January 25, 2016

The Honorable Barack Obama  
President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

This letter is written on behalf of the Chicago Area Waterway System (CAWS) Advisory Committee, whose members have met since 2014. The Committee includes representatives from 30 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. The goal of the Committee is to reach consensus on a set of recommendations to elected and appointed local, state, and federal officials and to the public on short and long-term measures to prevent Asian carp and other aquatic invasive species (AIS) from moving between the Mississippi River and Great Lakes basins through the CAWS.

The CAWS Advisory Committee has concluded that a system of possible control points in the CAWS to address AIS is worth further study. The Advisory Committee requests that sufficient funds be allocated, beginning with the proposed fiscal year 2017 budget, that will allow the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), under existing authorities, to complete specific studies necessary to develop a Chief’s Report on a system of control points, as described below, to prevent the transfer of AIS to and from the Mississippi River and Great Lakes basins through the CAWS. The Advisory Committee anticipates this work will involve a multi-year effort. We must emphasize the urgency of this situation, and request that USACE complete the process as soon as possible, recognizing that certain process requirements, including compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act, must be met. The Chief’s Report and accompanying information should be in sufficient detail for decisionmakers at the local, state, and federal levels to determine how to move forward with a long-term solution.

The CAWS Advisory Committee has considered options in the Great Lakes Mississippi River Interbasin Study (GLMRIS) developed by USACE, along with additional information provided by technical consultants, and has identified further information needed to design and select a long-term solution. This includes assessing in more detail, with respect to all of the criteria below, the following questions regarding a system of control points:

1. Whether an AIS lock or system of AIS locks can be designed and implemented in the CAWS to be effective at two-way prevention, compared to other alternatives, including what is known to be most effective; and
2. Whether and how control points could be implemented consistent with the mid-system locations identified in several GLMRIS alternatives.

Nothing in this letter is intended to limit USACE and/or other federal or state agencies from analyzing or implementing other AIS control measures that might be needed and have been shown to be feasible and effective.
Further information and analyses on these topics are necessary in order to reach consensus among Advisory Committee stakeholders on what specific control measures are needed or on the specific locations for control points. The Advisory Committee identified significant information needs on a number of topics, not sufficiently developed in GLMRIS. Assessment of these topics necessitates selecting possible control point locations to analyze. USACE also should not unduly restrict its consideration of other possible control locations, if the results of the initial analyses indicate that these locations are more appropriate.

The long-term solution in the CAWS should be designed with the following criteria in mind, which have guided the Advisory Committee:

- Prevent two-way interbasin transfer of invasive species between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River System through the CAWS in Illinois and Indiana.
- Maintain or enhance efficient maritime transportation and commerce through and on the CAWS.
- Reduce flood risk in Illinois and Indiana.
- Reduce impacts of Combined Sewer Overflows in Illinois and Indiana.
- Protect or improve water quality in the CAWS, Lake Michigan and the Illinois River Basin, and meet federal and Illinois and Indiana environmental regulations.
- Reduce the need for discretionary diversions from Lake Michigan.
- Create local benefits sufficient to facilitate local cost sharing.

In assessing an AIS lock system, USACE should build on studies conducted since GLMRIS, including a report by the U.S Geological Survey, and evaluate treatment and other control measures that could be applied to a full range of taxa and life stages. In this assessment, USACE should interface and collaborate with the member agencies of the Asian Carp Regional Coordinating Committee, representatives of Mississippi River basin agencies, and private entities.

Evaluation and research into a one-way lock treatment system is already underway for the Brandon Road Lock and Dam through the USACE Brandon Road Feasibility Study. As design studies are conducted, it is important that current nonstructural control measures for Asian carp, such as harvesting, be maintained and expanded downstream, and be fully funded. Actions to stop other AIS of concern from moving between basins should also be expanded and fully funded with appropriate congressional approval.

The City of Chicago, Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago, other local governments, the State of Illinois, other Great Lakes and Mississippi River states, Canadian interests, tribes/First Nations, environmental and industrial nongovernmental organizations and the private sector should be involved in the process to ensure that they are engaged and have the information needed to assess recommended actions, using criteria of importance to all stakeholders. The Committee also requests that USACE provide opportunities for meaningful public participation and transparency throughout the study process.

This request reflects the consensus of the CAWS Advisory Committee.

