

MONITORING AND RESPONSE WORK GROUP
MONTHLY ACTIVITY UPDATES
MARCH 2026

CONTRACTED COMMERCIAL FISHING BELOW THE ELECTRIC DISPERSAL BARRIER

IDNR

Introduction

Contracted Commercial Fishing Below the EDBS uses contracted commercial fishers to reduce invasive carp abundance and monitor for changes in range in the Des Plaines River and upper Illinois River downstream of the EDBS. By decreasing invasive carp abundance, we anticipate reduced migration pressure towards the barrier, lessening the chances of invasive carp gaining access to upstream waters in the CAWS and Lake Michigan. Monitoring for upstream expansion of invasive carp should help identify changes in the leading edge, distribution, and relative abundance of invasive carp in the IWW. The “leading edge” is the furthest upstream location where multiple Bighead Carp or Silver Carp have been captured with conventional sampling gears during a single trip or where individuals of either species have been caught in repeated sampling trips to a specific site. Trends in catch data over time may also contribute to understanding invasive carp population abundance and movement between and among pools of the IWW.

Dresden Island	Jan-March 2025
Yards of Net	1,400
Bighead Carp	2
Grass Carp	0
Silver Carp	4
Invasive Carp Caught	6
Invasive Carp Dresden Above I55	0
Invasive Carp Dresden Below I55	6
Invasive Carp Rock Run	0
IC/1000 yards	4.3

Marseilles	Jan-March 2025
Yards of Net	0
Bighead Carp	0
Grass Carp	0
Silver Carp	0

Marseilles	Jan-March 2025
Invasive Carp Caught	0
IC/1000 yards	0
Invasive Carp Pounds	0

Starved Rock	Jan-March 2025
Yards of net	80,800
Bighead Carp	5
Grass Carp	98
Silver Carp	22,678
Invasive Carp Caught	22,781
IC/1000 yards	281.9
Invasive Carp Pounds	156,184
Seine haul	2
Silver Carp	57,091*
Bighead Carp	39*
Invasive Carp Pounds	442,937
Total LBS Removed for March	599,121

*Total number of individuals estimated with total weight removed and average weight from subsample

BARRIER MAINTENANCE AND FISH SUPPRESSION

IL DNR, USACE

Introduction

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) operates three electric dispersal barriers (Barrier 1, Barrier 2A, and Barrier 2B) for aquatic invasive species in the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal (CSSC), collectively referred to as the EDBS. USACE has operated electric barriers in the CSSC since 2002. Over the years, several operational and procedural improvements have been implemented to improve the effectiveness and continuously deliver an uninterrupted flow of electricity to the water to deter fish. USACE fisheries team conducts biweekly electrofishing monitoring for invasive carp in Lockport and Brandon Road Pools.

March 2026 Highlights

The agency did not submit an update for March 2026.

INVASIVE CARP ENHANCED CONTRACT FISHING REMOVAL PROGRAM

ILDNR

Introduction

In September 2019, the Enhanced Contract Fishing Program was initiated in the Peoria Pool of the Illinois River. In 2022, the area was expanded to include the LaGrange and Alton pools. The program offers Illinois-licensed commercial fishers \$.10 per pound for invasive carp caught in any of these pools and sold to fish processors or other buyers for at least \$.07 per pound. To date, a total of 71 fishers have entered into contracts to catch invasive carp from these pools, with 43 currently under contract. From inception through March 2026, 34,006,023 pounds of invasive carp have been caught among all three pools. Of these total catches, 2.52% are Bighead, 87.97% are Silver, and 9.51% are Grass carp.

March 2026 Highlights

The table below summarizes the total pounds of invasive carp caught through enhanced contract fishing.

