

White House Assures Commitment to Great Lakes Invasive Carp Prevention Project, Resolving Stalemate with Illinois

May 14, 2025



The Trump administration has issued assurances regarding its financial commitment to a crucial \$1.2 billion project aimed at preventing invasive Asian carp from entering the Great Lakes, effectively resolving a recent stalemate with Illinois Governor JB Pritzker. This development paves the way for the continuation of the long-planned initiative designed to safeguard the Great Lakes' \$7 billion fishing industry.

The project, spearheaded by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in collaboration with officials from Illinois and Michigan, involves the installation of a multi-layered deterrent system in the Des Plaines River near Joliet, Illinois. This system will utilize bubble curtains, electrical fields, and sound frequencies to prevent the migration of invasive carp into Lake Michigan.

A deal between the Corps and the states, finalized in 2024, allocated \$226 million through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law for the project, with provisions in the Water Resources Development Act stipulating that the federal government would cover 90% of operating and maintenance costs. Construction commenced in January, and Illinois was poised to transfer a key property parcel to the Corps in February.

However, progress was temporarily stalled following a brief federal grant and loan freeze in late January. While the freeze was quickly rescinded, Governor Pritzker sought explicit assurances from the Trump administration regarding its long-term financial obligations to the project.

In a memo released late Friday, the White House affirmed its recognition of the significant threat posed by invasive carp to the Great Lakes' recreational and fishing sectors and reiterated its commitment to protecting the vital ecosystem. The memo emphasized the federal government's readiness to fulfill its financial responsibilities, contingent upon state cooperation, and urged Illinois to finalize the property deal by July 1. The administration also pledged to streamline permitting and environmental reviews for the project.

Governor Pritzker's office subsequently issued a statement expressing satisfaction with the assurances provided by the White House, signaling a resumption of progress on the critical infrastructure project.

While the full project is anticipated to be completed by 2032, stakeholders, including Joel Brammeier, President and CEO of the Alliance for the Great Lakes, have expressed optimism that the renewed commitment from the federal government will ensure the timely and effective implementation of measures to protect the Great Lakes from the detrimental impact of invasive carp. The introduction of Asian carp into the Great Lakes could lead to the out-competition of native species for food and habitat,

posing a significant threat to the region's substantial fishing industry. The Brandon Road Lock and Dam project represents a vital additional layer of defense against this ecological and economic threat.