

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 723

By Yager

A RESOLUTION to urge the federal government, the Tennessee Valley Authority, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency to aggressively assist in addressing the Asian carp invasion of Tennessee waterways.

WHEREAS, according to the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, there are four species of Asian carp in the United States and in Tennessee, including bighead carp, silver carp, black carp, and grass carp. All four species of Asian carp were imported into the United States for various aquaculture projects located in the Mississippi River delta from which the carp escaped during high floods. The Asian carp migrated into Tennessee waters through river dam locks and spillways; and

WHEREAS, sterilized grass carp may be used in ponds for vegetation control, but recent testing of grass carp in wild populations has revealed that many of these fish are not the sterile variety; and

WHEREAS, the bighead and silver carp compete with native fish species for food by consuming microscopic algae and zooplankton. Black carp may eat many species of snails and mussels that are native to Tennessee. Grass carp eat vegetation that provides cover for sportfish such as largemouth bass, crappie, and bluegill; and

WHEREAS, all species of Asian carp that have entered Tennessee waters compete for space with native fish species. Depending on the species, Asian carp may grow up to 100 pounds; and

WHEREAS, by out-competing native fish for limited resources, Asian carp have the ability to reduce growth rates of native fish or displace them almost completely; and

WHEREAS, in addition to threatening the continued viability of native fish, snail, and mussel populations, the silver carp poses a danger to boaters, fishers, water-skiers, and other persons who use the waters of Tennessee for recreational purposes. The silver carp is known to jump when disturbed by boats. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, a collision between boaters and jumping silver carp has the potential to cause human fatalities; and

WHEREAS, the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency website states the following with regard to management of the Asian carp invasion: "Asian carp are a national problem and control of carp is a national effort. Tennessee representatives actively serve on the Ohio River Asian Carp Task Force where they work collaboratively with other state representatives, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Tennessee Valley Authority, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in the Ohio Basin to make the best use of the limited federal dollars that are available for carp control in our basin. Tennessee is also an active participant in the Mississippi River Interstate Cooperative Resource Association, an organization of 28 states and federal agencies that are working together to lobby for additional carp management funds."; and

WHEREAS, in November 2019, the U.S. Senate included in its "minibus" appropriations package funding sought by Tennessee Senator Lamar Alexander to help prevent the spread of Asian carp into the Mississippi River Basin; and

WHEREAS, the continued support of the federal government and the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency is vital to successfully controlling the Asian carp; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we hereby urge the President of the United States, Congress, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Tennessee Valley Authority, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency to provide assistance, including, but not limited to, the provision of assistance to local organizations, such as the Chamber of Commerce, to aggressively address the Asian carp invasion of Tennessee waterways.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that certified copies of this resolution be prepared and transmitted to the President of the United States, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, the Majority Leader of the United States Senate, the Tennessee congressional delegation, the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the members of the Board of Directors for the Tennessee Valley Authority, the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Tennessee Valley Authority, the Commanding General of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the members of the Tennessee Fish and Wildlife Commission, and the Executive Director of the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency.