

MONITORING AND RESPONSE WORK GROUP
MONTHLY ACTIVITY UPDATES
APRIL 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	April 2026
Yards of Net	51,300
Bighead Carp	1
Grass Carp	1
Silver Carp	33
Invasive Carp Caught	35
Invasive Carp Dresden Above I55	0
Invasive Carp Dresden Below I55	19
Invasive Carp Rock Run	16
IC/1000 yards	0.68

Marseilles	April 2026
Yards of Net	55,500
Bighead Carp	153
Grass Carp	17
Silver Carp	5,511
Invasive Carp Caught	5,681
IC/1000 yards	103.9
Invasive Carp Pounds	94,493

Starved Rock	April 2026
Yards of net	40,300
Bighead Carp	32
Grass Carp	148
Silver Carp	5,224
Invasive Carp Caught	5,404
IC/1000 yards	134.1
Invasive Carp Pounds	40,396

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.

April 2026 Highlights

The agency did not submit an update for April 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 75 fishers have entered into contracts to catch invasive carp from these pools, with 46 currently under contract. From inception through April 2026, 34,489,904 pounds of invasive carp have been caught among all three pools. Of these total catches, 2.50% are Bighead, 87.96% are Silver, and 9.55% are Grass carp.

April 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	Total Lbs.**	Bighead	Silver	Grass
<i>January</i>	367,682	0	339,183	28,499
<i>February</i>	313,693	2,610	245,325	65,758
<i>March</i>	771,495	9,687	682,206	79,603
<i>April</i>	483,881	4,710	422,380	56,792
2026 Part-Year Subtotal	1,936,751	17,007	1,689,093	230,652
GRAND TOTALS	34,489,904	860,917	30,336,613	3,292,375

* 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 4,564,809 pounds of invasive carp have been purchased. Of these total catches, .95% are Bighead, 91.38% are Silver, and 7.67% are Grass carp.

April 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	Total Lbs.**	Bighead	Silver	Grass
<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
<i>April</i>	560,950	11,402	486,269	63,279
2026 Part Year Subtotal	1,989,774	22,691	1,754,556	212,528
GRAND TOTALS	4,564,809	43,542	4,171,201	350,067

* 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.

April 2026 Highlights

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

- Hydroacoustic barrier scan on April 28th, 2026, identified a total of eight 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 April.

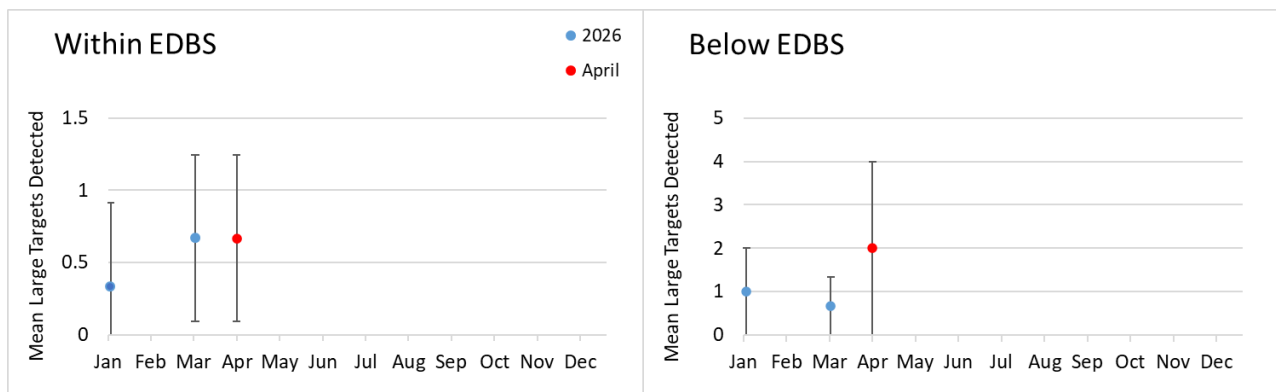


Figure 1. Comparison of the mean and standard deviation for three replicate surveys from the current mobile surveys with previous surveys from 2026.

