


Close the waterways and poison the carp

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If finding evidence of Asian carp within a few miles of Lake Michigan isn't an emergency for the Great Lakes, what in the world is?

The only sensible plan now is to close off access to the lake via every lock and dam in Chicago area waterways, and poison the heck out of the channels behind them until everyone's satisfied the carp aren't there. With a closing of one stretch already planned for next week, while an electrical barrier is inspected, the timing is right to take the next steps, either simultaneously or in a one-two sequence that guarantees [success](#).

Then, it won't be too soon to start planning for the permanent separation of the Great Lakes basin from [Mississippi River](#)  tributaries, restoring the natural division between the two that Chicago breached more than a century ago to dump its sewage.

Lest anyone forget the stakes here, the value of the Great Lakes for commercial and sports fishing ranks in the billions of dollars. Asian carp, which can consume up to 40% of their weight each day, will clean out the bottom of the food chain that supports those fish, be they imported salmon or native walleye and perch.

The carp may not thrive in the open water of the big lakes, but places like Lake St. Clair, Saginaw Bay and the western end of Lake Erie -- the shallower parts of the system and also the most [productive](#) -- seem almost guaranteed to delight them. In some waterways where the carp have already made themselves at home, they account for as much as 90%, by weight, of every living thing.

Imagine such a fate for Lake St. Clair. The leaping variety of these imported carp would also make it dangerous to water-ski, zip around on personal watercraft or cruise on almost any open boat.

The DNA evidence of carp so close to Lake Michigan may prove to have been an anomaly. But if not, there's still a chance to prevent these invasive fish from gaining enough of a foothold in the lakes to reproduce. It's time to fight for the lakes with every weapon available.