

**National Wildlife Federation \* Great Lakes United**

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## **Bill Axes Funding for Asian Carp Barrier To Continue Six-Year Navigation Study**

**‘Congress choosing pork over priorities’**

**Buffalo, NY (November 10)** –Conservationists expressed outrage that a Congressional bill would cut funding to fight the influx of aquatic invasive species like the Asian carp, while extending a controversial and ongoing study on commercial shipping on the Great Lakes.

"The navigation study is fiscally and environmentally irresponsible, and is the Great Lakes region's equivalent to the Alaskan bridge to nowhere," said Tim Eder, Director of Water Resources for the National Wildlife Federation's Great Lakes office. "It's shameful that Congress is throwing more good money at this wasteful study when people in New Orleans aren't even able to move back into their homes."

The Energy and Water conference committee released a bill on November 8, 2005 that devotes \$1.285 million to fund the Great Lakes Navigation Study. Congress has allocated more than \$6 million dollars of taxpayer money over six years to this study.

"Congress is funding a never-ending study while the region is prioritizing funding for Great Lakes protection and restoration." said Jennifer Nalbone, campaign director for Great Lakes United.

Despite strong regional support to protect the Great Lakes from Asian carp, the same bill cuts funding for critical projects designed to keep the invasive fish out of the basin. The original bill

allocated funding to maintain operations of two dispersal barriers on the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal designed to repel the Asian carp, a voracious filter-feeder non-native species that threatens to invade Lake Michigan and disrupt the region's world-class fishery. Congress failed to provide funding for continued operations of the electric barriers, as well as upgrades needed on the first barrier.

"Congress has undermined our only line of defense against the number-one threat today to the Great Lakes and its fishery. They are choosing pork over priorities for protecting the lakes," said long-time Indiana activist and founding member of Great Lakes United, Lee Botts. "It is up to the citizens of Indiana and the other Great Lakes states to insist that their elected representatives prioritize protecting the Great Lakes over their own parochial interests."

The Navigation Study was authorized in 1999 as a two-year, \$1 million study to look at improving the current commercial navigation system on the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Seaway.

In 2002 the Corps released a reconnaissance report proposing an in-depth examination of expanding locks and deepening channels to 35 feet.

After public and political outcry, a May 2003 Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the U.S. Department of Transportation and Transport Canada, resulting in the creation of a binational study team charged with performing a 30-month study on how to maintain the system at current configurations. Originally scheduled for completion in the fall of 2005, the binational study team announced last year that the study needed to be extended till fall of 2006, which this appropriations bill is now funding.

The conferees committee report stated that they expect that the Corps will be able to complete the study in fiscal year 2007. This language allows for yet another extension of federal funding.