

Seven Governors Ask Feds For Dam Funding To Stop Asian Carp

by Scott McClallen

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The Center Square – Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and the bipartisan Council of Great Lakes Governors asked federal leaders to fund the Brandon Road Lock and Dam in the 2022 Water Resources Reform and Development Act to prevent invasive Asian carp from entering Michigan’s water.

“The Great Lakes are the beating heart of Michigan’s economy, and we are taking action to put Michigan first and protect the Great Lakes,” Whitmer said in a statement.

“By funding the Brandon Road Lock and Dam, we can protect local economies and key, multi-billion-dollar industries that support tens of thousands of jobs including fishing and boating. I am proud that my fellow Great Lakes governors from both parties and I are coming together to continue uplifting our economies, build the Brandon Road Lock and Dam, and keep invasive carp out.”??

Businesses and environmental groups warn invasive carp could harm the Great Lakes economy and ecology.

The Brandon Road Lock and Dam in Joliet, Ill., is a critical chokepoint in the Chicago Area Waterways System for stopping invasive carp – especially bighead and silver carp –from entering Lake Michigan.

Southern farmers initially imported Asian carp in order to clean ponds by eating vegetation, but the fish escaped into the Mississippi River, ravaging catfish and other native food populations.

Carp have no natural predators in the Great Lakes. Leaders said they are concerned the carp may starve out native species.

“Guarding the Great Lakes against the ravages of invasive carp is one of the most urgent tasks for those charged with protecting and managing Michigan’s natural resources,” Michigan Department of Natural Resources Director Dan Eichinger said in a statement. “The Brandon Road Lock and Dam marks a key pinch point for keeping these harmful species out of the lakes. This proposed funding will help secure a better future for the Great Lakes and for all those who cherish and depend upon them.”

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) submitted a Chief’s Report to Congress with a plan of action at the Brandon Road Lock and Dam to prevent invasive carp from entering the Great Lakes. Subsequently, Congress authorized the construction of the Brandon Road Project in the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), which cost \$858 million.

In January 2021, Whitmer and Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker agreed to cost-share millions to protect the Great Lakes from invasive carp species via pre-construction engineering and design (PED) for the Brandon Road Ecosystem Interbasin Project.?

In 2021, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Illinois agreed to complete the PED estimated to take up to four years and cost \$29 million. Illinois and Michigan have committed to pay the 35% non-federal cost share for this phase.??

The governors of Wisconsin, Ohio, New York, Indiana, Illinois, Minnesota, Michigan, and Pennsylvania signed the letter that said the remaining cost for design, construction, operation, and maintenance is beyond the states' capacity to match and requested federal funding.