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Nation's Vessel Operators Urge Comprehensive, Common-Sense Approach to Fighting Invasive Species in the Great Lakes

ARLINGTON, VA – Responding to the Great Lakes and Mississippi River Interbasin Study report released today by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, American Waterways Operators President & CEO Tom Allegretti reiterated the tugboat, towboat and barge industry's understanding of the need to prevent the movement of invasive species, including Asian carp, between the two watersheds by utilizing a comprehensive set of science-based control measures that protect the free flow of waterborne commerce that is vital to the regional and national economies.

“We appreciate the detailed work that the Corps has done to lay out options for solving this complex problem,” Mr. Allegretti stated. “We believe it is clear from the GLMRIS report that one of the alternatives, physical separation, is neither economically feasible nor will it be effective at eliminating all identified pathways for the spread of invasive species, including Asian carp.”

“The Great Lakes and the Mississippi River are two of our nation's most important waterborne superhighways,” Mr. Allegretti continued. “Many of the building blocks of our economy move between them via the Chicago-area waterways – agricultural products for export, petroleum to fuel our cars, chemicals needed for our manufacturing facilities, cement and sand for construction projects, and many more. Severing a critical part of the nation's water transportation network is too high a price to pay for a solution that is not guaranteed to stop the spread of invasive species.”

“For the past decade, our industry has worked with the Corps, the Coast Guard, the Environmental Protection Agency, and other federal and state government entities to control the Asian carp population and limit its movement through installation of electric fish barriers in the Chicago-area waterways. Due to the success of these efforts, the Asian carp population front has not advanced since 2007. We will continue to work cooperatively to balance valid environmental concerns with the need to preserve commercial navigation,” Mr. Allegretti added.

“The GLMRIS report has given Congress a great deal of information to consider, and AWO looks forward to working with other stakeholders as part of a constructive dialogue to find a path forward that benefits the environment and the economy.”

The American Waterways Operators is the national trade association representing the tugboat, towboat and barge industry which operates along the rivers, coasts, Great Lakes and harbors of the United States. Barge transportation serves the nation as the safest, most environmentally friendly and most economical mode of freight transportation. For more information about AWO, please visit www.americanwaterways.com.

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