YEAR	Total Lbs.**	Bighead	Silver	Grass
2019 *	518,132	24,813	310,297	183,022
2020	2,882,724	176,195	1,980,175	726,355
2021	3,345,973	209,526	2,517,416	619,031
2022	5,249,161	200,396	4,615,097	433,669
2023	8,410,107	95,532	8,024,643	289,932
2024	6,336,449	90,865	5,821,067	424,517
2025	5,810,608	46,585	5,378,825	385,199
2026	-	-	-	-
January	367,682	0	339,183	28,499
February	276,339	2,140	239,355	34,844
March	771,495	9,687	682,206	79,603
2026 Part-Year Subtotal	1,452,870	12,297	1,266,714	173,860
GRAND TOTALS	34,006,023	856,207	29,914,233	3,235,583

* September 2019 program inception.

** No Black carp reported as these are reported through the Black Carp Bounty Program.

INVASIVE CARP CONTRACTED FACILITATION PROGRAM

ILDNR

Introduction

In July 2025, the Contracted Facilitation Program was initiated in the three pools of the Illinois River where the Enhanced Contract Fishing Program currently operates – the Peoria, LaGrange, and Alton pools. The program’s goal is to help reduce the cost of transporting invasive carp caught in the three pools to processing facilities. The program offers Illinois fish processors and other buyers \$0.05 per pound to purchase invasive carp caught in the three pools from commercial fishers. To date, four processors have entered into contracts to buy under the program. A total of 4,003,859 pounds of invasive carp have been purchased. Of these total catches, .80% are Bighead, 92.03% are Silver, and 7.16% are Grass carp.

March 2026 Highlights

The table below summarizes the total pounds of invasive carp caught through Contracted Facilitation Program.

YEAR	Total Lbs.**	Bighead	Silver	Grass
2025 Part Year *	2,453,826	20,851	2,295,436	137,539
2026	-	-	-	-
<i>January</i>	367,682	0	339,183	28,499
<i>February</i>	307,577	1,308	243,836	62,434
<i>March</i>	753,565	9,981	685,268	58,316
2026 Part Year Subtotal	1,428,824	11,289	1,268,287	140,249
GRAND TOTALS	4,003,859	32,140	3,684,932	286,788

* July 2025 program inception.

** No Black carp reported as these are reported through the Black Carp Bounty Program.

USFWS ILLINOIS WATERWAY HYDROACOUSTICS

USFWS

Introduction

The purpose of USFWS hydroacoustic monitoring in the upper Illinois Waterway (IWW) is to enhance invasive carp management by reporting spatial and temporal patterns of fish abundance. Having a greater understanding of the temporally varying abundances and spatial distributions of fishes in the vicinity of the electric dispersal barrier system (EDBS) is important to barrier management as it allows operational and maintenance decisions to be made while considering potential risk factors. These surveys will provide estimates of fish targets ≥ 12 inches, as well as geospatial distribution, and fish target depth information. When hydroacoustic estimates of length and depth of targets is paired with corresponding telemetric data, managers can make inferences about possible fish species and implement further management decisions. Hydroacoustic surveys conducted at the EDBS may produce targets that are detected across replicate surveys and may identify the same target. USFWS hydroacoustic barrier surveys are conducted on as need basis scheduled around barrier maintenance, and pool scans are conducted annually in the fall. Additional barrier and pool scans can be conducted upon request. Further details regarding the methods of data collection and use of hydroacoustic data can be provided upon request.

March 2026 Highlights

The results of the mobile hydroacoustic fish surveys are presented below:

- Hydroacoustic barrier scan on March 17th, 2026, identified a total of four targets within and just below the EDBS.
- Figure 1 shows the average targets detected across all three replicate surveys.
- No hydroacoustic pool scans were completed in the month of March.

