MONITORING AND RESPONSE WORK GROUP
MONTHLY ACTIVITY UPDATES
MAY 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	**May 2026**
Yards of Net	0
Bighead Carp	0
Grass Carp	0
Silver Carp	0
Invasive Carp Caught	0
Invasive Carp Dresden Above I55	0
Invasive Carp Dresden Below I55	0
Invasive Carp Rock Run	0
IC/1000 yards	0

Marseilles	**May 2026**
Yards of Net	11,000
Bighead Carp	29
Grass Carp	8
Silver Carp	696

Marseilles	May 2026
Invasive Carp Caught	733
IC/1000 yards	66.6
Invasive Carp Pounds	11,241

Starved Rock	May 2026
Yards of net	64,400
Bighead Carp	21
Grass Carp	33
Silver Carp	8,113
Invasive Carp Caught	8,167
IC/1000 yards	126.8
Invasive Carp Pounds	24,251

SEASONAL INTENSIVE MONITORING IN THE CAWS

IL DNR

Introduction

The SIM is a planned intensive surveillance of the CAWS upstream of the EDBS, conducted twice annually. These events are planned for the spring season (weeks of May 12th and 19th) and the fall season (Weeks of September 29th and October 6th). The SIM deploys fixed and random site monitoring. This project includes standardized monitoring with pulsed-DC electrofishing gear and contracted commercial fishers. Along with maintaining the spatial coverage upstream of the EDBS, each SIM event will provide extra sampling focus on a unique location in the CAWS. SIM provides a spatially and temporally adequate assessment of the relative abundance and distribution of invasive carp in the CAWS upstream of the EDBS.

IDNR, INHS, USACE, USFWS, and contracted netters sampled the North Shore Channel, North and South Branches of the Chicago River, Chicago River, Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal, Cal-Sag Channel, Little Calumet River, Calumet River, and Lake Calumet.

May 2026 Highlights

Overall:

- 0 Bighead Carp, 1 Grass Carp (observed), and 0 Silver Carp were observed or collected

Commercial gill netting:

- Contracted fishers along with assisting agency biologists set 50 miles of gill net (440 sets) at fixed and random sites

Electrofishing:

- Agency biologists completed 70 hours (280 transects) of electrofishing as fixed and random sties

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.

May 2026 Highlights

The barriers are currently operating at the following parameters (May 28, 2026) but are subject to change:

Barrier	Operation Parameters	Status
1D	Full water array 1: 5 Hz, 4 ms, 400 V = ~1.0 V/in Benthic array 2: 5 Hz, 4 ms, 100V	Operational
1N	NA	Ready Standby
1S	34 Hz, 2.3 ms, 1450 V = ~2.4 V/in	Operational
2A	Narrow: NA	Ready Standby
2A	Wide: NA	Ready Standby
2B	Narrow Pulser 2: 34 Hz, 2.3 ms, 2000 V = 2.3 V/in	Operational
2B	Wide Pulsers 3: 34 Hz, 2.3 ms, 800 V= ~1.0 V/in	Operational

Barrier outages that occurred during the month of May 2026:

- 5/8/2026: 1S array of Barrier 1: 1 day, 2 hours and 14 minutes, scheduled shutdown for leak repair on pump skid, section of pipe replaced.

Traditional Monitoring

During the month of May, there were a total of sixteen 15-minute fixed electrofishing sites completed in Lockport and Brandon Road Pools. Data for eight of the sixteen fixed sites were combined by pool to show what counts and species were captured, although the data from the other eight sites have not yet been accounted for in the following information. In Lockport Pool, 48 individuals across 10 species were captured, with the five most abundant species being Channel Catfish, Gizzard Shad, Common Carp, Brook Silverside, and Freshwater Drum. In Brandon Road Pool, 54 individuals across 14 species were captured, with the five most abundant species being Common Carp, Smallmouth Bass, Gizzard Shad, White Sucker, and Largemouth Bass. Across the monitoring efforts conducted in Lockport and Brandon Road pools, no live or dead invasive carp were observed or captured during the month of May by USACE biologists.

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 76 fishers have entered into contracts to catch invasive carp from these pools, with 49 currently under contract. From inception through May 2026, 35,146,700 pounds of invasive carp have been caught among all three pools. Of these total catches, 2.50% are Bighead, 87.91% are Silver, and 9.59% are Grass carp.

May 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	313,693	2,610	245,325	65,758
March	803,430	9,687	714,141	79,603
April	600,980	13,282	519,167	68,532
May	507,762	7,963	432,250	67,549
2026 Part-Year Subtotal	**2,593,547**	**33,542**	**2,250,065**	**309,940**
GRAND TOTALS	**35,146,700**	**877,452**	**30,897,584**	**3,371,664**

* 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 5,111,780 pounds of invasive carp have been purchased. Of these total catches, 1.00% are Bighead, 90.84% are Silver, and 8.16% are Grass carp.

