

Ohio Department of Natural Resources

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The following is a joint news release issued by the Michigan and Ohio Departments of Natural Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

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Agencies Plan for Further Assessment of Two Asian Carp Species in Lake Erie

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR), Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) are collaborating to assess the current status of bighead and silver carp within western Lake Erie bays and select tributaries.

Laboratory results received earlier this month indicated the presence of Asian carp environmental DNA (eDNA) in 6 of the 417 water samples collected in August 2011. Four samples from Sandusky Bay, in Ohio waters, tested positive for bighead carp eDNA, while two samples from north Maumee Bay, in Michigan waters, were positive for silver carp eDNA. The findings indicate the presence of genetic material left behind by the species, such as scales, excrement or mucous, but not the establishment of Asian carp in Lake Erie.

Initial surveys began this week and are focusing on the collection of water samples for eDNA analysis. Electroshocking and netting survey efforts will also be conducted starting next week. The eDNA surveys will occur in the Sandusky River and Bay, and the Maumee River and Bay. Samples will be collected in the areas where positive eDNA samples were collected in 2011 and at additional locations believed to provide suitable bighead and silver carp habitat.

"Our coordinated sampling efforts with partner agencies are very important in order to revisit areas where positive samples were collected last year, and to expand sampling to areas that may be reproductively favorable for bighead or silver carp," said MDNR Research Program Manager Tammy Newcomb. "These are the areas where we can be most effective in preventing expansion of these species should they be present."

MDNR and ODNR requested assistance from the USFWS to develop and implement this assessment effort. The USFWS is contributing significant technical and logistical expertise, as well as personnel, survey equipment and vessels. The US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) will analyze the collected eDNA water samples.

"At the state's request, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is assisting the states with all the resources we can bring to the table," said U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Deputy Regional Director Charlie Wooley. "The Service is committed to working in a coordinated effort, using all available resources and skills, to prevent the movement of self-sustaining populations of Asian carp into the Great Lakes."

"We are very appreciative of the assistance and efforts contributed by diverse partners in the development and implementation of a comprehensive assessment plan to determine the status of bighead and silver carp in western Lake Erie" said Rich Carter, ODNR Executive Administrator for Fish Management and Research." The results of these efforts will provide critical information that will inform and guide future assessment and management actions."

Since 2010, MDNR, ODNR, USFWS, University of Notre Dame, Central Michigan University and the Nature Conservancy have partnered to collect water samples from Great Lakes basin waters, including southern Lake Michigan, western Lake Erie and tributary streams of lakes Michigan and Erie. The collaborative early-detection Asian carp surveillance program is funded by the USFWS with a federal Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grant.

Asian carp, including bighead and silver carp, pose a significant threat to the Great Lakes ecosystem, the \$7 billion dollar fishery, and other economic interests dependent on the Great Lakes and its tributaries. Silver and bighead carp are likely to compete with native and recreational fish species and are known to quickly reproduce. Anglers are urged to become familiar with the identification of Asian carp, including both adults and juveniles, as the spread of juvenile Asian carp through the use of live bait buckets has been identified as a potential point of entry into Great Lakes waters.

A video demonstrating how to identify bighead and silver carp can be viewed on the USFWS YouTube channel at <http://youtu.be/B49OWrCRs38?source=govdelivery>. Identification guides, frequently asked questions, management plans and an online reporting form are available online at michigan.gov/asiancarp and wildohio.com or by calling 800-WILDLIFE.

High resolution images of the current sampling are available at:
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/acrc/sets/72157630854558566/with/7691501884/>

MDNR and ODNR are committed to the conservation, protection, management, use and enjoyment of the region's natural and cultural resources for current and future generations. The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.