

U.S. targets invading carp with poison, nets, shocks

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(Reuters) - Looking for Asian carp that could pose a dire threat to billion-dollar Great Lakes fisheries, U.S. authorities announced plans on Wednesday to poison, net and shock any invaders in Chicago-area rivers.

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Authorities want to find out if any of the invasive Bighead and Silver Carp -- which have populated the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers -- have made it past electric barriers erected near Chicago to keep them out of the Great Lakes.

Carp DNA has been found in Lake Michigan, prompting neighboring states to file a lawsuit seeking to have locks closed. The suit seeks a permanent separation of the century-old, man-made links between the Mississippi River and Great Lakes watersheds.

So far, the U.S. Supreme Court has rejected efforts to close the locks, much to the relief of the commercial barge industry, recreational boaters, and tour operators. In a \$78 million effort to track the voracious invaders and keep them out of the Great Lakes and away from the lakes' \$7 billion recreational and commercial fisheries, federal and state agencies have embarked on a fishing program.

The next step will be to drop a fish poison, rotenone, along a narrow stretch of the Cal-Sag channel on the Lake Michigan side of the T.J. O'Brien Lock and Dam. The area is also past two underwater electric barriers meant to keep out the carp. Boat traffic will be prohibited for four of five days during the poisoning operation set to begin on May 20.

The same poison was dispersed in December in a canal farther from Lake Michigan and turned up a single Bighead carp. A subsequent fishing expedition nearer to Lake Michigan did not find any of the invaders. Nets and electro-fishing will be conducted next week along a shallow section of the Chicago River, closing the waterway to paddlers and recreational boats.

"These new monitoring efforts will help us make the most strategic decisions for keeping Asian carp from becoming established in the Great Lakes," said Charlie Wooley, Deputy Regional Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

(Reporting by [Andrew Stern](#); editing by [Mohammad Zargham](#))