May 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 *	**2,575,035**	**20,851**	**2,416,645**	**137,539**
2026	-	-	-	-
January	367,682	0	339,183	28,499
February	307,577	1,308	243,836	62,434
March	753,565	9,981	685,268	58,316
April	554,312	11,402	481,282	61,628
May	553,609	7,500	477,441	68,668
2026 Part-Year Subtotal	**2,536,745**	**30,191**	**2,227,010**	**279,544**
GRAND TOTALS	**5,111,780**	**51,042**	**4,643,655**	**417,083**

* 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.

May 2026 Highlights

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

- Hydroacoustic barrier scan on May 26th, 2026, identified a total of 129 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 May.

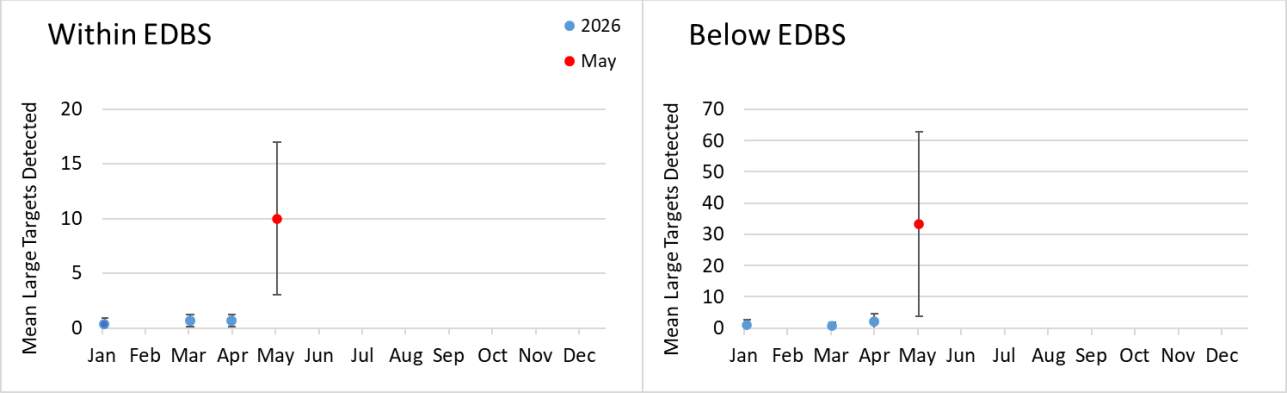

Figure 1. Comparison of the mean and standard deviation for three replicate surveys from the current mobile surveys with previous surveys from 2026.

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.

May 2026 Highlights

- Six Silver Carp (829 mm – 914 mm TL [Total Length]) were captured in the lower Kankakee River during May 2026.
- The approach to Brandon Road Lock and Dam was electrofished, for 32 minutes on May 26th, 2026, to investigate a tagged Silver Carp detected within its vicinity. No invasive carp were captured or detected in the approach channel.
- No small-bodied (< 153 mm TL) invasive carp were captured by EDM in May 2026.
- No large-bodied (≥ 153 mm TL) invasive carp were captured outside their known range by EDM in May 2026.

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

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

-	Marseilles	Dresden Island	Kankakee	Brandon Road	Lockport	Des Plaines
Electrofishing Effort (hours)	0	4.04	3.75	2.5	2.25	0
Electrofishing Sites	0	16	15	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	6	0	0	0
Species Richness	0	34	29	11	11	0
Total Catch	0	669	484	75	51	0
Most Abundant Species	N/A	Emerald Shiner	Emerald Shiner	Emerald Shiner	Bluntnose Minnow	N/A

MONITORING INVASIVE CARP REPRODUCTION IN THE ILLINOIS WATERWAY

INHS

Introduction

This project monitors for invasive carp reproduction in the IWW and major tributaries (Kankakee, Fox, Spoon, and Sangamon rivers). Ichthyoplankton sampling will be conducted to assess the extent, timing, and magnitude of invasive carp reproduction in the IWW, monitor for Black Carp reproduction, and quantify relationships between invasive carp adult abundance, reproductive output, and recruitment. Samples will be collected from late April through October, with more frequent sampling effort during periods when temperature and flow conditions are considered optimal for invasive carp spawning.

