

ANS Task Force

Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force
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MAR 20 2007

Mr. Mike Conlin, Chair
Great Lakes Panel on Aquatic Nuisance Species
2805 South Industrial Hwy
Suite #100
Ann Arbor, MI 48104-6791

Dear Mr. Conlin:

Thank you for your letter of January 19, 2007 on behalf of the Great Lakes Panel on Aquatic Nuisance Species endorsing completion of a permanent aquatic invasive species dispersal barrier on the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal. As co-chairs of the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force, we assure you the Task Force shares your concern that the Canal continues to provide a pathway for species to move between the Great Lakes and Mississippi watersheds, and we will continue to work towards closing that pathway.

The Task Force's record includes support for the 'temporary' barrier in Romeoville, Illinois that was intended to test the electrical barrier concept and stop the movement of the round goby into the Mississippi River watershed. Unfortunately the round goby moved past the Romeoville site before the barrier became operational. Now that the electrical barrier concept is proven, we support a permanent barrier system, one that will address the very real threats posed by invasive Asian carps and prevent their movements into the Great Lakes watershed.

Although the Administration has not taken a position on the congressionally introduced legislation to specifically authorize construction of the permanent barrier, the President's budget for Fiscal Year 2008 indicates clearly that construction of the permanent barrier is a priority and requests funding for the project. A summary of the budget request for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/fy2008/corps.html> and contains the following language:

“The Budget’s support for aquatic ecosystem restoration activities includes providing funding for three significant new initiatives: . . .

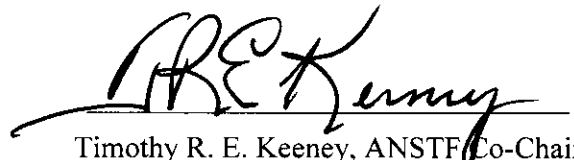
Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal Dispersal Barrier. To protect the ecosystem of the Great Lakes from Asian carp, which have had a harmful impact on the ecology of the Illinois Waterway, and from other invasive species, the Corps will improve the existing electrical barrier on the Illinois Waterway and continue to construct a second barrier.”

We appreciate your panel's work in bringing this issue to the attention of the Task Force and conveying the high priority the regional interests you represent put on the completion of a permanent dispersal barrier, and, whenever possible, we will support its completion. To enhance our efforts, we will forward your letter to the Task Force members and ask them to take it into consideration should they find themselves in positions to lend support to your request.

Sincerely,



Mamie A. Parker, ANSTF Co-Chair
Assistant Director - Fisheries and Habitat Conservation
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



Timothy R. E. Keeney, ANSTF Co-Chair
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration



Copy: Mr. Michael Hoff, Co-Chair
Mississippi River Basin Panel on ANS