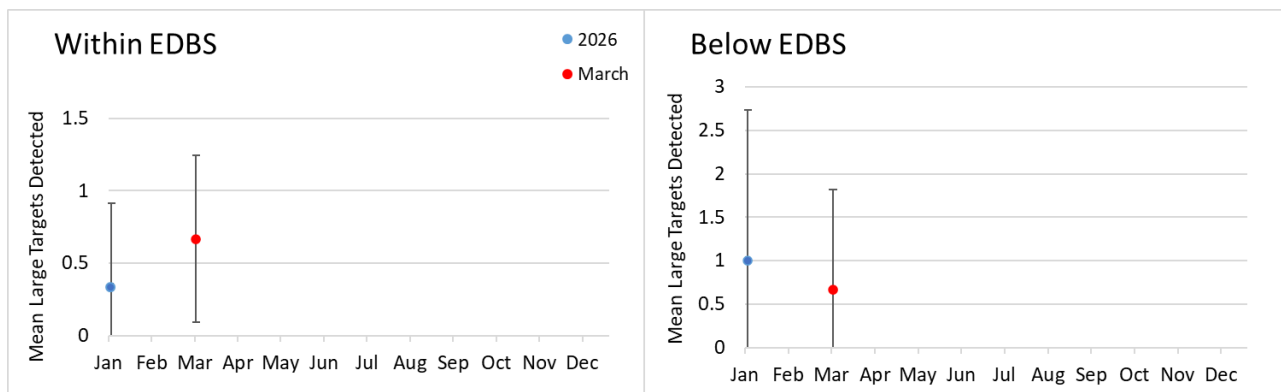


Figure 1. Comparison of the mean and standard deviation for three replicate surveys from the current mobile surveys with previous surveys from 2026.

SUPPORT FOR EARLY DETECTION OF INVASIVE CARP IN THE UPPER ILLINOIS WATERWAY

USFWS Wilmington

Introduction

The purpose of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Wilmington Substation's early detection monitoring (EDM) is to detect juvenile and adult invasive carp (Bighead, Silver, Black, and Grass Carp) at their invasion fronts. A combination of traditional boat electrofishing, electrified dozer trawling, mini-fyke netting, and gill netting are used in main-channel border, side-channel, and backwater habitats in the Marseilles, Dresden Island, Brandon Road, and Lockport Pools of the upper Illinois Waterway (IWW), upper Des Plaines River, and lower Kankakee River. Rarefaction analysis is performed annually to ensure an extremely high probability that sampling efforts are detecting any changes in invasive carp population status. The application of fishing gears across pools and habitats, utilizing fixed and random sites, is assessed annually based on the results of this analysis. This USFWS EDM Program is an adaptive management tool focused on invasive species detection.

March 2026 Highlights

- Five Silver Carp (830 mm – 985 mm TL [Total Length]) were captured in the lower Kankakee River during March 2026.
- No small-bodied (< 153 mm TL) invasive carp were captured by EDM in March 2026.
- No large-bodied ($\geq$ 153 mm TL) invasive carp were captured outside their known range by EDM in March 2026.

Table one summarizes the USFWS invasive carp EDM from March 2026 for each pool monitored under the project.

Table 1. Summary of USFWS EDM effort during March 2026.

-	Marseilles	Dresden Island	Kankakee	Brandon Road	Lockport	Des Plaines
Electrofishing Effort (hours)	0	3.75	3.83	2.5	2.25	0
Electrofishing Sites	0	15	16	10	9	0
Dozer Trawl Effort (hours)	0	1.25	1.25	0	0	0
Dozer Trawl Sites	0	15	15	0	0	0
Mini-fyke Effort (net nights)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fyke Net Effort (net nights)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gill Net Effort (yards)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gill Net Sites	0	0	0	0	0	0
Small Carp Captured	0	0	0	0	0	0
Large Carp Captured	0	0	5	0	0	0
Species Richness	0	26	30	17	11	0
Total Catch	0	1222	1249	180	66	0
Most Abundant Species	N/A	Emerald Shiner	Emerald Shiner	Emerald Shiner	Emerald Shiner	N/A