April - May 2026 Highlights

INHS began monitoring for invasive carp reproduction on April 29. Ichthyoplankton samples were collected at sites from the Brandon Road to Alton pools. Additional sampling was conducted in major tributaries of the Illinois River (Kankakee, Fox, Spoon, and Sangamon rivers). Water temperatures briefly surpassed 18°C in both the upper and lower Illinois River during the second and third weeks of April, but then declined and did not rise above 18°C again until mid-May. Water levels in the upper Illinois River were low and relatively stable during this time period. Water levels in the lower Illinois River were high, although not above flood stage during late April and early May, but steadily declined throughout May. Low numbers of large-diameter eggs were collected from all sites in the LaGrange and Alton pools during the last week of April, and sporadically at these locations across May. A single large-diameter egg was collected from the Dresden Island Pool on May 20. This egg will be prioritized for sequencing to determine species identity. Full processing of collected ichthyoplankton samples and identification of fish eggs and larvae is ongoing. Monitoring for invasive carp reproduction will occur weekly until mid-July and bi-weekly thereafter, except when river conditions warrant more frequent sampling. Additional occurrences of invasive carp eggs or larvae, particularly upstream of the Starved Rock Lock and Dam, will be reported as soon as this information is available.

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.

May 2026 Highlights

Agency stated there were no updates for May 2026.

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 2026, USACE operates 39 (4 above the EDBS, 7 in Lockport, 5 in Brandon Road, and 23 in Dresden Island) receivers between the confluence of the Cal-Sag and CSSC and the Dresden Island Lock and Dam.

May 2026 Highlights

USACE downloaded all the receivers within the array in mid-May 2026 except for receivers within the Constellation Energy Nuclear Power Plant. Any remaining VR2W receivers were switched over to newer models to ensure data collection as receivers aged. Twenty-eight new invasive carp (twenty-six Silver Carp and 2 Bighead Carp) were implanted with acoustic tags in Dresden Island in March and April in collaboration with Illinois Department of Natural Resources. All tagged invasive carp received both a jaw tag and loop tag for easy identification of recapture.

No tagged invasive carp were detected upstream of Brandon Road Lock and Dam through the entirety of the USACE telemetry array. One Silver Carp (Tag A69-9001-45066) which was tagged on April 22nd, 2026, in Rock Run Rookery, was detected immediately downstream of Brandon Road Lock and Dam on May 10th, 2026. This Silver Carp was detected on both USACE and USGS receivers in the approach channel of Brandon Road Lock and Dam. However, the fish was not detected on the USACE receiver within the Lock as well as the USACE and USGS receivers upstream of Brandon Road Lock and Dam. The same Siver Carp was detected again on May 28th, 2026 on the USGS receiver located below Brandon Road Lock and Dam, but USACE receivers have not been downloaded since that detection. Like the first approach, the Silver Carp was not detected on the USGS real-time receiver upstream of Brandon Road Lock and Dam.

Receiver data shows that the tagged Silver Carp (45066) following tagging in Rock Run Rookery was detected at the receiver immediately upstream of Houbolt Road until the receiver was downloaded on May 22nd, 2026. This Silver Carp has not been detected in Rock Run Rookery since it was captured and tagged.

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.

May 2026 Highlights

ISU conducted inspections of a bait shop and a fee-fishing facility as part of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources' random commercial inspection program. A review of records confirmed that both businesses purchased live aquatic organisms from licensed suppliers authorized to import and sell approved aquatic species in Illinois. Facility inspections verified that all species on site were legally possessed and properly maintained. No violations or deficiencies were identified.

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.

May 2026 Highlights

The modeling work group has completed the species accumulation curve analysis for the early detection monitoring project and is anticipating a discussion with the EDM group and the MRWG co-chairs before finalizing recommendations. In addition, the modeling work group has started discussions of among-work group synthesis of data and will continue to discuss directions and potential analyses with those involved. The modeling work group has also begun to explore the use of N-mixture models as a means of estimating the silver carp abundance in low density areas using MAM data. We are anticipating a UMN PhD candidate (currently undergoing a routine federal background check) assisting with this project. In terms of peer-reviewed manuscripts, the updated SEICarP model that includes a connection to the UMR was accepted to *Management of Biological Invasions* with minor revisions which will be submitted as soon as practicable. The Ecopath with Ecosim model of invasive carp dynamics in the Illinois River was rejected from *Journal of Applied Ecology* but will be submitted to *Biological Invasions* in the near future. The manuscript describing the occupancy models used to analyze early detection and monitoring data in the Upper Illinois River was also rejected by *North Americal Journal of Fisheries Management*. The modeling work group will discuss potential journals for resubmission of this manuscript.

INVASIVE CARP STOCK ASSESSMENT IN THE ILLINOIS RIVER

IL DNR

May 2026 Highlights

The agency did not submit a response for the May 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.

May 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	-
January	20
February	44
March	13
April	14
May	23
2026 Part-Year Total	114
GRAND TOTALS	**414**

* Records start July 1, 2023.