**AYC Ecology North**

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**Army draws new battle line against Asian carp**

By Paul Merrion, Crain’s Chicago Business

The war to keep Asian carp out of Lake Michigan is moving to a new battleground.

The Army Corps of Engineers wants to build a barrier in the Des Plaines River at the Brandon Road Lock and Dam near Joliet. It would be far cheaper and easier than the permanent separation of the Chicago waterway system from the lake, which other Great Lakes states and environmentalists have said is the ultimate solution.

But total separation would disrupt the barge industry and local firms that depend on it, not to mention a price tag that ranges up to $25 billion.

The proposed barrier would use high-speed water circulation or other technology and is expected to cost roughly $25 million.

“Some of the alternatives had in mind this Brandon Road site,” said Dave Wethington, project manager at the Army Corps of Engineers in Chicago.

**ELECTRIC BARRIER**

If it works, the proposed barrier would keep Asian carp and other unwanted species from getting to the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal, where the only thing stopping them from getting to Lake Michigan is an [**older barrier**](http://www.chicagobusiness.com/article/20120721/ISSUE01/307219981/chicago-businesses-are-caught-in-a-net-of-asian-carp) built by the corps about five miles east that tries to block fish by electrifying the water. Critics have said that solution is inadequate.

“The electric barrier is robust, but we're looking at other technologies as well,” Wethington added. “There's going to be some residual risk, no matter what kind of controls” are put in place.

The problem is that carp eggs can drift undeterred through an electric barrier, while the proposed barrier would keep free-floating organisms out.

That barrier also would stop Asian carp from getting to the point where the Des Plaines River and the Sanitary Canal meet. Recent studies have shown that during heavy rains the river could overflow its banks, allowing fish to move into the canal.

The plan will require an environment impact statement, including potential cost, which is expected to be in the ballpark of the cost of the electric barrier in the canal, or roughly $25 million, Wethington said.

The first step will be two public comment sessions at Argonne National Laboratory in south suburban Lemont Dec. 6 and at the University of Chicago's Gleacher Center in downtown Chicago Dec. 9.