TELEMETRY SUPPORT SUMMARY

USFWS

Introduction

This project provides support for the inter-agency telemetry array deployed in the Illinois River basin. The 2026 plan of work for USFWS placed 125 acoustic transmitters in Silver Carp and/or Bighead Carp throughout the Peoria Pool. The USFWS maintained 14 receivers across the Peoria and Starved Rock Pools in 2026 in order to provide movement data and transition data by telemetered fish into the upper pools of the IWW. In 2026, we reduced the number of receivers from 20 to 14 to reduce receiver redundancies in the Peoria and Starved Rock Pools. To support our agency partners, USFWS will be maintaining receivers from Southern Illinois University in Starved Rock and Marseilles Pools located in and around the lock chambers. SIU will maintain USFWS main channel receivers in the Peoria Pool from river mile 164.8 upstream to river mile 199.1. The receiver names and locations in the telemetry array are listed in table 1 and figure 1.

March 2026 Highlights

- USFWS deployed fourteen 69 kHz VR2Tx acoustic receivers across the Peoria and Starved Rock Pools from March 9th to March 10th.
- The receiver that had been stationed at Lone Point in Starved Rock Pool was moved to inside the Starved Rock Marina (figure 1)

Table 1. Receiver deployments during March 2026.”RM” denotes “river mile”, “US” denotes “upstream” and “MC” denotes “main channel”. River Mile 233.4 is denoted for the receiver location inside Starved Rock Marina.

Receiver Number	Station Name	Receiver ID
1	RM164.8 Lower Peoria_Lake_Point_River Left	VR2Tx-489204
2	RM166.6 Peoria Lake Narrows	VR2Tx-489205
3	RM173 Upper Peoria Lake_River Right	VR2Tx-491940
4	RM173 Upper Peoria Lake_River Left	VR2Tx-489207
5	RM188.1 DS Lacon_MC Sawyer Slough	VR2Tx-489206
6	RM199.1 Senachwine Lake Peninsula	VR2Tx-489209
7	RM202.7 Lower Twin Sisters Island	VR2Tx-489211
8	RM216 US of Clark Island	VR2Tx-489039
9	RM219.8 US Spring Valley River Left	VR2Tx-491941
10	RM233.5 Starved Rock Marina	VR2Tx-489212
11	RM235.1 MC Sheehan Island	VR2Tx-490949
12	RM238.5 Hitt-Mayo Straight	VR2Tx-489040
13	RM241 Bulls Island MC Abandoned Harbor	VR2Tx-490950
14	RM243 US Heritage Harbor River Left	VR2Tx-490864

