

Great Lakes Boating Federation

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ASIAN CARP ADVISORY

CHICAGO – NOVEMBER 4, 2009 – The Asian carp have worked their way up the Chicago Sanitary & Ship Canal, moving closer and closer to entering the Great Lakes and to decimating their ecosystems. The imminent threat to these bodies of water has led the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to plan to close the canal on Dec. 2 for four or five days, to release a substance poisonous to all fish.

On Dec. 3, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), the Great Lakes Interagency Task Force and the Asian Carp Rapid Response Workgroup will release a pesticide called rotenone into the Chicago Sanitary & Ship Canal. Although rotenone disperses quickly, the agencies will follow its application with potassium permanganate, which will increase the dissipation speed and neutralize the rotenone. According to the IDNR, rotenone poses no danger to humans or to wildlife other than the Asian carp and other fish found in the waterway.

The Army Corps of Engineers is closing the Chicago Sanitary & Ship Canal between mile markers 291 and 298, within a safety zone that the U.S. Coast Guard is creating. The agencies are shutting down the area until Dec. 18, at the latest, says Lt. David French of the U.S. Coast Guard. “We’ll work with our other partners to reopen it as quickly as possible,” he says.

The shutdown of the throughway will coincide with the maintenance performed every six months on Barrier IIA, one of the canal’s two electric barriers, that helps it to continue to reliably protect against the Asian carp.

The Coast Guard has designed the safety zone to protect the approximately 200 IDNR workers applying the rotenone from passing traffic, and also to increase the efficacy of

applying the chemical, French says. The involved agencies are not concerned that this area would be unsafe to boaters during this period, or to others who would normally be using the canal. Rotenone is commonly used for fish control purposes across the United States, and the IDNR has been applying it for more than 40 years.

The IDNR and other agencies will enact an electro-fishing operation to remove any sport fish from the section of the canal in question before using the rotenone. This area contains mainly non-sport fish, especially common carp, gizzard shad and goldfish.

The same boating restrictions that were in effect before the rotenone application will be imposed on the canal afterward, French says. Vessels longer than 20 feet may receive permission on a case-by-case basis, while smaller vessels will not be allowed because of the risk of shock. These include personal watercraft, sailboats without motors, kayaks, canoes, shells or rafts.

Asian carp are considered aggressive, and can grow to at least 100 pounds and more than five feet long. If they reached the Great Lakes, they would be extremely likely to outcompete native fish for food. Boat motors disturb Asian carp, causing them to leap into the air and, on many occasions, to hit boaters and to injure them. The Great Lakes Boating Federation has been concerned that the Asian carp will move past the electronic barrier into the Great Lakes, devastating the sport fish populations. However, this is the first time that the IDNR is stepping in to improve the situation and to preserve the Great Lakes.

“The Great Lakes boating community feels a great sense of comfort from the introduction of the chemical rotenone and from the entry of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources to the fight against the Asian carp,” says F. Ned Dikmen, chairman of the Great Lakes Boating Federation, voice of recreational boating on the Great Lakes.

The Great Lakes Boating Federation is the advocacy voice and marketplace for the 4.3 million boaters on the Great Lakes (www.greatlakesboatingfederation.com).

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