state agencies, should complete the evaluation, engineering, and design of appropriate control technologies that could be deployed at the Brandon Road lock and approach channel. Any technologies that are tested and/or employed at Brandon Road must take into account the important ecological value of the location, as the Brandon Road lock tail waters are critical habitat for this segment of the Des Plaines River.
3. **Research to further evaluate reconfiguring locks as a means to control aquatic invasive species.** The GLMRIS report proposed a new lock configuration and gate system that would allow boat traffic to pass between water bodies and that would exchange water in a way to prevent the passage of aquatic organisms. If such a concept is proven to be feasible, it could be deployed in the CAWS as part of a long-term solution. It could also be used in other river systems to prevent the movement of AIS. However, significant questions remain regarding its potential effectiveness. One concern is whether such locks could adequately flush out species or whether additional treatment technologies will be required. Further, the overall cost and time frame for deployment and impacts on the water system as a whole and commercial navigation need to be identified before proceeding to full engineering and design. The Advisory Committee supports initial research and design necessary to further evaluate the concept’s effectiveness in preventing AIS transfer.

Request: The Advisory Committee requests that Congress provide \$8 million, and additional funding levels as appropriate, to the Army Corps of Engineers in FY 2015 to conduct the above studies. Upon approval of funding, the Army Corps of Engineers should be directed to provide to Congress, within six months, a detailed schedule and cost estimate for completing the necessary studies for the above projects. The studies will result in design and engineering analysis as well as projected design and construction costs, timelines, and any new legislative authority required to implement the projects.

The Army Corps of Engineers should be instructed to complete these investigations within two years and to coordinate with other federal and state agencies and non-federal partners via the Asian Carp Regional Coordinating Committee and to report to the Advisory Committee. In addition to these specific investigations and reports, the Advisory Committee asks that the Army Corps of Engineers provide Congress with a decision-making document that incorporates the Corps’ traditional principles, guidelines and policies, including the evaluation of alternatives, selection of a recommended plan, and compliance with applicable environmental statutes. This should be sufficient to enable Congress to authorize and fund, and the Army Corps of Engineers to proceed to implementation of, a recommended plan for near-term measures.

These requests reflect the consensus of the Advisory Committee. We appreciate your support for these urgent and immediate actions to strengthen protections against the movement of AIS into the Great Lakes.

Sincerely,

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