

November 21, 2009
GLSFC Special Report

Asian Carp may have breached the Electronic Barrier

Multiple Carp DNA samplings have been found in multiple locations North and East near O'Brien Lock

During a press conference call held Friday morning, November 20, it was confirmed that multiple samples of carp DNA have been found substantially north and east of the existing carp barrier, and in another water body that has a direct connection to Lake Michigan.

Common maps, (shown below) reflect that direct connection, which includes the Calumet and Little Calumet Rivers and Calumet Harbor.

Map #1 – “Calumet River Waterway” location of: Calumet Harbor entrance, Calumet Harbor and the O'Brien Lock.

Map #2 – “O'Brien Lock & Dam” shows its location.

During the conference call, facilitated by the USEPA, there was a comment made that the O'Brien Lock is the only existing barrier remaining to prevent further migration of Asian carp into Lake Michigan. The O'Brien Lock is not a barrier; it is only an impediment to slow down carp migration. Unless the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers commits to keeping that lock closed until an Interagency Task Force is assured no carp are in the area, Asian Carp will get into Lake Michigan. Common maps show irrefutable evidence there is a direct connection between the location of confirmed carp DNA evidence (1-3 miles below O'Brien Lock) and the short distance of six river miles to Calumet Harbor and the opening to Lake Michigan.

Again, The O'Brien lock is only an impediment – unless the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers keeps it closed permanently, or until the area is electro-shocked and subsequently treated with Rotenone, creating a fish-free-zone.

In view of this new and startling announcement, it was asked would the existing plan be modified to initially electroshock the area around O'Brien then subsequently treat it with Rotenone. Ill DNR deputy director John Rogner stated all options were open to the Task Force. They put together the present plan of shutting down all shipping and treating the immediate area around the barrier for scheduled barrier maintenance. They will proceed as planned on December 2.

Rogner reiterated the inter-agency task force will be taking a hard look at the new evidence and considering further options including electro-shocking and further treatment of Rotenone in these other riverway stretches; however he would not commit to a specific date or timeline. Ironically, the need for more Rotenone may require the Task Force to research availability in Europe, since most all North American sources will have been exhausted.

The most pressing problem is the short distance between the O'Brien Lock on the Calumet River and Calumet Harbor just six short river miles from the O'Brien Lock. “Several positive Carp DNA samples were found 1-3 miles below the O'Brien Lock” according to Army Corps regional Commander Maj. General John Peabody.

Peabody added “Notre Dame field personnel found one positive DNA sample in the Des Plaines River and three at the confluence of the Cal-Sag Channel and the Sanitary Ship Canal.” That area is approximately 10-12 miles north of the existing barrier. Peabody's reference to the Corp increasing the barrier voltage from 1 to 2” on August 17 evidently either wasn't sufficient to prevent carp migration through the barrier or the Corp's efforts were too little too late.

The Corps, and the U.S. Congress, must ultimately be held responsible and/or culpable for this latest and most grave threat to the nation's Great Lakes.

Agencies on the press conference call included USEPA (Cameron Davis, Sr. Advisor to USEPA), USFWS (Charlie Wooley, Region 3 Deputy Director), USACE (Gen. John Peabody, GL Regional Commander and Col Vince Quarles, Chicago Dist Cdr), USCG (Rear Adm. John Neffinger, Dist 9 Cdr), IL DNR (Deputy Director John Rogner) and Dr David Lodge, Research director U. of Notre Dame.

Lodge informed us approximately 43 DNA samples were taken between Sept 23 and Oct 1 by University of Notre Dame researchers, and at least 29 samples proved positive. Lodge also said process time of these samples takes 14 days, which means that positive information was available to the US Corps of Engineers on or shortly after Oct 15.

