

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Testimony by Greg Genz

President Friends of Pool 2

March 26, 2024

Chairman Hartwell and members of the Council,

Good morning and thank you for giving me your time today.

My name is Greg Genz and I am President of Friends of Pool 2, an organization dedicated to enhancing and promoting the recreational opportunities afforded to the citizens of the Twin Cities. To those who are unfamiliar with Pool 2, it is a designation the Corps of Engineers uses to describe the Mississippi River from Lock and Dam 2 in Hastings, MN to Lock and Dam 1 and includes 25 miles of the Minnesota River from the mouth to Shakopee.

We started Friends of Pool 2 in 2012 because of two issues we saw as negatively impacting our waters. One, the sediment inflow destroying our backwater lakes and channels and, two, more relevant to this meeting, the invasion of what were, at the time, called Asian Carps. With agencies and NGOs in MN focused on the closure of Upper St. Anthony Falls to protect the Central MN Fishery, few resources were being committed to the rest of the State. In a conversation with then Rep. McNamara, he asked me about our resistance to the Lock closure. My response was to ask him what closing the Lock would do to protect the rest of the State. His answer, "Nothing" was our impetus to start fighting for Pool 2. With its hydro morphology of nutrient rich main channel and floodplain lakes, Pool 2 is very similar to the Illinois River. And we all know its story. Up to 90% of the biomass in the Illinois River consists of these Carps. We do not want the same to happen in our area. Our concern seems to be well founded. Since 2015's USAF St. Anthony Lock closure, the Upper Mississippi has seen a variety of plans, but little action to protect local parts of the river.

As some of you know, federal agencies including the EPA and USFWS were instrumental in bringing these Carps to our waterways. The purpose was to assist small communities in cleaning sewage treatment ponds after the Clean Water Act in 1973 and assisting fish farmers in cleaning their ponds of algae, excessive nutrients, vegetation, and disease carrying snails.

Despite being responsible for bringing Carps to us, I have noticed a distinct lack of federal participation in the campaign against the Carps in Minnesota. Having been assured by Chapman of the USGS that the federal government was on it, what I found he was describing were the many studies being funded. There were few actions being federally funded for our area. In 2013, I had the opportunity to be out on the River with Senator Franken. As we were looking at what Rep. McNamara called the 'disco light and sound deterrent' at Lock 1, I asked Senator Franken why most of the federal government's resources seemed to be directed to the Illinois River. His response was to ask what I thought. When I suggested it could be political, he rubbed his chin and said, "I wonder who is from Illinois?"

Since 2002, the Illinois River electrical deterrent at Romeoville, IL has received USACE money to the tune of tens of millions of dollars in annual operational costs. Those don't include the additional capital expenditures for installation and replacement.

Planned installation of a deterrent at Brandon Road Lock and Dam is estimated, after a multimillion-dollar study, to cost \$1.1 billion dollars with the federal government on the hook for 65% of that.

Additionally, temporary deterrents were placed in 2019 at the Barkley Lock on the Cumberland River, in KY and at Lock 19 at Keokuk, IA. Both projects were funded by the Federal EPA, USGS, GLRI, and in kind by USACE. Supported by Senator McConnell, the KY effort has gotten \$40 million in funding this year alone.

I present this information to the Council in support of our position that it is time for those responsible for bringing Carps to our waterways to do their part in helping with the much-needed solutions. We need the deterrent and gate manipulation Professor Sorenson of the University of Minnesota has been championing for years. If the federal government was the reason why these fish are here in the first place and we are talking about placing the deterrent at a federal facility on a federally designated water why aren't the feds participating in the installation and maintenance? Other states are tapping the federal budgets, why aren't we?

I believe the best course of action for the State of MN is to pressure our federal legislators to help like those in Illinois and KY have done, and continue to do, today. It's time to add more support to Congresswoman McCollum's Mississippi River Restoration and Resilience Initiative Act so we on the Upper Mississippi can get more help. During the Obama administration there was a 'Carp Czar', maybe we need to pressure the current administration to place more focus on this issue. The state of Minnesota did not create this mess. We should not be on our own to clean it up.

Friends of Pool 2 will continue to do our part to advocate for the river and call on all who have an interest in protecting our waterways to join us in our efforts. Thank you for your time and support of the Minnesota waterways.

Credentials

Personal involvement in most aspects of MN's campaign against the Carps since the issue reared its head, including:

- Attendance at both of Governor Dayton's Summits related to issue
- Membership on the first Action Plan advisory committee
- Participation in the MNDNR-sponsored commercial netting operation in Pool 2
- Participation in MNDNR's Roundtables
- Participation in meetings with Duane Chapman of the USGS and Peter Sorensen of the University of MN
- Visits to USGS lab in Onalaska, WI for deterrent demonstrations
- Public Education through working at the Science Museum of MN
- Active member of group working on the issues of deterrents on the Chicago Area Waterways
- Research work regarding origins of the Carps in conjunction with former Arkansas Game and Fish Commission biologist
- Onsite observation of sound deterrent installation at Lock 8 in Genoa, WI
- Founding member and current President, Friends of Pool 2
- Member of the technical group for the most recent MN DNR revisions to the Invasive Carp Action Plan (2023).