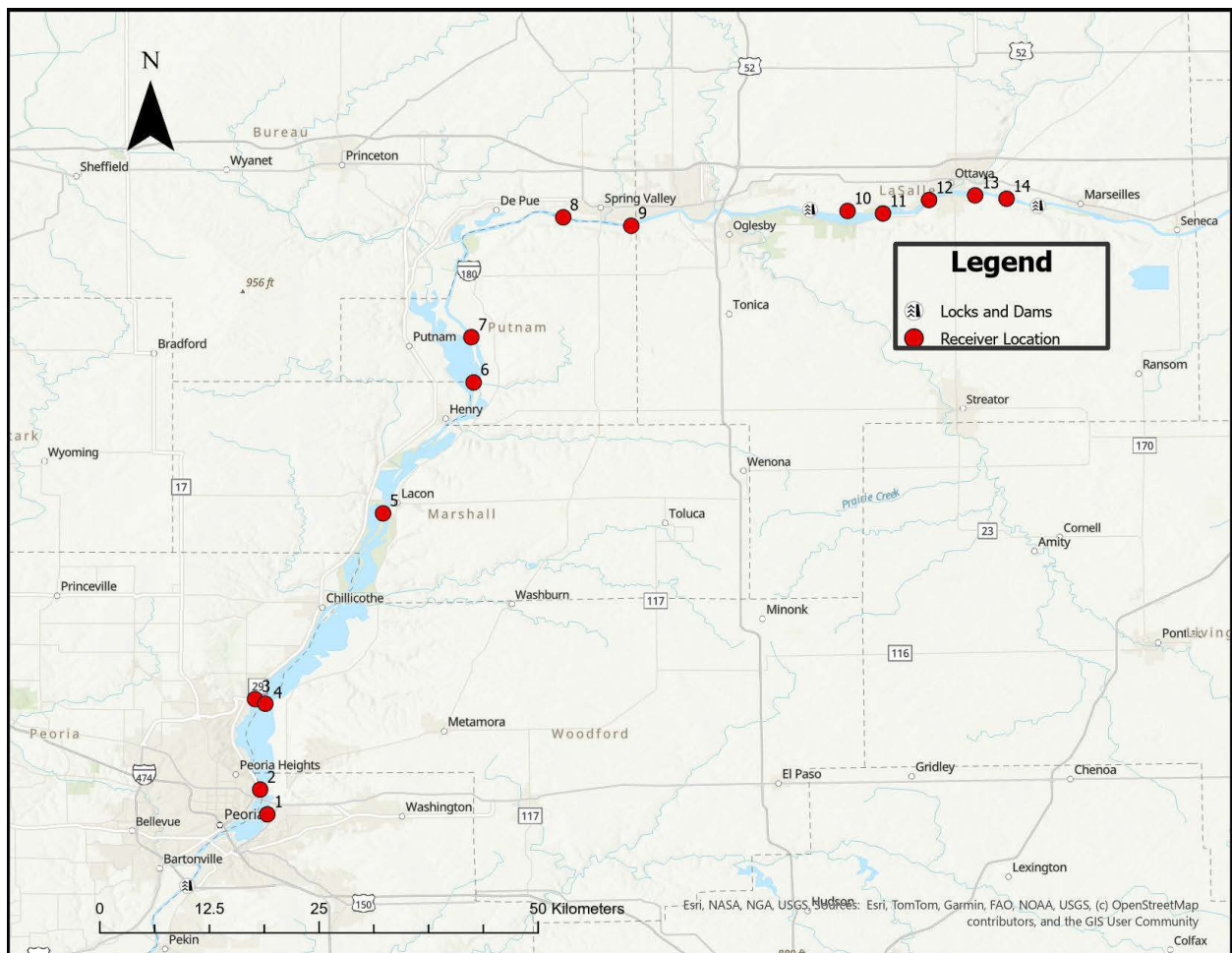


Figure 1. USFWS Wilmington receiver placements in Peoria and Starved Rock Pools. The numbers reference the receiver's name and location in table 1.

TELEMETRY MONITORING PLAN

USACE

Introduction

The telemetry monitoring plan includes tagging fish with individually coded ultrasonic transmitters in the Upper IWW. The acoustic network is comprised of stationary receivers supplemented (when necessary) by a mobile hydrophone unit to collect information from acoustic transmitters (tags) implanted into Bighead Carp, Silver Carp, and surrogate species. Acoustic receiver coverage within the Upper IWW primarily focuses on the EDBS, with secondary coverage surrounding lock and dams and emigration routes, such as tributaries and backwater areas. As of 2025, USACE operates 41 receivers between the confluence of the Cal-Sag and CSSC and the Dresden Island Lock and Dam.

March 2026 Highlights

The agency did not provide an update for March 2026.

ALTERNATE PATHWAY SURVEILLANCE IN ILLINOIS – LAW ENFORCEMENT

IL DNR

Introduction

This project enforces laws enacted to prevent the expansion and/or introduction of aquatic invasive species (AIS) within the waters of the State of Illinois and jurisdictions throughout the Great Lakes basin. The IL DNR Invasive Species Unit (ISU) specializes in closely regulating water-related industries that are likely to be a source of future introductions or expansion of AIS into state waters. Industries include sport and commercial fishing, aquaculture, fish transportation, bait, pet, aquarium, fish stocking, and live food markets.

