

# Asian carp's invasion may have stalled

Scientists say fish no closer to lake

By Tim De Chant  
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Government scientists expressed relief Thursday that surveys of the Illinois and Des Plaines Rivers did not reveal any further movement of the Asian carp toward the vulnerable waters of Lake Michigan.

Scientists with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service sighted two bighead carp and six silver carp about 30 river miles from an electric fish barrier near Romeoville

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that is meant to keep Asian carp from reaching the lake—close, but no closer than fish spotted by previous surveys.

The agencies monitor the advance of the two ravenous invasive species each year by traveling the rivers and “electrofishing,” or temporarily stunning the fish with a species-specific electric current so they rise to the surface. Nine boats of scientists were out scanning the waterways Wednesday and Thursday.

During this year’s “Carp Corral,” the 13th such annual survey, scientists were hoping to capture bighead carp close to the electric fish barrier so they could implant thumb-size ultrasonic transmitters.

But the fish have proved elusive, darting away after being shocked, and by Thursday, the teams had not succeeded in netting any carp in the waterways near Channahon. If they are still unsuccessful Friday, they will try again later this summer.

Scientists plan to place canister-like sensors in the river that will listen for each transmitter’s sonic signature, tracking individual carp as



Scott Bartell (right) of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources joins other biologists in searching for Asian carp.

Tribune photo by Abel Uribe

they advance toward the fish barrier in the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal near Romeoville.

“Right now the main worry is to keep them out of Lake Michigan,” said John Chick,

aquatic ecologist with the Illinois Natural History Survey.

Brought to the United States to control algal blooms in fish farms, bighead and silver carp can consume up to 20 percent of their weight in

microscopic plankton per day.

Compared with the plankton-rich Illinois River, the lake is an aquatic desert. Because Lake Michigan’s native species already compete with

zebra and quagga mussels for plankton, more mouths at the table could push those populations to extinction, experts say.

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