

DEBBIE DINGELL
12TH DISTRICT, MICHIGAN

116 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-4071

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY AND COMMERCE
SUBCOMMITTEES ON
HEALTH
ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE
COMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY
CONSUMER PROTECTION AND COMMERCE

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
NATURAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEES ON
NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS AND PUBLIC LANDS
OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

May 3, 2019

DISTRICT OFFICES:
18855 WEST OUTER DRIVE
SUITE 103-E
DEARBORN, MI 48124
(313) 278-2938

301 WEST MICHIGAN AVENUE
SUITE 400
YPSILANTI, MI 48197
(734) 481-1100

WEBSITE: DEBBIEDINGELL.HOUSE.GOV

Lieutenant General Todd T. Semonite
Commanding General
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20314-1000

The Honorable Andrew Wheeler
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington D.C. 20460

Dear Lieutenant General Semonite and Administrator Wheeler:

This letter is being sent to express concern and request information regarding an ongoing dredging project by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in the Old Channel of the Lower Rouge River in Southeast Michigan. A number of constituents and stakeholders in my district who rely on water intake from the river are concerned with water quality and availability.

It is my understanding, the Army Corps of Engineers awarded a contract in September 2018, in partnership with EPA, for dredging and cleanup of contaminated sediments from the Lower Rouge River through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. This site is located in an important Area of Concern that needs remediation. Full dredging operations are set to begin in 2019 and expected to last 12 months.

In my district, there are industrial facilities who use the water supply from the Rouge River for various fire safety and cooling purposes, including cooling fluids, bearings, and air. Ensuring these companies have continued access to a quality water source during the lifetime of this dredging operation project is vital to the health of the environment and local economy.

In several instances, since this contract was awarded, companies approved for using the water supply near the dredging operation have experienced elevated mercury samples and buildup of sediment in piping systems used for water intake. These are serious concerns with many potential environmental and human health impacts. There has been at least one instance of a state issued violation notice for a mercury exceedance as well, which is not believed to have originated with the permittee. Also, sediment buildup as a result of the dredging process can damage the industries operation, or worst, require closures, which could have a significant, negative economic impact.

These continued concerns have been brought to my attention and need to be addressed seriously. Also, these concerns have been shared directly with the Army Corps of Engineers, EPA, and the

Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (now known as the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy).

As USACE and EPA work to clean up the Rouge River it is critical we are doing so in a smart and effective way that will not lead to greater environmental pollution or hurt our economy in the process.

The residents nearby and companies along the Lower Rouge River need certainty that this important dredging project has no adverse public health or economic effects that could harm our way of life. They entrust us all with protecting these Michigan communities. Thank you in advance for your attention and work on this important matter. We look forward to a full response to these concerns and to learn what specific actions are being taken by the Army Corps of Engineers and EPA.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Debbie Dingell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

DEBBIE DINGELL
Member of Congress

cc:

Ms. Liesl Eichler Clark, Director, Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy