

Asian carp fight gets boost in Washington

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By **TODD SPANGLER** _DETROIT FREE PRESS WASHINGTON STAFF

WASHINGTON – Two Michigan members of Congress say legislation that would force the Army Corps of Engineers to come up with a plan to keep invasive Asian carp out of Lake Michigan in the next year-and-a-half has a good chance of passage, with Illinois Sen. Dick Durbin on board.

U.S. Sen. Debbie Stabenow, a Democrat, held a news conference today on the legislation which she is writing along with U.S. Rep. Dave Camp, Midland Republican who will push the bill in the House.

Critics have complained that the Army's five-year study into how to ensure Asian carp – a voracious species found in the Mississippi River and the Illinois River – is too long, with the health of the Great Lakes being threatened. Stabenow and Camp's bill would require the Corps to begin work on a action plan for hydraulic separation between Chicago-area waterways and the lake immediately, with reports due six months and a year from enactment. The plan would have to be complete in 18 months.

“This is the only way that we're going to guarantee we don't see Asian carp going into Lake Michigan,” Stabenow said.

Both Stabenow and Camp have called for closing shipping locks around Chicago as a way to stop the spread of the carp, but Illinois legislators – including Durbin, a Democratic leader in the Senate – have successfully blocked those moves. This legislation does not include such a move, though Stabenow said she and Camp will continue to try to push closing the locks.

“It's more than symbolic that Sen. Durbin from Illinois is on board,” Tim Eder, executive director of the Great Lakes Commission, said of the new legislation.

Stabenow said the problems involved in separating the waters from Chicago-area waterways can be solved and in the short-term, and that this legislation is intended to “light a fire” to get the Corps to move quickly than they had planned.

“It's going to take them several years and we don't have several years,” she said. “We need to get this done as quickly as possible.”