Respectfully submitted,

Alliance for the Great Lakes  
Joel Brammeier, President and CEO  
Ph: 312-939-0838  
jb Brammeier@greatlakes.org

American Waterways Operators  
Lynn Muench, Senior Vice President – Regional Advocacy  
Ph: 314-308-0378  
lmuench@vesselalliance.com

Chemical Industry Council of Illinois  
Mark Biel, Executive Director  
Ph: 217-522-5805  
m biel@cicil.net

Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning  
Alex Beata, Associate Policy Analyst  
ABeata@cmap.illinois.gov

Council of Great Lakes Industries  
Kathryn Buckner, President  
Ph: 734-663-1944  
kabuckner@cgli.org

Environmental Law and Policy Center  
Howard Learner, President and Executive Director  
Ph: 312-673-6500  
hlearner@elpc.org

Friends of the Chicago River  
John Quail, Director of Watershed Planning  
Ph: 312-939-0490, ext. 20  
jquail@chicagoriver.org

Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative  
Dave Ullrich, Executive Director  
Ph: 312-201-4516  
david.ullrich@glslcities.org

Great Lakes Commission  
Tim Edler, Executive Director  
Ph: 734-971-9135  
tedler@greatlakes.org

Great Lakes Panel on Aquatic Nuisance Species  
Erika Jensen, GLP Coordinator  
Ph: 734-971-9135  
ejensen@glc.org

Healing Our Waters – Great Lakes Coalition  
Todd Ambs, Campaign Director  
Ph: 608-692-9974  
AmbsT@nwf.org

Illinois Chamber of Commerce  
Benjamin J. Brockeschmidt, Executive Director, Infrastructure Council  
Ph: 312-983-7100  
bbrockeschmidt@ilchamber.org

Illinois Farm Bureau  
Kevin Rand, Sr. Director of Local Government, Illinois Agricultural Association  
Ph: 309-557-3274  
KRundd@ilfb.org

Illinois International Port District  
Frank Kudrna, Principal Water Resources Engineer, URS Corp  
Ph: 312-596-6727  
frank.kudrna@urs.com

Illinois River Carriers Association  
John Kindra, President, Kindra Lake Towing  
Ph: 773-721-1180  
jk kindra@kindralake.com

Lake Erie Charter Boat Association  
Rick Under, Executive Director  
Ph: 216-401-6231  
rungerhpel@aol.com

Metropolitan Mayors Caucus  
Mayor John Ostendorp  
Village of Park Forest  
Mayor Barrett Pedersen  
Village of Franklin Park  
Ph: 312-201-4506  
emakra@mayorscaucus.org

Metropolitan Planning Council  
Josh Ellis, Project Manager  
Ph: 312-863-6045  
jellis@metroplanning.org

Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago  
David St. Pierre, Executive Director  
Ph: 312-751-7900  
david.stpierre@mwrd.org

Mississippi Interstate Cooperative Resource Association  
Bobby Wilson, MICRA Chair  
Chief, Fisheries Division, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency  
Ph: 615-781-5000  
bobby.wilson@tn.gov

National Wildlife Federation  
Marc Smith, Policy Director, Great Lakes Regional Center  
Ph: 734-887-7116  
msmith@nwf.org

Natural Resources Defense Council  
Meleah Geertsma  
Staff Attorney, Midwest Program  
Ph: 312-651-7904  
mgeertsma@nrdc.org

The Nature Conservancy  
Dave Hamilton, Senior Policy Director  
Ph: 517-316-2222  
dhamilton@tnc.org

Northeast Ohio Mayors & City Managers Assoc.  
Mayor Debborah Sutherland  
City of Bay Village  
Ph: 440-899-3415  
dsutherland@cityofbayvillage.com

Northwest Indiana Forum  
Kay Nelson, Director of Environmental Affairs  
Ph: 219-763-6303, ext. 186  
knelson@nwiforum.org

Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters  
Matt DeMille, Manager, Fish and Wildlife Services  
Ph: 705-748-6234, ext. 249  
matt_demille@ofah.org

Passenger Vessel Association & Wendella Sightseeing  
Michael Borgstrom, President, Wendella Boats  
Ph: 312-205-4044  
msb@wendellaboats.com

Prairie Rivers Network  
Robert Hirschfeld, Water Policy Specialist  
Ph: 217-344-2371 x205  
rhirschfeld@prairierivers.org

Save the Dunes  
Nicole Barker, Executive Director  
Ph: 219-879-3564 x 122  
nicole@savedunes.org

Sierra Club - Illinois Chapter  
Jack Darin, Director  
Ph: 312-251-1680  
jack.darin@sierraclub.org

cc: Great Lakes and Mississippi River Congressional Delegation  
Asian Carp Regional Coordinating Committee