

States Declare War On Asian Carp



The states of Michigan and Wisconsin have declared war. Leaders in those two states aim to defeat the Asian carp, a fish that has made its way from Asia to the Mississippi River. The leaders worry that carp might make their way into the Great Lakes.

Why do some people fear this finned foe? Carp, which can grow to be more than 3 feet long and 100 pounds, feed on algae and other microscopic plants that live at the bottom of ponds, rivers, and lakes. That doesn't sound like a bad thing to many people, but carp have *huge* appetites. Some experts fear that carp could "invade" the Great Lakes and cause smaller species to starve. That could harm trout, perch, and other fish in the lakes. It could harm tourism too, since thousands of people travel to the lakes each year to enjoy fishing, boating, and water skiing.

Asian carp are native to China and other parts of Southeast Asia. About 30 years ago, catfish farmers in the United States brought carp into this country. Carp helped farmers control algae in their ponds. Over the years, however, floods helped some carp escape from ponds and make their way into the Mississippi River. Today, carp can be found in many spots along the Mississippi.

Now some people fear carp might make their way into the Great Lakes through a man-made canal that connects the Illinois River to Lake Michigan. In order to stop that from happening, workers have put up an electric fence to keep carp out of the canal. But others say more must be done. They want to shut down the canal to stop the carp.

Carp are not the first species to invade U.S. waters.

- Some mussel species came into the U.S. aboard big ships. They have invaded U.S. waters, eating up algae and clogging water pipes.
- Some plant species have taken over ponds and rivers, changing them forever.
- The *nutria*, a rat-like animal that is native to South America, has moved into some rivers. It has destroyed river banks and harmed other species.

Those stories of other invaders are the reason leaders in Michigan and Wisconsin say it is important to declare war on carp, which they call "eating machines."

NEWS WORD BOX

microscopic
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THINK ABOUT THE NEWS

What other "invasive species" have you read or heard about in the news?
What efforts were made to control those species?