

White House names overseer of federal effort against invasive Asian carp

September 9 2010, By Joel Hood

The White House has tapped a former leader of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources and the Indiana Wildlife Federation as the Asian carp czar to oversee the federal response to keeping the invasive species out of the Great Lakes.

On a conference call Wednesday with Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., and other congressional leaders, President Barack Obama's Council on Environmental Quality announced the selection of John Goss to lead the near \$80 million, multipronged federal attack against Asian carp.

"This is a serious challenge, a serious threat," Durbin said. "When it comes to the Asian carp threat, we are not in denial. We are not in a go-slow mode. We are in a full attack, full-speed-ahead mode. We want to stop this carp from advancing."

Asian carp, which have steadily moved toward Chicago since the 1990s, present a challenge for scientists and fish biologists. The fish are aggressive eaters, consuming as much as 40 percent of their body weight a day in plankton, and frequently beat out [native fish](#) for food, threatening those populations.

They are also prolific breeders with no [natural predators](#) in the U.S. The fish were imported in the 1970s to help waste-water treatment facilities in the South keep their retention ponds clean. Mississippi River flooding allowed the fish to escape and then move into the Missouri and Illinois rivers. Some species can grow to more than 100 pounds.

The challenge for Goss, who was director of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources under two governors and served for four years as the executive director of the Indiana National Wildlife Federation, will be to make sure millions in federal money is spent efficiently, to oversee several ongoing studies -- including one looking into the possibility of permanently shutting down the Chicago waterway system linking Lake Michigan to the Mississippi River -- and to bring together [Great Lakes](#) states currently locked in a courtroom battle over the response to the Asian carp threat.

"Certainly there are some legal questions that are in process, but there has been a history already of good cooperation among the states," Goss said. "I believe that will be one of my strengths, talking at the level of the department of natural resources in each of the states so that we can very carefully coordinate our efforts."

Today also marks the second day of what is expected to be a three-day hearing in federal court in Chicago to deal with Asian carp. Michigan and four other Great Lakes states are suing the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago to try and force closure of two shipping locks in the Chicago waterway system that could serve as a barrier to keep Asian carp from entering Lake Michigan.

Testimony Tuesday focused on the reliability of the environmental DNA research that has been used to track the movement of Asian carp through the Chicago Sanitary and Shipping Canal as they have inched closer to Lake Michigan. The architect of the research, University of Notre Dame scientist David Lodge, said the method is sound and that Asian carp pose a "a very imminent risk of invasion." He added that such "invasions are often irreversible."

Attorneys for the defense countered that the DNA research has never

been used in this manner and was unreliable. They argued that even scientists disagree about the likelihood that [Asian carp](#) are capable of sustaining a large and destructive population if allowed to enter the Great Lakes.

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