

Report: If Locks Are Closed to Stop Asian Carp, Economic Impact Will Be \$4.7 Billion Over 20 Years

By: Dave Scriven-Young, Attorney at Peckar & Abramson, P.C.

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On April 7th, DePaul University Professor [Joseph P. Schwieterman](#) released a report entitled "[An Analysis of the Economic Effects of Terminating Operations at the Chicago River Controlling Works and O'Brien Locks on the Chicago Area Waterway System.](#)" This report attempts to quantify the economic impact that would result if Chicago-area locks were closed to prevent Asian carp from reaching Lake Michigan. According to the report:

"The findings show that spending by consumers and commercial shippers on the barge and boat operations that would be affected by closure of the locks has an annual financial impact of \$1.3 billion. This figure is inclusive of multiplier effects related to waterway use but not inclusive of certain employment-related effects, which can only be measured with further study. The economic value lost from permanent closure is estimated to be \$582 million the first year, \$531 annually over the subsequent seven years, and \$155 million annually thereafter. The net present value of these costs, over a 20-year planning horizon at a four percent discount rate, is \$4.7 billion.

"For the first year after closures, the lost value consists of added transportation costs (\$125 million; inclusive of social costs), losses to recreational boaters (\$5 million), consumers of river cruises and tours (\$20 million), municipal departments providing public protection (\$6 million), property owners (\$51 million), and regional agencies needing additional funds for flood-abatement systems (\$375 million). A portion of these losses would be shouldered by industries outside the Chicago metropolitan area, particularly certain ports in the Mississippi River basin that serve the barge transportation industry."

This report bolsters the claim of many who believe that closing the locks would have a devastating effect on the Chicago-area economy. They believe that there are alternative ways to prevent Asian carp from reaching Lake Michigan without closing the locks. Some environmentalists, on the other hand, believe that it will be devastating if Asian carp reach Lake Michigan, and that it is worth the potential economic impact. These contrary opinions are the subject of [a case presently before the U.S. Supreme Court](#), which is supposed to take up the case on the merits this month.

Stay tuned to the Illinois Environmental Law Blog for more news and developments.