

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 Survey¹, 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,

¹ Hubert, T.D., Boogaard, M.A., and Fredricks, K.T., 2016, Identify potential lock treatment options to prevent movement of aquatic invasive species through the Chicago Area Waterway System (CAWS): U.S. Geological Survey Open-File Report 2016-1001, 16 p., <http://dx.doi.org/10.3133/ofr20161001>.

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