

NEWS

\$75K in fines levied for importing live Asian carp



Kevin Sprague, a conservation officer with the Ministry of Natural Resources displays two types of Asian Carp species that were seized at the Windsor/Detroit border. An Edmonton trucking company was busted for importing a large quantity of the fish into Canada and fined \$70,000. (DAN JANISSE/The Windsor Star)

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A trucker and the Edmonton company he worked for were fined \$75,000 in court Thursday for bringing live Asian carp into Canada.

Alltheway Trucking, based in Edmonton, was fined \$70,000 and driver Yong-Sheng Zhang of Markham, Ont., was fined \$5,000 for twice bringing the invasive species over the Ambassador Bridge.



A truck from Alltheway Trucking entered Canada at the Ambassador Bridge on Jan. 25, 2012, carrying grass and bighead carp from the state of Arkansas. Conservation officers with the Lake Erie Enforcement Unit inspected the truck and found that some of the grass carp were still alive. They subsequently seized all of the fish.

(Courtesy of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources)

In January and February 2012, Zhang crossed the bridge with a truckload of fish from Arkansas. The shipments contained grass carp and bighead carp, among other

species. Such Asian carp species are legal to import provided they are dead, explained Kevin Sprague, a conservation officer with the Ministry of Natural Resources.

On the days in question, Sprague was called to the border to inspect the load, he testified at a five-day trial held in June. The fish were packed in ice, but some had faint signs of life. Sprague picked out a few of the two Asian carp species and put them into containers of water. Within minutes, they perked up. Court saw the videotapes Sprague took of the fish splashing in the bins.

On the first occasion the prohibited fish found to be live were grass carp. "Zhang was given the opportunity to see the live fish in the bin of water," said justice of the peace Maureen Ryan-Brode. "That should have served as an alert that a change in his practice was required."

A view of one of the holding containers with grass and Asian carp seized by the MNR in January, 2012. (Courtesy of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources)

Yet one month later, Zhang was caught again with fish on ice that were still alive. The second time, those fish were bighead carp.

Sprague said the fish were seized by the MNR and most were subsequently sold to a wholesaler in Wheatley. Justice of the peace Maureen Ryan-Brode Thursday ordered the \$2,000 paid by the wholesaler will go to the province.

Neither Zhang nor an Alltheway representative appeared in court Thursday, but their lawyer sent a student. Court heard Zhang is on WSIB and has limited ability to pay a fine. Ryan-Brode gave him and the company one year to pay.

According to the MNR, Asian carp species came to North American in the 1960s. They have migrated north through U.S. waterways toward the Great Lakes.

In some areas of the Mississippi River and its tributaries, the rapidly reproducing carp have replaced native species. Weighing up to 40 kg each, Asian carp species can eat up to 20 per cent of their body weight in plankton each day. Native species die off because there is not enough left to eat.

The MNR warns that a decline in native fish species could hurt sport and commercial fishing in Ontario, an important part of the province's economy. ssacheli@windsorstar.com

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