

NOVEMBER, 2010 MICHIGAN ASIAN CARP PREVENTION WORKSHOP

On November 22, 2010 I attended the workshop along with 112 other people. This group was made up of 55 from various state, federal and local government agencies, 15 from the academic world (mostly from MSU), 14 from the business world (bait handlers, charter boats, insurance companies, energy producers, consultants, news media, foundations), 3 representatives from the Ottawa/Chippewa Indian tribes and 25 from clubs and organizations like us. Actually there were two conservation clubs with the rest being state or national organizations. The intent was to inform the attendees of the status of the Asian Carp invasion and get our comments on the efforts and future plans.

We heard from the Federal agencies, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Canada and the Tribes as to what they are doing and the successes they have had. Needless to say successes were few, plans were vague and hopes were high. Everybody said the Mississippi basin and the Great Lakes basin should be separated. It is absolutely critical to do so, but there are no plans to do so. There are ongoing studies which might be completed by 2013, the conclusions of which might be implemented by 2015.

I had not put much thought into the various ways invasive species could get into the Great Lakes. We know about the ballast water problem and the Chicago Canal, but there are other connections along the Ohio River and its tributaries, particularly during flood stages. If the Asian Carp, or any other invasive species, are in the Mississippi they have access to almost all the waterways east of the Rockies and west of the Appalachians.

The Army Corp of Engineers is the lead on the problem. They complained about the lack of funding. As an example they

estimated all the studies required would take 2-3 years and cost \$15 million. They received study authorization in 2007, but received the funding in 2009 to the tune of \$400,000. That completely discredited all the wonderful things contained in the presentation by the White House Council on Environmental Quality's Asian Carp Director. This individual had the first presentation and instantly established an air of skepticism.

Michigan has a plan to monitor and detect the presence of Asian Carp through DNA analysis. Asian Carp coming in as bait is a major concern. There are fliers being published which picture juvenile Asian Carp so anglers can be on the lookout.

Michigan and the other Great Lake states have a law suit against the Illinois agencies and the Army Corp of Engineers to get action on the basin separation. When and if this will do any good is highly questionable.

Our folks in the DNRE are frustrated at the lack of action in separating the basins. They are cooperating as much as possible in the detection and elimination of the Carp outside Michigan waters. The problem is; there is nothing they can do to prevent the advance of the Carp into the Great Lakes. All these efforts are taking too long and my conclusion is, like all the other invasive species, we will need to learn to live with Asian Carp in the Great Lakes. I heard this lament many times during the workshop.

**I draw my conclusion for the following reasons:
ECONOMIC IMPACT - not to the resource or the people who use the resource and certainly not to the state of Michigan, but to the livelihood of those who use the Chicago Canal. That is what is foremost in the minds of the Federal agencies and, of course, the state of Illinois.**

LACK OF FUNDING - \$400,000 when \$15 million is needed. This is an instant political football, particularly between the current legislators and the President. It is difficult for me to believe that either of these has any concept as to the economic impact related to our natural resources and, therefore, the economic threat the Asian Carp presents.

POLITICAL POSTURING – Lobbying, note the content of the attendees, and political donations have more value than votes, mainly because people do not concentrate their vote on such issues.

TIME – Between waiting for funding and the numerous studies (if the courts are to decide you can't have enough studies) time is on the Carp's side.

To a lesser degree I feel there is some Bureaucratic cross interference related to who is in charge, particularly from the Illinois contingent, evident in the presentations. Less obvious was the academic desire to do studies and get grants for as long as the threat lasts. Nothing like one study contradicting another to prolong studies and delay action. Sound familiar - dioxin??

God help us if we ever get invaded by Canada. By the time all the studies are done the people in Georgia will be saying "eh".

Jim De Clerck