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**\$2 Million Funding Goal Met, Lead Contractor Selected for Study Initiative to Modernize the Chicago Waterway System and Protect the Great Lakes from Asian Carp**

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**For Immediate Release [January 11, 2011]:**

A fast-tracked effort by Great Lakes states and cities to develop options for separating the Great Lakes from the Mississippi River while improving transportation, water quality and flood control is now underway after reaching a funding target of \$2 million, largely from private funders, and selection of an expert consulting team.

The project, *Envisioning a Chicago Area Waterway System for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, [www.glc.org/ans/chicagowaterway.html](http://www.glc.org/ans/chicagowaterway.html), is being undertaken by the Great Lakes Commission representing states and provinces, and the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, representing mayors. Its goal is to identify engineering options for Chicago's waterway system that will prevent interbasin movement of aquatic invasive species such as Asian carp, while also modernizing the system's roles in commercial navigation, recreational boating, flood and stormwater management, and water quality.

"We are intensively focused on completing the project by the end of 2011 and presenting options for separation in January 2012," said Tim Eder, executive director of the Ann Arbor, Michigan-based Great Lakes Commission. "With our full budget in hand and the hiring of a top-notch team of consultants, we are on track."

David Ullrich, executive director of the Cities Initiative, noted that the project represents the most comprehensive look at the waterway system since the reversal of the Chicago River away from Lake Michigan over a century ago. "We have a unique opportunity to not only protect the Great Lakes and Mississippi River from serious invaders, but improve quality of life and economic well-being for the residents of greater Chicago and the Great Lakes basin for many generations to come. This project is comprehensive because it addresses all the vital functions of the Chicago waterway system."

The \$2 million in funding has been secured from six funders: the Frey Foundation, the Great Lakes Fishery Trust, the Great Lakes Protection Fund, the Joyce Foundation, the C.S. Mott Foundation, and the Wege Foundation.

The Chicago office of HDR Engineering, Inc. of Chicago, (<http://www.hdrinc.com/>) will be the lead consultant for the project. HDR assembled a national highly qualified, multi-disciplinary technical team with expertise in hydrology and hydraulics; environmental engineering; lock, dam and canal engineering; ecology and fisheries biology; transportation planning and commercial logistics; sanitary engineering; regional planning; and economics. HDR will serve as the lead consultant for the project, with support from an array of premier specialty firms that bring additional skills. HDR has more than 35 years of experience in the Chicago area.

While Asian carp have been migrating up the Mississippi toward the Great Lakes during the past two decades, urgency intensified in June 2010 when a live Asian carp was caught in Lake Calumet above electronic barriers installed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and just six miles from Lake Michigan.

Both the Great Lakes Commission and the Cities Initiative have taken positions favoring separation as the best approach to keep the invasive fish from entering the Great Lakes and threatening businesses, tourism and a \$7 billion sport fishery. The Chicago waterway project will evaluate the economic, technical and ecological elements of separation, along with associated costs, impacts and potential benefits of a re-engineered hydrologic system.

The project is designed to support the work of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Great Lakes and Mississippi River Interbasin Study, but is committed to produce findings on a more accelerated schedule: completion is envisioned by the end of 2011. The project has been endorsed by U.S. Senator Richard Durbin (D-IL), Illinois Governor Pat Quinn and Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley, among many other regional leaders.

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*The Great Lakes Commission, chaired by James Tierney of the New York Department of Environmental Conservation, is an interstate compact agency established under state and U.S. federal law and dedicated to promoting a strong economy, healthy environment and high quality of life for the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence region and its residents. The Commission consists of governors' appointees, state legislators, and agency officials from its eight member states. Associate membership for Ontario and Québec was established through the signing of a "Declaration of Partnership." The Commission maintains a formal Observer program involving U.S. and Canadian federal agencies, tribal authorities, binational agencies and other regional interests. The Commission offices are located in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Learn more at [www.glc.org](http://www.glc.org).*

*The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative is a U.S. and Canadian coalition of over 70 mayors and other local officials representing over 13 million people that works actively with federal, state, tribal, first nation and provincial governments and other stakeholders to advance the restoration and protection of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River basin. For more information on the Cities Initiative, visit [www.glslcities.org](http://www.glslcities.org).*