

# Michigan to offer prize in fight against invasive Asian carp

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In this July 16, 2014, file photo, plant manager Peter Allen feeds Asian carp onto a conveyer belt at the American Heartland Fish Products carp-processing plant near Grafton, Ill. Faced with the threat that Asian carp could enter the Great Lakes, Michigan is turning to the public for new ideas and plans to offer a prize to whomever comes up with a way to stop the voracious fish. The state's global search challenge comes after the U.S. government and others have spent hundreds of millions of dollars searching for a solution to stop the carp from entering the world's largest freshwater system. (AP Photo/Jim Suhr, File)

Faced with the threat that Asian carp could enter the Great Lakes, Michigan is turning to the public for new ideas and plans to offer a prize to whoever comes up with a way to stop the voracious fish.

Michigan's global search challenge comes after the U.S. government and others have spent hundreds of millions searching for a solution to stop the carp from entering the world's largest freshwater system. If they aren't stopped, officials fear the aggressive fish will crowd out prize native fish and hamper recreational boating in large sections of the lakes, which stretch from Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan in the west to New York and Pennsylvania in the east and from Ontario, Canada, in the north to Illinois, Indiana and Ohio in the south.

"I think in the fight against Asian carp, there aren't really any bad ideas," said Molly Flanagan, vice president of policy for the Alliance for the Great Lakes. "We have to try a bunch of different things."

Michigan alone has a \$38 billion tourism industry, much of it focused on the outdoors, and the Great Lakes region has a \$7 billion fishing industry. Asian carp have been spotted 45 miles from Lake Michigan. If the fish make it into that lake, they could make their way into the other Great Lakes.

Details on how much prize money will be offered are still being worked out. Officials also haven't determined how many winners might be chosen.

The Michigan Legislature and Gov. Rick Snyder allocated \$1 million to develop the challenge. Most of the money will go toward a prize for an idea or ideas that are deemed feasible, Michigan Department of Natural Resources spokeswoman Joanne Foreman said. The rest will be used to create the challenge, which includes working with InnoCentive, a crowdsourcing company that will host the event online. The campaign is

expected to go live this summer.

"Somebody out there possibly could have a really good idea," Foreman said. "Maybe they're not in fisheries or hydro-engineering."

Asian carp were imported to the U.S. in the 1970s to gobble scummy algae from Deep South fish farms and sewage ponds. They escaped into the Mississippi River and migrated north, reaching dozens of tributaries, including the Illinois River, which is linked to Lake Michigan by a man-made shipping canal near Chicago. Electric barriers are set up to keep them out of Lake Michigan, but skeptics fear young fish will slip through.

Since 2010, more than \$388 million has been spent to battle the invasive species—mostly by the federal government.

Many researchers have developed ideas to halt their advance. Some have shown promise in lab trials but are still in experimental phases; others have failed.

Leon Carl, Midwest regional director for the U.S. Geological Survey, said one idea called a "carp cannon" shot pressurized water to scare the fish. The carp eventually adapted.

"They are highly evolved animals, pretty evolved fish," Carl said. "They are not a primitive fish by any means."

Environmentalists favor putting physical barriers in the Chicago Area Waterways System, but shippers oppose that because they say it would slow the movement of millions of tons of cargo.

The Army Corps of Engineers had been developing a plan to strengthen defenses at a crucial lock and dam near Chicago, but President Donald

Trump's administration recently put that on hold.

Asian carp are like a vacuum cleaner, gorging on plankton that native fish need, which can unravel the natural food chain. Silver [carp](#) have the added danger of jumping out of the water at the sounds of boat engines and hitting boaters and fishermen.

"They are ferocious eaters. They can get up to 60, 80, 100 pounds," said David Hamilton, senior policy director for aquatic invasive species for The Nature Conservancy. "They eat a huge percentage of their body mass; a big [fish](#) eating many, many pounds is going to wreak havoc at the base of the food chain."

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