

Economic Factors Concerning Separation

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The Great Lakes are a national treasure and an economic asset worth protecting

The Great Lakes are a national treasure and a vital economic asset for the 36 million people who live in the basin. The lakes support 1.5 million jobs that generate \$62 billion in wages annually. Over 4 million recreational boats are registered in the region and nearly \$16 billion is spent annually on boating trips and equipment. The Great Lakes commercial and sport fishery generates \$7 billion in economic activity each year.

The cost of not taking action to protect the Great Lakes

The country is investing billions of dollars to clean up the Great Lakes and leverage them as a vital part of our regional economic infrastructure through various programs including the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. The lakes provide a unique competitive advantage for our region and shoreline communities are prime areas for economic growth. *Asian carp and other aquatic invasive species threaten a key part of our cultural identity and our ability to attract tourists and business.*

Separation will prevent economic damages and avoid costs from future AIS invasions

Aquatic invasive species cost the Great Lakes region—and our nation as a whole—millions of dollars each year. Invasive species in the Great Lakes are estimated to cost \$150 million annually and zebra mussels cost our country up to \$500 million annually. We are currently spending approximately \$50 million a year to control Asian carp. Preventing future AIS invasions with similar impacts could generate up to \$9.5 billion in long-term savings. *Separation will shut the door on a major pathway for AIS introductions and avoid future economic damage to both the Great Lakes and Mississippi River basins.*

Separation will generate significant benefits beyond stopping Asian carp

Separation involves investments that will improve water quality, flood protection and transportation in the Chicago area. Chicago's waterways face significant challenges in these areas. Leaders in the Chicago area are already investing in the waterway system and separation can build on and support these investments. *The Chicago waterway system is evolving and separation can be integrated into a broader effort underway to improve water quality, prevent flooding and enhance transportation.*

Modernized shipping facilities can leverage new economic opportunities for Chicago

Commercial shipping on Chicago's waterways has declined in recent years and the system is an underutilized part of the region's transportation network. The separation alternatives include investments that will modernize shipping infrastructure and help relieve traffic congestion, move freight, and contribute to the regional economy. These improvements can take advantage of increased shipping of containers on barges up the Mississippi River anticipated from the expansion of the Panama Canal. Overall, transporting shipping containers in the Great Lakes region, by all modes, is expected to double by 2050. However, Chicago's ports currently are not equipped to serve this growing market. *Modernizing shipping facilities is projected to generate over \$400 million in economic benefits for Chicago-area ports.*

Infrastructure investments will create jobs

The infrastructure investments included in the separation alternatives are projected to generate between 2,900 and 7,500 jobs annually over a 50-year period.