

## **INVASIVE SILVER CARP WILL DESTROY OUR ENDANGERED LAKES—TENNESSEE WILDLIFE RESOURCE AGENCY (TWRA) CAN STOP THEM—BUT WILL THEY?**

The invasive Asian silver carp have devastated the lake economy and ecosystems of nearly the entire central portion of the U.S. If not stopped, our nine-county region (Chattanooga to Knoxville) will suffer more than a billion-dollar **annual** economic loss, and a terrible ecological disaster. As well, silver carp jump en-masse when startled, weigh over 60 lbs., and have broken jaws, arms, and legs, and have cracked skulls. A child's neck could easily be broken while tubing. Those fish will abolish everything wonderful about our lakes.

TWRA is recommending the construction of barriers behind the carp rather than in front of them. Doing this is akin to tossing spike-strips on the road to stop a criminal's car, **after** the car has passed by. TWRA "speculates" that by reducing the number of silver carp swimming into silver carp infested lakes, then using commercial fishing to reduce their numbers (which cannot be done until the population is large), it will prevent silver carp from reaching upstream uninfested lakes. Their faulty speculation is not only "illogical," it is unscientific and reckless with no chance of success.

TWRA has subsidized commercial fisherman to remove more than 18-million pounds of silver carp from Kentucky Lake, with no measurable overall positive ecosystem impact. One adult silver carp can lay five-million eggs. Thus, "control" by commercial fishing will never bring the ecosystem back to health, and eradication is impossible. Yes, removing fish is positive, however, however it does not restore the previous natural, healthy ecosystem the fish are destroying—it represents a Band-Aid; thus, the minor positive impact cannot be considered the answer let alone touted by TWRA. They are spending large amounts of money to subsidize commercial fisherman and are now paying individual fisherman to catch silver carp. They can prevent this expense from being needed in our uninvaded lakes if they prevent them from reaching us. Why can't they understand this?

For years, the *Watts Bar Ecology and Fishery Council (WBEFC)*, established at the request of the Roane County Commission, met with past and present TWRA directors explaining why their plan cannot possibly prevent the silver carp from entering and destroying our carp-free lakes. We made numerous requests for scientific studies or data which supports their groundless "speculation" that placing barriers behind the fish will 'prevent' them from invading our lake. TWRA has provided only narrative saying they are following the advice of experts, but these experts only addressed how to best reduce the number of silver carp in already invaded lakes, not preventing them from reaching new lakes. TWRA does not have a single scientific study or report that shows reducing their numbers into silver carp infested lakes will prevent them from moving upstream into carp-free lakes—TWRA is only speculating. Their mission statement says they are to "Protect" our lakes. A barrier behind the silver carp cannot "protect" upstream lakes.

The mere fact that the silver carp have taken over nearly the entire Ohio, Missouri, Mississippi, and Tennessee River Basins is proof enough that merely slowing their progress upstream only delays the devastation, and "stopping" them is the only answer. Yet TWRA cannot admit this fact.

I have more than fifty years of fisheries experience nationwide and know the two leading silver carp experts in the nation. One is the foremost silver carp population modeler,

the other has over four-decades of silver carp experience and directed the principal silver carp advisory group in the U.S. for eighteen-years. Both experts told the TWRA that placing the first barrier in front of the silver carp at Watts Bar lock stands an “excellent” chance of saving Watts Bar, Melton Hill, Fort Loudon, and Tellico lakes. If the second barrier is placed at Chickamauga Lock, the chance for success is almost certain, and Chickamauga Lake could also possibly be saved. Yet, TWRA willfully ignores these experts as well as Federal United States Fish and Wildlife guidance which “states” the first action must be to **prevent** silver carp from entering new ecosystems. Guidance goes on to say that trying to manage them in place won’t work.

The economic and ecological devastation of the entire Tennessee River basin will be the legacy of TWRA/TFWC. Every person and business in this region must tell our state, local, federal political leaders, TWRA, TFWC, and the Governor that the “**only**” possible way to save our lakes is to place the first barrier **in front of** the silver carp at Watts Bar Lock, and the second at Chickamauga, and that the TWRA’s reckless and unreasonable recommendation to place barriers behind the carp will staircase them up to our lakes and guarantee economic and ecological devastation—FACT.

Everyone knows that endangered species must be protected at all costs. Well, our silver carp free lakes are indeed an endangered ecosystem, for there are few remaining—therefore they must be protected. If they are protected from the silver carp, they will be the **ONLY** lakes of the Tennessee River Basin free of their economic and ecological devastation. Our endangered lakes must be saved, and barriers behind the silver carp cannot possibly prevent this invasive, destroyer from overtaking our lakes.

The WBEFC has been working extremely hard for years to get the TWRA to work with and recommend to other agencies that the first two barriers must be built in front of the carp, and then work to reduce recruitment of silver carp into already invaded lakes—we have had no success. Simply put, state and federal agencies must do everything possible to ‘prevent’ silver carp from reaching our lakes **before** they stop a few more from entering lakes already invaded.

TWRA/TFWC needs to hear from more than just the WBEFC’s collective voice. Please speak out and help us save our magnificent lakes. See the video on our website WBEFC.ORG

Dr. Timothy Joseph, Chairman, Watts Bar Ecology and Fishery Council.

(Dr. Joseph is a fisheries biologist with extensive experience in ecosystems throughout the U.S., including hundreds of research, fisheries, and ecological projects for State and Federal agencies, and private corporations.