March 2026 Highlights

A covert investigation into a Will County pet shop that was illegally selling Illinois-listed injurious species led to the confiscation of 43 mammals and citations against the owner for unlawful sale and possession of live injurious species.

ISU and a United States Fish and Wildlife Service agent interviewed the seafood manager of an ethnic grocery store regarding an illegal mitten crab shipment that had been confiscated in Illinois.

In another case, ISU and a Wisconsin DNR investigator located and interviewed the manager of a large seafood distribution company in Cook County. The company had been importing and selling protected aquatic life products in both Wisconsin and Illinois without the required aquatic life dealer licenses in either state. Charges are pending.

Additionally, ISU assisted Minnesota DNR investigators with three separate cases involving commercially harvested roe, red swamp crayfish, and largemouth bass.

INVASIVE CARP POPULATION MODELING TO SUPPORT AN ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

USFWS, USGS

Introduction

This project will develop objective, data-driven models to inform decisions concerning invasive carp control efforts in the Illinois River. This project supports ongoing modeling efforts to provide recommendations about the magnitude and spatial allocation of fishing effort and deterrent barriers to reduce the risk of Silver Carp and Bighead Carp introduction and establishment in the Great Lakes.

March 2026 Highlights

The modeling work group continues to work with the telemetry and monitoring work groups to ensure data collections will support the SCAA model. In addition, the modeling work group is collaborating with the monitoring work group to examine the utility of using N-mixture models to estimate the size of the invasive carp population in upstream pools of the ILR using MAM data. Lastly, the Ecopath with Ecosim model was reviewed and will be submitted for peer-review in the near future.

INVASIVE CARP STOCK ASSESSMENT IN THE ILLINOIS RIVER

IL DNR

March 2026 Highlights

The agency did not submit a response for the March 2026 monthly report.

BLACK CARP BOUNTY PROGRAM

ILDNR

Introduction

In 2015, the Black Carp Bounty Program was created to increase the number of black carp specimens made available for research to provide improved information on the status and characteristics of these carp in the Mississippi River and its tributaries. Knowledge of black carp geographic distribution, population characteristics, and diet are needed to inform development of management strategies to control black carp abundance, impacts, and further range expansion.

Nearly all black carp detected in the Mississippi River and tributaries are caught and reported by commercial fishers, largely due to the difficulty in sampling black carp in large rivers and limited agency and university sampling efforts focused on this species. The Black Carp Bounty Program was created to provide a reward of \$100 per fish to provide incentive for commercial fishers to target black carp in the wild, report any black carp that they catch to agency biologists, and donate the fish for black carp research.

March 2026 Highlights

The table below summarizes the total number of Black carps caught since transition of the program from Southern Illinois University to IDNR to Tetra Tech.

Month	# of Fish
2023 *	11
2024	116
2025	173
2026	-
<i>January</i>	20
<i>February</i>	41
<i>March</i>	3
2026 Part-Year Total	64
GRAND TOTALS	364

* Records start July 1, 2023.

ENHANCED DETECTION OF BLACK CARP IN THE LOWER ILLINOIS RIVER

IL DNR/INHS-IRBS

Introduction

Exotic black carp *Mylopharyngodon piceus* have invaded the Illinois River system and have been recently captured in the Alton, La Grange, and Peoria reaches of the lower Illinois River. Currently, the invasion of black carp is represented by only a few reported individuals and little is known about the size of the population or potential scope of ecosystem changes that may result from the invasion. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) has been closely monitoring the range expansion of black carp up the Illinois River, despite limited catches reported to date.

Critical to any inferences made about the range expansion of black carp is better knowledge of their population levels in invaded reaches. The limited number of black carp reported have been from incidental commercial fishermen catches while targeting other species (e.g., bighead carp, silver carp, common carp, grass carp, buffalo spp., catfish spp.). These captures and associated data (e.g., length, weight, age, diet, otolith microchemistry.) are valuable, but the limited number of reported individuals makes it difficult to assess their prevalence/establishment in the lower Illinois River. More robust estimates of the current population level are essential to management and potential control of black carp in the Illinois River.