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.

April 2026 Highlights

- Eighteen Silver Carp (826 mm – 990 mm TL [Total Length]) were captured in the lower Kankakee River during April 2026.
- One Silver Carp (1025 mm TL) was captured in the Dresden Island Pool during April 2026
- One Grass Carp (990 mm TL) was captured in the Brandon Road Pool during April 2026.
- No small-bodied (< 153 mm TL) invasive carp were captured by EDM in April 2026.
- No large-bodied ($\geq$ 153 mm TL) invasive carp were captured outside their known range by EDM in April 2026.

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

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

-	Marseilles	Dresden Island	Kankakee	Brandon Road	Lockport	Des Plaines
Electrofishing Effort (hours)	0	3.75	3.75	2.5	2.25	4.5
Electrofishing Sites	0	15	15	10	9	18
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	3.17
Gill Net Effort (yards)	0	0	0	0	0	100
Gill Net Sites	0	0	0	0	0	1
Small Carp Captured	0	0	0	0	0	0
Large Carp Captured	0	1	18	1	0	0
Species Richness	0	35	32	23	8	27
Total Catch	0	983	692	347	35	154
Most Abundant Species	N/A	Emerald Shiner	Emerald Shiner	Emerald Shiner	Brook Silverside	Emerald Shiner

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.

April 2026 Highlights

Agency stated there were no updates for April 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 2025, USACE operates 41 receivers between the confluence of the Cal-Sag and CSSC and the Dresden Island Lock and Dam.

April 2026 Highlights

The agency did not provide an update for April 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.

April 2026 Highlights

A private aquarium owner in Chicago, Illinois reported invasive snails in a home aquarium. Specimens submitted to the Acting Curator of Malacology at the Illinois Natural History Survey were identified as New Zealand mud snails (*Potamopyrgus antipodarum*). This species is highly invasive, reproduces quickly, competes with native species, and can disrupt freshwater ecosystems. It is listed as an injurious species by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and appears on the Great Lakes Fishery Commission's "Least Wanted" Aquatic Invasive Species list.

ISU interviewed the aquarium store where the aquarium owner had recently purchased aquatic plants. The store owner provided sales records and allowed ISU to collect snail samples from two in-store tanks for identification. One of the samples was confirmed to be a New Zealand mud snail.

ISU also identified the store's wholesale suppliers to help trace where the snails may have entered the supply chain and whether they may have spread to other locations. Treatment recommendations were provided to help eliminate the snails from the store's tanks and reduce the risk of further spread through the aquarium trade.



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.

April 2026 Highlights

The modeling work group continues to work 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 and on developing a machine learning algorithm to assign ages to individuals using images of otoliths. In addition, the modeling work group is continuing to work on species accumulation curve analyses to help inform sampling efforts for the EDM and SIM projects.

INVASIVE CARP STOCK ASSESSMENT IN THE ILLINOIS RIVER

IL DNR

April 2026 Highlights

The agency did not submit a response for the April 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.

April 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	# of Fish
<i>January</i>	20
<i>February</i>	44
<i>March</i>	13
<i>April</i>	12
2026 Part-Year Total	89
GRAND TOTALS	389

* 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.

May 2026 Highlights

During this past month, baits have been quoted and purchased for this upcoming 2026 field season. Other supplies and equipment have been evaluated, and nets have been tarred for preventative maintenance. There has been discussion with CERC to assist with some black carp acoustic tag surgeries at CERC at the beginning of June and formulate a collaboration during the event of a live black carp capture within the lower Illinois River and the Mississippi River near Alton and Grafton, IL. Additionally, we had some outreach events with local high schools to educate the youth on fisheries related careers and some of the types of species within the Illinois River.