

# **Fisheries expert: Asian Carp going strong in Grafton, slowing in other parts of state**

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SPRINGFIELD - Illinois Department of Fisheries expert Dan Stephenson said the growing Asian Carp population is slowing into the Great Lakes because of electrical barriers on Chicago waterways. In many other places, however, the numbers keep growing.

“We don’t find hardly any on the northern Illinois border,” Stephensen said.

“Commercial fishermen go up near Morris, Illinois, and net almost year-round 5 million pounds of Asian Carp and send them to a processing plant. We think the only real possible solution to slow them down is to get processing plants built and turn them into human or pet food or liquid fertilizer.”

Stephenson said when the processing plant was established in Grafton a time back, there was a community outrage.

“The smell really bothered people,” he said when the plant was started in Grafton.

In October 2014, a fish products company stopped processing Asian Carp in Grafton after the city gave the deadline for a company to close because of the rancid smell. The plan there was to turn the invasive species into dehydrated meal and fish oil. The claims were that there would be no foul smells, and eventually townspeople working through the council had the plant shut down.

One of the reasons for the explosion of Asian Carp in Grafton has been that the food source is perfect, Stephenson said.

“The Illinois River dumps in very fertile plant and animals and that is what the Asian Carp feed on. They spawn on rising water levels,” he said. “There are always fertilizers that come in from the field. There is also a lack of predators there.”

About the only way right now Grafton would see Asian Carp diminishing is commercial fisherman working hard to remove the species on a constant basis, Stephenson said.

Asian Carp were brought primarily to Illinois from Arkansas and Mississippi from the Flood of 1993 when many ponds broke out into the rivers. From there, the population just exploded.

Now that Asian Carp are so well-established, they will always be present in Illinois, Stephenson said.

“We can knock down the numbers if we create some commercial markets,” he said. “At some point, the numbers will drop off naturally and they will come back in balance.”