



February 26, 2005

Honorable Mike DeWine, Senator
37 West Broad Street, Suite 300
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Senator DeWine:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Mississippi Interstate Cooperative Resource Association (MICRA) regarding reauthorization of the Water Resources Development Act, and more specifically regarding proposed language which addresses the Invasive Species Dispersal Barrier Project in the Chicago Waterway System and biological separation of the Mississippi River and Great Lakes ecosystems.

This language was proposed to you in a letter from the Great Lakes Fishery Commission (GLFC), dated February 3, 2005. MICRA would like to go on record strongly in support of the GLFC proposals outlined in their Attachments 1 and 2 (copies attached). MICRA's membership includes 28 state departments of conservation and natural resources in the Mississippi River Basin, charged with managing more than 90 interjurisdictional river systems including the Upper Mississippi, Lower Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, Tennessee, and Arkansas/Red rivers.

The spread of invasive species has become one of the dominant natural resource issues in the nation. Invasive organisms such as the zebra mussel and Asian carp have had devastating impacts on the native organisms of the Mississippi River Basin, and everything possible needs to be done to reduce or eliminate these effects. We, of course, have experienced zebra mussel and round goby invasions from the Great Lakes via the Chicago Waterway System, and are interested in working with the GLFC to prevent the spread of Asian carp in the other direction from the Mississippi River Basin to the Great Lakes.

Numerous other exotic organisms have already invaded both the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River Basin ecosystems, but many have not yet crossed between the two. But as long as the Chicago Waterway System serves as a viable dispersal point, both ecosystems are threatened with continued invasion from the other. Therefore, we need the most reliable barrier possible in place between the two, and since the ecosystems of so many states are at risk, we feel that it is in the federal interest and a federal responsibility to operate and maintain such protection.

We also feel it is in the federal interest to seek ways to permanently separate the biological systems of these two great ecosystems. Several options have been proposed for such separation and others undoubtedly remain to be identified. Funding of the GLFC's proposed reconnaissance study would provide the opportunity to further define and refine these options, and hopefully recommend actions that could be taken.

MICRA appreciates your consideration of our views and your attention to protecting and restoring the great ecosystems of both the Mississippi River Basin and the Great Lakes. We look forward to working further with you on this great partnership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Doug Nygren". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Doug Nygren
Chairman

Attachments

Cc: MRB State Directors of Conservation and Natural Resources
GLFC

Attachment 1

Authorizing dispersal barriers, Illinois Waterway System
(The following proposal is nearly identical to section 4306 of WRDA 2004, as reported in the Senate.)

CHICAGO SANITARY AND SHIP CANAL DISPERSAL BARRIERS PROJECT, ILLINOIS.

(a) **EXISTING BARRIER.**—The Secretary shall upgrade and make permanent, at full Federal expense, the existing Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal Dispersal Barrier Chicago, Illinois, constructed as a demonstration project under section 1202(i)(3) of the Nonindigenous Aquatic Nuisance Prevention and Control Act of 1990 (16 U.S.C. 4722(i)(3)).

(b) **NEW BARRIER.**—Notwithstanding the project cooperation agreement dated November 21, 2003, with the State of Illinois, the Secretary shall construct, at full Federal expense, the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal Dispersal Barrier initiated under section 1135 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1986 (33 U.S.C. 2309a).

(c) **OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE.**—The Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal Dispersal Barriers described in subsections (a) and (b) shall be operated and maintained by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, at full Federal expense, as a system in a manner to optimize effectiveness.

(d) **CREDIT.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary shall credit to each State the proportion of funds that the State contributed to the authorized dispersal barriers.

(2) **USE.**—A State may apply the credit to existing or future projects of the Corps of Engineers.

FUNDING: There is authorized to be appropriated \$6,500,000 for this section.

Attachment 2

Authorizing a reconnaissance study to investigate biological separation of the Great Lakes and
Mississippi River systems

PERMANENT PROTECTION FROM INTER-BASIN TRANSFERS OF AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES, CHICAGO WATERWAY SYSTEM

IN GENERAL: The Secretary shall conduct a reconnaissance study at 100% Federal expense to identify, review and recommend alternatives to establish permanent measures to protect the Great Lakes and Mississippi River basins from all life stages of non-native aquatic invasive species that may migrate between the two basins via the Chicago Waterway System. The study shall include:

1. Engineering alternatives to reduce or eliminate potential for and risk of future introduction and spread of non-native species;
2. Costs, benefits and other issues associated with various alternatives,
including: - impacts on native biota:
 - impacts on waste water treatment discharges;
 - impacts on flood damage reduction; and
 - impacts on movement of cargo and commercial and recreational vessels between the two basins.

The identified alternatives shall be compared for their ability to protect the two basins from migration of non-native species from a wide array of aquatic taxa.

COORDINATION: The Secretary shall establish a Task Force to provide input for study design, review of findings, and coordination of recommendations. This task force shall be co-chaired by the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Administrator of NOAA. Members shall include the Secretary, the Administrator of EPA, the Governor of the State of Illinois, the Commander of the U.S. Coast Guard, the Chair of the Great Lakes Panel on Aquatic Nuisance Species, the Chair of the Mississippi River Panel on Aquatic Nuisance Species, a representative of the City of Chicago, and the Superintendent of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District. The task force shall solicit input from interested observers and scientists including, but not limited to, the Dispersal Barrier Advisory Panel, a representative of the navigation industry, the Chicago International Port Authority, a non-government organization, the International Joint Commission, and the Great Lakes Fishery Commission.

REPORT TO CONGRESS: The Secretary shall present the findings of this study, with a detailed consideration of costs and benefits and recommendations, in a report to the Congress within 2 years from the date of passage. The Secretary shall, in his final report, include recommendations and identify the position (support or opposition) of task force members.

FUNDING: There is authorized to be appropriated \$1,500,000 for the reconnaissance report.