

Upstream Migration of Asian Carp

Bill Waldrop March 2020

Four varieties of an invasive species of Asian Carp currently populate the five most downstream reservoirs of the Tennessee River. These fish have migrated from the Ohio River where they thrive and are prevalent throughout the Mississippi River Basin. Without intervention, they will likely continue to migrate upstream primarily through the navigation locks to Fort Loudoun and Tellico Reservoirs and create economic and ecological damage. However, none of these fish have been confirmed upstream of Guntersville Reservoir in North Alabama. One reported sighting of a single Asian Carp near Chattanooga has not been substantiated after extensive monitoring of Chickamauga Reservoir by field staff of both the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) and the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). The distance and dams separating known locations downstream from Tellico Reservoir allow time for developing and implementing an effective containment strategy.

Both TWRA and TVA are participating in a multimillion-dollar field-testing project in Northern KY along with fisheries biologists of 28 states, four federal agencies, and numerous universities. The goal of this large-scale project is to better understand behavior of Asian Carp and to evaluate and perfect safe and efficient barriers (i.e., bubble and sound) to block upstream migration through locks. Preliminary results from field-testing of several types of barriers will be made available to TVA in about a year. TVA will evaluate the most promising barriers by preparing an Environmental Assessment. The Environmental Assessment allows comments from other state and federal agencies as well as the public to avoid unintentional safety and environmental consequences. The most promising barrier will be applied to ten navigation locks throughout the Tennessee River system with a potential cost of millions of dollars. WATeR will continue to monitor this process and provide comments when appropriate.

