

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 5, 2017

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**Asian Carp Regional
Coordinating Committee**



**Council of Great Lakes
Fishery Agencies**

Grass Carp Early Detection Efforts Underway for Lake Erie

For the past few years Asian Carp Regional Coordinating Committee partners have stepped up efforts to better understand the population status and distribution of grass carp in western Lake Erie. Work completed between May 30, 2017 and July 12, 2017 has led to the collection of fish eggs in the Sandusky River in Ohio, now confirmed to be grass carp eggs. The eggs were collected by representatives from U.S. Geological Survey, Ohio Department of Natural Resources and the University of Toledo, and then identified based on morphological characteristics of the eggs by the University of Toledo with confirmation by the U.S. Geological Survey. The recent discovery is not an indicator of the population size of grass carp in the Sandusky River, but it does underscore the continued need for grass carp early detection and management efforts in the area.

Current evidence suggests that grass carp, a type of Asian carp, are present in extremely low abundance in the area, making early detection a critical step in preventing the invasive fish from gaining a foothold in the environment. The collaborative efforts of Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Great Lakes Fishery Commission are yielding critical new information about the locations and movement patterns of grass carp.

Work to assess the potential for reproduction of grass carp in Ohio and Michigan rivers is being led by U.S. Geological Survey and the University of Toledo, with support from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Work began in the Sandusky River (Ohio) in 2014, the River Raisin (Michigan) in 2015, and the Maumee River (Ohio) in 2017. Research is focused on learning more about the reproductive behaviors of grass carp and identifying potential hatching locations for resulting eggs. Prior to this year, collection efforts in the Sandusky River yielded eight grass carp eggs in 2015, with no eggs collected in 2014 or 2016. With a single female grass carp able to produce up to one million eggs during spawning, the implications of finding 7,649 eggs in the Sandusky River this year are as of yet still unknown. It is important to note that no larval grass carp were found since sampling began.

Coordinated fish sampling efforts focused on the Sandusky River and Sandusky Bay by federal, provincial and state partners were completed the week of August 28. The work complements the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Early Detection and Monitoring Program for Aquatic Invasive

Species, which is conducted in targeted areas throughout the Great Lakes Basin in collaboration with state partners. Sandusky Bay was identified in 2013 as a “high risk” location for potential aquatic invasive species introductions in Lake Erie. Information from sampling work, together with results from ongoing research, will be used to inform planning and implementation of a large-scale, coordinated, grass carp-focused action in the Sandusky River in 2018. This larger-scale effort will more fully evaluate potential future actions to remove grass carp and to learn more about potential opportunities to manage the populations in Lake Erie. Future decisions about specific actions that could occur in Lake Erie will be made through the cooperative fishery management process facilitated by the [Great Lakes Fishery Commission](#), including its Invasive Fishes Executive Committee and the Lake Erie Committee, in collaboration with the Asian Carp Regional Coordinating Committee.

Information resulting from this interagency effort will inform potential grass carp response actions in Lake Erie, and may also support efforts to reduce the risk of introduction of bighead, silver, and black carps in the Great Lakes and beyond. Grass carp research and management actions are funded by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, U.S. Geological Survey and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service federal appropriations, and Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Ohio Department of Natural Resources agency budgets. Grass carp actions are described in greater detail in the [2017 Asian Carp Action Plan](#). Collectively these interagency efforts also support the goals and objectives of the national [Management and Control Plan for Bighead, Black, Grass, and Silver Carps in the United States](#).

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