

Lt. Gov. Sanguinetti celebrates partnership with Louisiana to market Asian Carp as food

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CHAMPAIGN - Illinois Lt. Gov. Evelyn Sanguinetti joined partners from Illinois and Louisiana at a luncheon in Champaign today to showcase and encourage the human consumption of Asian Carp as a healthy food source in America. These efforts can have a positive ecological and economic impact for both states.



Established a few years ago, this first-of-its-kind project has been an ongoing alliance among the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, and the University of Illinois, which has served as a liaison between the two states. In addition to increasing public awareness, the project also focuses on helping and encouraging fishermen to sell the fish.

In an event, “Catch to Course,” hosted by the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Lt. Governor Sanguinetti joined partners, experts, and stakeholders at a luncheon where chefs showcased three dishes made of Asian Carp, also known as silverfin. Chef Philippe Parola of Louisiana, and Dawn Aubrey, associate director of Housing for Dining Services at the University of Illinois, have been involved in the project by raising awareness and encouraging ideas and actions for “catching” Asian Carp and then developing into multiple “courses” and cuisines.

“We are very proud of the hard work our partners have done to educate the public about the delicious and healthy consumption of Asian Carp and to help fishermen to sell it and become financially viable and increase its demand,” said Lt. Governor Sanguinetti. “This effort will potentially help grow our fishery industry and create more jobs while at the same time reduce the population of invasive Asian Carp and help prevent further spread.”

Louisiana Lt. Gov. Billy Nungesser, a key partner who was unable to attend the luncheon, said in a statement, “We are excited to partner with the University of Illinois, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and Chef Philippe Parola in finding a workable and sustainable solution to the growing threat of the invasive Asian Carp. Left unchecked, the Asian Carp will devastate our state’s multi-billion-dollar seafood and fisheries industries. I’m honored to be a part of this partnership between Louisiana and Illinois in ensuring our seafood and waterways are safe, reducing impacts from invasive species like the Asian Carp.”

While the leading edge of Asian Carp fish migration has not moved since 1991, the State of Illinois in partnership with commercial fishermen and numerous stakeholders from our local, state and federal government continue to develop strategies to keep this invasive species from the Great Lakes. There is great potential to expand Asian Carp consumption in the United States – which will not only assist in our efforts to keep these fish out of the Great Lakes, but provide a healthy food source.

According to experts, Asian Carp can be a great source of food because it is low in sodium as well as a good source of vitamin B12, selenium, protein, phosphorous and Omega-3 and Omega-6 fatty acids.

“It is wild caught, sustainable, and a natural protein. It’s an excellent food source. This is the beginning of the end regarding the threat this fish presents to the Mississippi River Ecosystem from Illinois to Louisiana,” said Chef Parola. Parola was the main instigator in encouraging Louisiana to become involved in the project and has spent years traveling between Illinois and Louisiana to help put the project together.

According to Dan Stephenson, Chief of Fisheries of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, the invasive Asian Carp are now found in, or have access to, most of the rivers and streams between the Appalachians and the Rockies and have become in many cases the most dominant species in those waterways.

“We, at the IDNR, believe the best way to have a positive effect on our aquatic resources is to remove the invasive fish through commercial means and sell them to the markets for human consumption, understanding additional by-products will also be valuable as other protein products, liquid fertilizers, pharmaceuticals, or as high-quality pet treats and feeds. Working with the University of Illinois, the State of Louisiana and Chef Parola to promote the value as premium table fare for the students at this university is first and important step in such a venture,” Stephenson said. “The IDNR Division of Fisheries believes it is unlikely that Asian carp will be eradicated from the rivers and streams of the state. They are here to stay much like the house sparrows and starlings that were brought to North America in the 19th century.”

“Choosing a food that is flavorful, healthy and has a positive ecological effect makes Asian Carp a smart choice for our students. The mission of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is to be a community of students, scholars, and alumni that is changing the world. We are changing the world one Asian Carp at a time,” said Aubrey.