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AWO Hails Supreme Court Asian Carp Decision to Keep Waterborne Commerce Flowing

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The American Waterways Operators (AWO), the national trade association for the American tugboat, towboat and barge industry, hailed the decision today by the U.S. Supreme Court to keep the Illinois Waterway System locks open for the free flow of commerce. The Court rejected a petition brought by the State of Michigan and other Great Lakes states against the State of Illinois that sought a preliminary injunction to close the locks to prevent Asian carp from entering Lake Michigan. U.S. Solicitor General Elena Kagan had argued that closing the locks was not justified by available science and would not provide a solution to the Asian carp issue, since there are other outlets through which the fish can gain access to the Great Lakes.

AWO submitted an affidavit on January 6, 2010 as part of Illinois' response to the Michigan suit. The affidavit set out the case for the devastating impact that closing the locks would have on the barge industry and the Midwest economy, environment, jobs, public safety and quality of life by preventing millions of tons of commodities from being shipped by barge to and from Great Lakes ports.

AWO President & CEO Thomas Allegretti commented, "We are gratified that the U.S. Supreme Court has taken action to prevent disastrous consequences to Midwest consumers and to the hard-working Americans employed in the towing industry and in all the industries and companies that rely on the essential commodities shipped by barge. These economic building blocks include coal for utilities, industrial steel, iron ore, petroleum, home heating oil, road salt, deicing liquid for airliners, and gasoline." He said further, "Barging is the safest, most economical and most environmentally friendly mode of cargo transportation. Our industry will continue the work we have done for over the past six years with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, EPA, U.S. Coast Guard and other officials to ensure a balance between preventing the spread of Asian carp while ensuring the free flow of commerce essential to our nation."

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