March 2026 Highlights

We have been working to identify some more suitable habitats and locations for increased targeted sampling efforts using bathymetry and past commercial capture locations with respect to different hydrological flow patterns within the Illinois River and the Mississippi River. We have also started to reach out to old and new vendors to get quotes for bait for the hoop nets this year.

Columbia FWCO Black Carp Citizen Science Program Monthly Report

March 2026 Highlights

During March 2026, the Black Carp Bounty Program received catch information for 4 Black Carp captures bringing the total number to 135 since the start of the Fiscal Year 2026 (Figure 1). Fish were captured in the Lower Mississippi and Upper Mississippi Subbasins (Figure 2). Catch data is shown in Table 1. Fish age results will be recorded in USFWS's CarpDat database. The bounty program is made possible through the partnership with commercial fishers and state and federal partners who continue to report black carp captures supporting the collection of important Black Carp demographic data within the Mississippi River Basin.

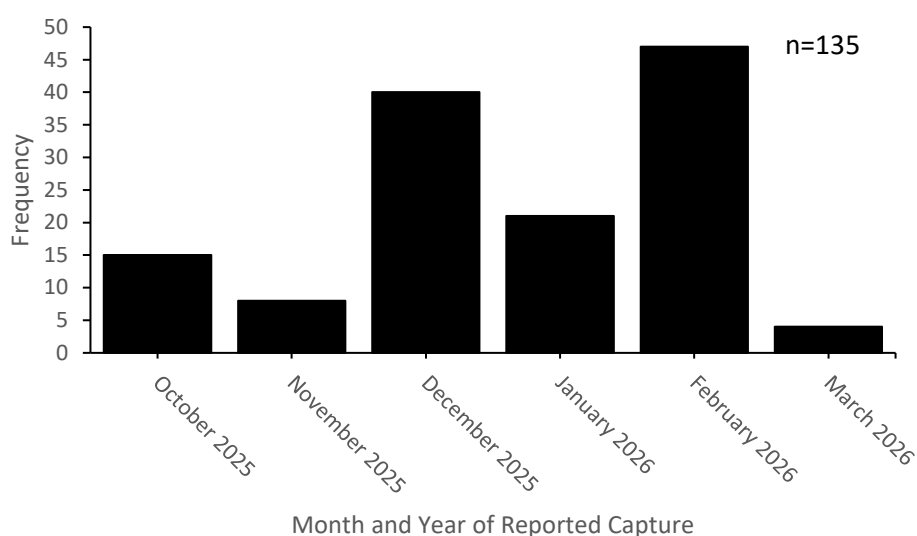


Figure 1. Reported Black Carp monthly catches for the Fiscal Year 2026.

