



November 17, 2009

Secretary Robert M. Gates
U.S. Department of Defense
Washington, D.C. 20301-1400

Dear Secretary Gates:

As you know, the Great Lakes are at risk from the grave threat posed by Asian carp and other harmful aquatic invasive species. Over the past several years, the Great Lakes Governors have repeatedly urged that protections be strengthened. Unfortunately, recent evidence confirms that Asian carp are closer than ever to entering the Great Lakes. These carp potentially threaten public safety and the ecological integrity of the world's largest freshwater ecosystem. We again call on you, through the Army Corps of Engineers, to aggressively take the necessary steps to stop this threat.

The Water Resources Development Act of 2007 authorized the completion of the barrier needed to help prevent the Asian carp and other species from entering the Great Lakes system through the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal. Without the completion and operation of an effective barrier system in the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal, the Asian carp may soon enter the Lakes through the Illinois and Chicago River systems. Unfortunately, the construction of the full barrier system remains unfinished.

A year ago, the Great Lakes Governors requested that you provide us with a detailed work plan and timeline to complete barrier construction and testing, and then to begin operation at full capacity as soon as possible. We respectfully request that barrier IIb be completed and tested before June 2010 when it will be necessary to take down the barrier again for routine maintenance.

Further, we ask that you share with us additional measures that either will be taken or are under consideration to more broadly counter the threat of invasive species entering the Great Lakes through the Illinois and Chicago River systems. The barrier system is very important but necessarily forms but one part of a larger protective network. All available authorities at your disposal must be exercised aggressively to strengthen these protections.

Our region, and our nation, depends on the Great Lakes. The Asian carp pose a grave and immediate threat. The Great Lakes States are working individually and together to address this threat aggressively. We cannot afford to act cautiously, and ask that you join us in taking action to stop this threat.

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Sincerely,



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