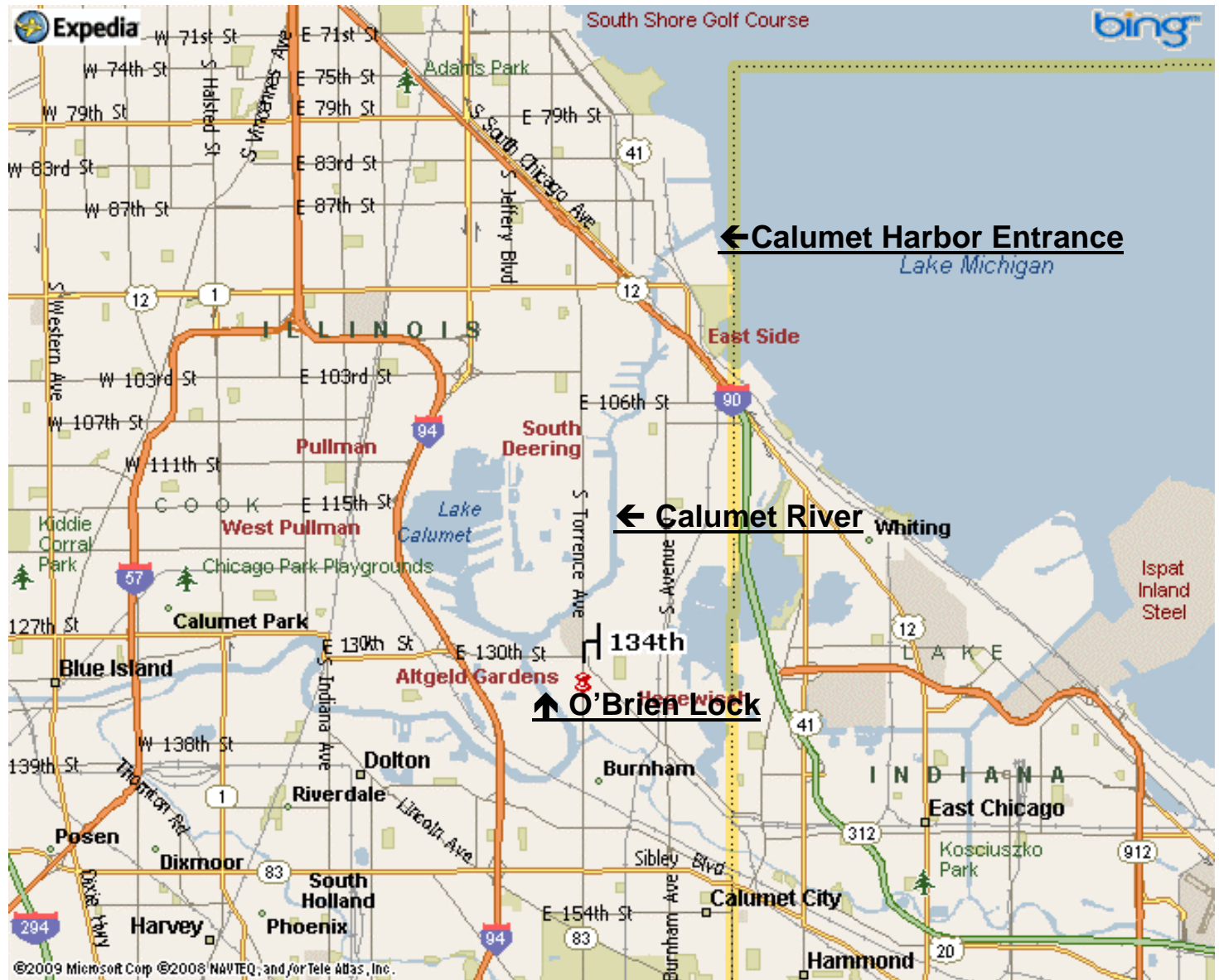
There were at least 4 barrier committee or sub-committee meetings and two conference calls held between Oct 15 and November 20, affecting hundreds of vitally interested parties, agencies and businesses, yet this information was not made available to anybody until November 20.

Why? Why the delay? And why the obvious lack of a sense of urgency by federal authorities and Congressional legislators??

There will be a more comprehensive report and related information in our November newsletter, due shortly.

Dan Thomas, President
Great Lakes Sport Fishing Council

Map #1 - Calumet River Waterway: Calumet Harbor, Calumet River & O'Brien Lock



Map #2 - O'Brien Lock & Dam