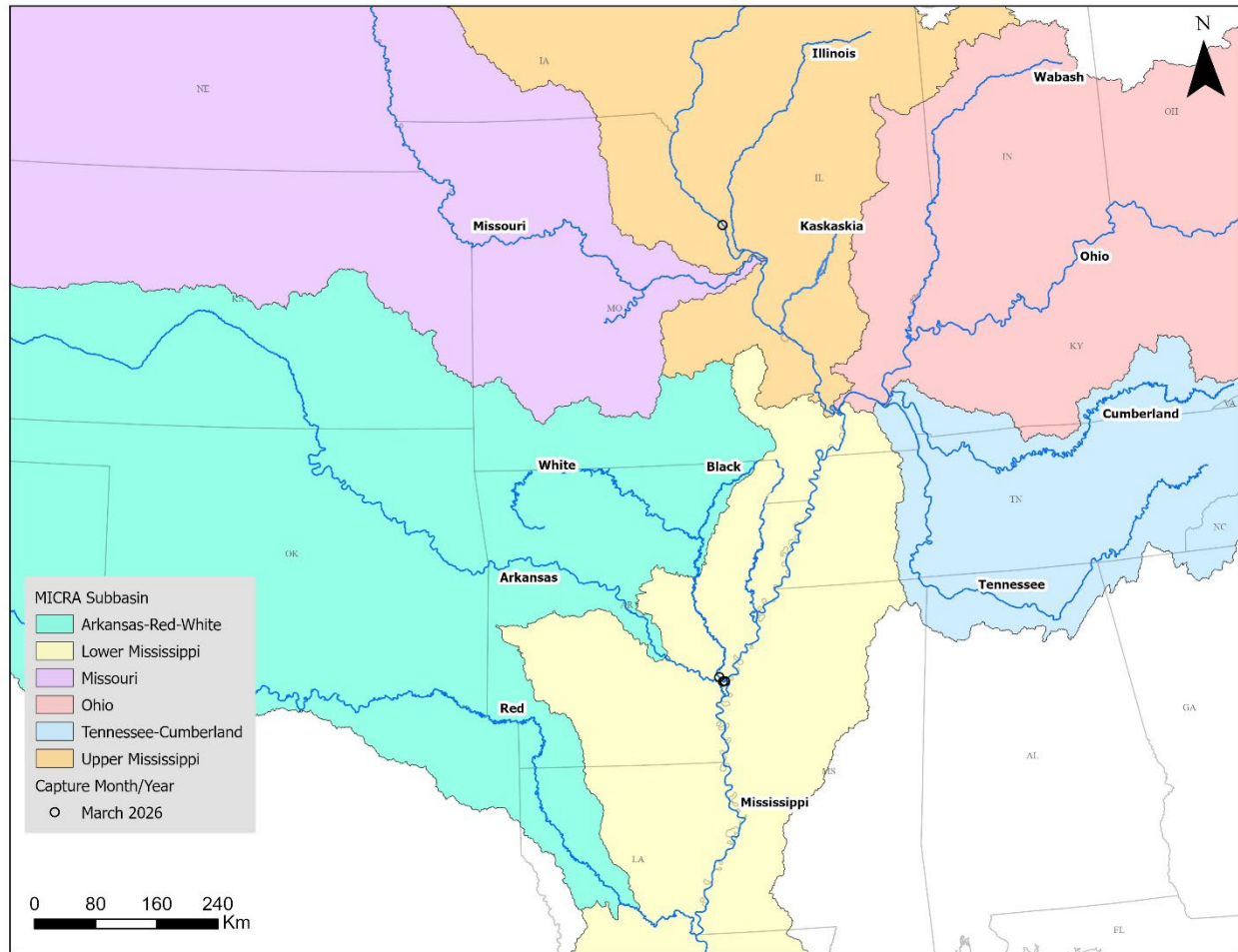


Figure 2. Locations of Black Carp captures in the MICRA Subbasins. Map produced on 4/13/2026.

Table 1. Black Carp catch data including FWCO ID, capture date, agency, river, river basin, location, total length, fork length, weight, and capture method. *LMR = Lower Mississippi Region, Upper Mississippi Region = UMR; °HN = Hoop Net, GN = Gill Net, TN = Trammel Net.

USFWS Columbia FWCO ID	Date	Agency	River	*River Basin	Lat.	Long.	Total Length (mm)	Fork Length (mm)	Weight (kg)	°Capture Method
BSCP030426-001-FWS	3/4/2026	Commercial fisher	White	LMR	33.9486	-91.1112	1138	1060	19.4	HN
BSCP031126-001-FWS	3/11/2026	Commercial fisher	Mississippi	UMR	39.2689	-90.7587	1275	1175	27.4	TN
BSCP031626-001-FWS	3/16/2026	Commercial fisher	White	LMR	34.0012	-91.1610	1335	1204	32.3	HN
BSCP031726-001-FWS	3/17/2026	Commercial fisher	White	LMR	33.9507	-91.0832	1021	948	12.9	GN
Average	-	-	-	-	-	-	1192	1097	23.0	-