



News from the La. Department of Wildlife and Fisheries

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ASIAN CARP CREATING PROBLEMS IN LOUISIANA WATERWAYS

Members of the Asian carp family, mostly bighead and silver carp, have been tied to a number of problems for both fishermen and the fish resources in Louisiana waterways.

These nuisance fish were introduced into the United States in the 1970s to help manage aquaculture ponds and wastewater lagoons. They quickly escaped into the wild and eventually descended into Louisiana waters from the north in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Asian carp are commonly found in Louisiana in the Mississippi, Red and Ouachita rivers and Atchafalaya Basin.

It is the silver carp, most recognized for its jumping ability, that can leap several feet out of the water when disturbed by boat propellers.

Silver carp can grow up to 50 pounds, posing a threat to boaters and their equipment. A silver carp jumping out of the water can result in injury to the operator and damage to the boat, or in the most extreme cases, death to the boater.

Both silver and bighead carp pose a threat to the local Louisiana freshwater fishery by out competing local fish for food. Both of these carp species primarily feed on plankton, which is also the main diet for shad, bigmouth buffalo and paddlefish. Plankton is also the primary food of the larval stages of catfish, bass and other freshwater species.

"These Asian carp have been in Louisiana waters for close to 20 years and are sustaining their populations," said Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) Inland Fisheries Administrator Gary Tilyou. "This is a problem we have to manage to minimize impacts to our natural resources and the people that enjoy our Louisiana waterways."

Included in LDWF's management plan for Asian carp is creating a demand for the white, delicious meat they possess and relaxing the regulations on fishing for these nuisance fish.

On Tuesday, Jan. 12, LDWF along with Chef Philippe Parola will unveil a new marketing plan that will include a name change from Asian carp to "Silverfin". At the event, some local chefs will be preparing silverfin and LDWF will announce the rollout of silverfin products being distributed by Rouses Super Market.

Because these fish feed on plankton, they are not susceptible to traditional angling methods. On Thursday, Jan. 7, LDWF will be presenting the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission a notice of intent (NOI) that, if adopted, will allow fishermen to take Asian carp using dip nets, spears and snagging methods. Additionally, since silver carp can jump into boats, fishermen would be able to use their boats as a legal catching method. Asian carp also have no size or possession limits.

"We will never be able to fully eradicate these fish, so we are trying to make the best out of what these fish have to offer," said Tilyou. "By creating a demand for the meat, we hope to create a commercial and recreational freshwater fishing industry for Asian carp."

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