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GOVERNORS AND PREMIERS UNITE TO BLOCK “LEAST WANTED” AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES

Mackinac Island, Michigan—The Great Lakes Governors and the Premiers of Ontario and Québec today unveiled the “least wanted” aquatic invasive species including the infamous Asian carp, and announced joint action to block these species from entering the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River. The Governors and Premiers committed to use their executive powers to take a series of actions, while calling on other leaders to refocus their efforts in this critical fight.

“The trade and transport of aquatic invasive species presents a grave threat to the region’s ecological and economic health. We must take action, and today the Governors and Premiers are committing ourselves to a new approach,” Michigan Governor Rick Snyder, Council of Great Lakes Governors Co-Chair, said. “As Governors and Premiers, we are taking important steps to build on current actions and partnerships to ensure that the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River continue to be the greatest freshwater system in the world. “

Illinois Governor Quinn, Council of Great Lakes Governors Co-Chair, added, “The Great Lakes Governors and Premiers are bringing the leadership required to combat the threat of aquatic invasive species and protect our shared waters. We must and will do everything that we can to prevent the next zebra mussel or sea lamprey from entering the Lakes, and we encourage our federal partners to support this crucial effort.”

For many years, the Great Lakes Governors and Premiers have worked aggressively to prevent the introduction of aquatic invasive species (AIS) into our region’s waters. AIS cost the U.S. and Canada billions of dollars in damages each year, are a burden on the economy and strain State and Provincial budgets. They also pose a threat to human health and cause immeasurable ecological damage to native species with consequences for our region’s sport and commercial fisheries, tourism and recreation. There are more than 180 nonnative species that have been introduced into the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River.

The Governors and Premiers announced the following, specific steps:

- Taking executive action to address AIS introduction to the States and Provinces. Through executive order or other processes, the Governors and Premiers will work to add the “least wanted” AIS to State and Provincial lists for priority action that could include

prohibitions, or restrictions on the transfer of these species to and within the States and Provinces as well as plans for early detection and rapid response

- Regional collaboration to unify State and Provincial regulations and plans regarding organisms in trade, transport, early detection and rapid response.
- The States and Provinces, with the support of federal agencies, will expand and accelerate actions to prevent the movement of AIS in high-risk pathways including canals and rivers.
- An effort to harmonize State and U.S. federal ballast water regulations.
- A collaborative “mutual aid” agreement between States and Provinces to enable sharing of staff, expertise and resources to facilitate effective response actions to the “least wanted AIS” in our shared waters.
- The launch of a public information campaign about the threat posed by the “least wanted” AIS and steps that citizens can take to join the fight against them.
- A united call on Congress and the U.S. federal agencies to prohibit the transfer of the “least wanted” AIS across State lines.
- Advocacy for the development and funding of national plans to block the highest risk “least wanted” AIS.

The Governors’ and Premiers’ “least wanted” AIS were identified in consultation with the States’ and Provinces’ leading experts, and building on years of work by partners organizations. They include:

Fish:

- Bighead carp
- Silver carp
- Grass carp
- Black carp
- Northern snakehead
- Stone moroko
- Zander
- Wels catfish

Aquatic invertebrates:

- Killer shrimp
- Yabby (crayfish)
- Golden mussel

Plants:

- Hydrilla
- Brazilian elodea
- Water soldier

- European water chestnut
- Parrot feather

The five Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River comprise the world's largest surface freshwater system. AIS are among the greatest ecological threats to them. The Governors and Premiers in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River region are leading the fight against AIS through innovative and collaborative policies and actions. Further information on the Governors' and Premiers' work to protect our waters and combat these species is available at www.cglg.org.

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Council of Great Lakes Governors
 Aquatic Invasive Species Task Force
 “Least wanted” species list

The Great Lakes Governors’ and Premiers’ “least wanted” aquatic invasive species present an imminent threat to the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River region. The Governors and Premiers commit to add these species to State and Provincial lists for priority action that could include prohibitions or restrictions on the transfer of these species to and within the States and Provinces, and seek their inclusion in similar federal lists.

