

Efforts to close canal to Great Lakes

August 8 2011, by Deborah Braconnier

Efforts are underway to try and get the river locks on the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal closed in order to stop the spread of two invasive species of fish known as the Asian carp and the Snakehead.

Asian [carp](#) DNA has been discovered in Lake Calumet in Illinois despite an electric fence that has been placed downriver in an effort to stop them from passing. Last week biologists from the U.S. [Fish](#) and Wildlife Services, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources scoured Lake Calumet for the Asian carp but found none.

Asian carp has been found in the Mississippi River and as close as 25 miles from Lake Michigan. Biologists believe they must keep them out of the [Great Lakes](#) or many native fish species will be threatened.

But Asian carp is not their only concern anymore. The Northern Snakehead is a fish that is raising far more fear when it comes to the delicate ecosystem in the Great Lakes. This fish is known to be able to survive icy waters, is a ravenous predator, breathes air and is able to survive out of water for days as long as it stays moist.

The other fear is the Snakehead's ability to survive out of water. Not only can they breathe air, but they can wiggle out of the water and move on land in search of other watering holes. Back in 2008, a local Arkansas farmer Russell Bonner found one on the side of the road near a flooded culvert. Because it was not a species of fish he recognized he picked it up and threw it in the back of his truck. The next day, expecting to find a

dead fish, he discovered the fish was still alive and called the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission.

It has been discovered in nine states ranging from California to Maryland and they are spreading in the Potomac River and biologists believe they may already be in the Mississippi river as well. Last year, Time magazine named the Snakehead to its top 10 list of [invasive species](#) and last month they were listed as one of 10 invasive species that create a high risk of invading the Mississippi River Basin and the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal.

Between the Snakehead and the Asian carp and the risk they pose to the Great Lakes, biologists believe it is essential to permanently block the canal waterway and protect the Great Lakes.

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