



Fisheries and Oceans Canada

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Brief History of Asian Carp in North America and Related Initiatives in Canada

May, 2012

1970s

Asian carp were introduced to North America. In the southern United States, most were brought in for use in the aquaculture industry. In Canada, Asian carp are imported for the live food fish industry.

Flooding in the southern United States in the 1970s and onward, resulted in Asian carp moving beyond their contained environments into open freshwater water systems. Adapting quickly to their environments, two Asian carp species, Bighead and Silver carp (together termed bigheaded carps) began migrating northward through the Mississippi Basin.

1990s

Receding waters after a major flood event in Illinois provides the first warning that Asian carp were invading these aquatic environments. Of the many dead fish specimens that lay on the shores of the receding rivers, most were Asian carp, outnumbering local species by a factor of nine to one.

2003 - 2004

Canada participated in two Asian carp summits held in Chicago to consider strategies to prevent the introduction of Asian carp into Lake Michigan.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada conducted a science-based risk assessment study to evaluate the likelihood of arrival, survival, reproduction spread and impact of Asian carp should they be introduced into Canadian aquatic environments. The study concluded that the risk of impact was high in some parts of Canada, including the southern Great Lakes basin by four Asian carp species.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada Science staff began their ongoing participation in the development of the U.S. Asian carp Control and Management Plan, and in a prevention subgroup.

2008

Canada initiated "border blitzes" of shipments coming into Canada by road and air, for live fishes, specifically Asian carp. Fisheries and Oceans Canada worked with several partner organizations to provide training, equipment and protocols. Since then, several land shipments of live Asian carps have been intercepted, charges laid and convictions imposed.

2009

During the summer, Asian carp DNA was found 10 kilometres from Lake Michigan, indicating that Asian carp were much closer to the Great Lakes than previously thought. In December, Canada provided equipment and expertise towards containment efforts in Illinois to prevent Asian carp from passing unrestricted through the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal into the Great Lakes. The key control mechanism used in that waterway was, and still is, a series of electrical barriers that require ongoing maintenance to ensure their effectiveness and longer-term operation.

2010

The Province of British Columbia banned the possession and sale of Asian carp.

On behalf of the Government of Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Minister Gail Shea announced the launch of a Great Lakes Basin-wide *Bi-national Ecological Risk Assessment of Asian carp for the Great Lakes Basin*, to identify likely routes where Silver carp and Bighead carps could enter the Great Lakes and pinpoint key areas within the basin most vulnerable to invasion and impact. Both Canadian and American scientists participated as co-authors of the report and as scientific experts in the peer review. The Government of Canada allocated approximately \$415,000 to fund the completion of this study; these funds were in addition to the \$4 million invested annually through Budget 2010 to support the Department's overall Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) program and an additional \$6.1 million invested annually in the Sea Lamprey Control Program.

visited on 7/15/2014

2011

The Province of Ontario and the Government of Canada collaborated on mock exercises to test the province's rapid response framework and communication systems that would be required to respond to a sudden introduction of an Asian carp into Ontario.

Federal, state and provincial agencies and academic institutions from both sides of the border concluded 15 months of collaboration, resulting in up-to-date information regarding the risk assessment of Silver and Bighead carp. The binational collaboration continued as experts in risk assessment for aquatic species from a number of Canadian and American agencies came together and formed the risk assessment writing team. They prepared the Risk Assessment document for peer review, which further strengthened the overall process.

The Great Lakes hold 21 percent of the world's above-ground freshwater. The annual revenue generated from the commercial and sport fisheries, as well as thriving tourism and recreational industries is estimated to be in excess of \$9 billion CAD . (Source: Fisheries and Oceans Canada; Great Lakes Fisheries Commission).

News Release:

- [Harper Government Protects the Great Lakes from Asian Carp](#)

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