For many years, the Great Lakes Governors and Premiers have worked aggressively to curb the flow of aquatic invasive species (AIS) into our region’s waters. AIS are a burden on the economy and strain State and Provincial budgets. They pose a threat to human health and cause immeasurable ecological damage to native species with consequences for our region’s sport and commercial fisheries, tourism and recreation. There are more than 180 nonnative species that have been introduced into the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River.

The Governors’ and Premiers’ “least wanted” AIS were identified in consultation with the States’ and Provinces’ leading experts, and building on years of work by partners organizations. They include:

	<p>Bighead carp <i>Hypophthalmichthys nobilis</i> Bighead carp have the potential to deplete food sources for native fishes and mussels.</p>
	<p>Silver carp <i>Hypophthalmichthys molitrix</i> Silver carp has the potential to cause enormous damage to native species because it feeds on plankton required by larval fish and native mussels. The fish also are prone to leap in the air, and pose a threat of injury to boaters.</p>
	<p>Grass carp <i>Ctenopharyngodon idella</i> Grass carp compete for food with invertebrates and other fishes, and interfere with the reproduction of other fishes.</p>
	<p>Black Carp <i>Mylopharyngodon piceus</i> The black carp would negatively impact native aquatic communities by feeding on, and reducing, populations of native mussels and snails.</p>
	<p>Northern snakehead <i>Channa argus</i> These predatory fishes compete with native species for food and habitat. Adult snakeheads feed almost exclusively on other fishes and show diet overlap with largemouth bass.</p>
	<p>Stone moroko <i>Pseudorasbora parva</i> Stone moroko consumes larger species of plankton, which promotes algae growth and depletes water of available oxygen, causing the death of other organisms.</p>
	<p>Zander <i>Sander lucioperca</i> Zander can force native fish, including perch, out of its preferred habitat. The high climate match of this species in the Great Lakes indicates the potential risk of invasion.</p>
	<p>Wels catfish <i>Silurus glanis</i> Wels catfish is a voracious predator and serious danger to the populations of native fish and other vertebrates.</p>

	<p>Killer shrimp <i>Dikerogammarus villosus</i> The killer shrimp is capable of consuming a variety of prey and out-competing other species. Within a short time after invading a new area, it can eliminate a wide range of species from the ecosystem.</p>
	<p>Yabby (crayfish) <i>Cherax destructor</i> Yabby is common in aquaculture and is gaining popularity as an aquarium species. A high climate match indicates the potential risk of invasion in the Great Lakes.</p>
	<p>Golden mussel <i>Limnoperna fortunei</i> Golden mussel has the potential to affect the diversity of native mollusk communities. Dead mussels clog small water pipes, which can cause industrial facilities to shut down.</p>
	<p>Hydrilla <i>Hydrilla verticillata</i> Hydrilla is perhaps the worst aquatic weed in the United States. Plants form large, dense populations which displace native species, restrict flow, and impair small boat navigation and other recreational uses.</p>
	<p>Brazilian elodea <i>Egeria densa</i> Populations of Brazilian elodea dominate the environment by vigorous growth. The spread of this plant is most likely the result of human activity since it is perhaps the most universally available aquarium plant.</p>
	<p>Water soldier <i>Stratiotes aloides</i> Water soldier crowds out native vegetation resulting in decreased plant biodiversity. Dense floating mats hinder boating, angling and swimming, and sharp serrated leaf edges can cut swimmers.</p>
	<p>European water chestnut <i>Trapa natans</i> Water chestnut forms dense floating mats that severely limit light, reduce oxygen levels and compete with native species. Water chestnut limits recreational activities and, if stepped on, can cause painful wounds.</p>
	<p>Parrot feather <i>Myriophyllum aquaticum</i> Parrot feather is dense and can completely colonize small ponds and impede water flow in drainage ditches and irrigation canals. It may also outcompete and replace native species that are more valuable to fish and wildlife.</p>

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