Protecting our Lakes from Invasive Species

U.S Senator Debbie Stabenow

A Major Threat

Over 180 aquatic invasive species have already found their way into the Great Lakes, and new ones like Asian carp are knocking on the door. Invasive species cost the Great Lakes as much as $800 million annually, and pose a grave threat to our $7 billion fishery and $36 recreational boating industry. On June 22, 2017, an eight-pound silver carp was found just nine miles from Lake Michigan. This was the first time a live silver carp was found so close to Lake Michigan, and is a serious reminder that we must move quickly to implement near- and long-term solutions to combat invasive species.

Asian carp

As co-chair of the bipartisan Senate Great Lakes Task Force, Senator Stabenow has been leading efforts to combat the serious threat posed by Asian carp. In 2012, Senator Stabenow authored and passed the bipartisan Stop Invasive Species Act that required the federal government to take quicker action to protect our Great Lakes from Asian carp. Thanks to Senator Stabenow's continued leadership, after many months of unnecessary delays, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers finalized a comprehensive plan to stop Asian carp at the Brandon Road Lock and Dam – a critical chokepoint in the Illinois River located 45 miles from Lake Michigan. Congress now has the ability to advance this much-needed, long-term solution.

On July 1, 2019, Senator Stabenow *led a bipartisan trip to Brandon Road with 10 members of Michigan's Congressional Delegation to meet with Army Corps' leadership and discuss the path forward for constructing this critical project. The project includes measures to fight Asian carp, including electricity, sound, and numerous other deterrents.*

Early Detection and Rapid Response

Senator Stabenow has led efforts to secure robust funding every year that is used for monitoring, detecting, and responding to aquatic invasive species in the Great Lakes and connecting waterways. As a result of these efforts, groundbreaking technology has been developed to detect DNA from Asian carp and invasive species. Regulators and scientists at the state and federal levels are utilizing this technology to prevent invasive species from entering our Lakes and to respond quickly to stop them from spreading widely.

Ballast Water

Thirty percent of the invasive species that are currently in the Great Lakes, like the zebra mussel, were transferred in ballast water released from commercial ships. These species cost the region an estimated $200 million annually. Last Congress, Senator Stabenow successfully fought off legislative efforts to undermine Clean Water Act protections that are important to preventing future invasive species from entering the Great Lakes through ballast water. Thanks to Senator Stabenow's leadership, robust ballast water standards will be required for large shipping vessels that enter and operate within the Great Lakes. In addition, a new $50 million federal grant program was established to develop new technologies neutralize and prevent invasive species from entering our Great Lakes through ballast water.

A Moral Imperative

For Senator Stabenow, fighting invasive species doesn't make just economic sense, it's a moral imperative that is vital to the long-term wellbeing of our Great Lakes.