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August 21, 2019

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

Dear Administrator Wheeler,

This letter is in regard to the closure of the Large Lakes Research Station on Grosse Ile, Michigan. Today, August 21, marks the final day employees will be working from the station on Grosse Ile before being consolidated with the Ann Arbor office.

There continues to be serious concerns about the potential impact on the Great Lakes and the surrounding environment of this decision. This is the station that has led the cleanup of hazardous waste sites and after major environmental events, for example the Flint drinking water crisis. The work there has also included Criminal Investigation Division investigations of such crimes as illegal storage and disposal of hazardous waste, the improper removal of asbestos, the illegal export of electronic waste, and public corruption.

The kind of work that has been done at Grosse Ile requires rapid response to emergency situations. The more distant relocation of this office could impose longer drive times to emergencies. I will continue to push for efforts that places EPA employees in strategic locations critical to the Great Lakes and rivers in Southeast Michigan.

Further, the consolidation of Grosse Ile and Ann Arbor stations has also raised concerns about employee workplace safety and security. Current plans would have Grosse Ile employees work in prefabricated workstations placed in a warehouse. Employees have raised questions about adequate ventilation and air quality standards in the workspaces. As Administrator of the EPA, you of all people must know that everyone deserves to work in a space that meets minimum air quality standards, and this is even more important for the employees tasked with ensuring our communities air and water quality standards.

It is also disturbing that an imposed contract with AFGE employees has placed restrictions on their use of official time and prevented union representatives from asking management critical questions about the quality of air and the standards in their new workspace.

It is imperative that you and the EPA allow AFGE representatives to review the results of air quality testing being done in the Ann Arbor space to ensure a safe workplace and allow AFGE representatives to ask these questions when they can reasonably get the answers during the work day. It is not acceptable that EPA employees, whose job it is to protect our environment are being kept in the dark on the safety of their own work space.

Sincerely,



Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress

CC: Cathy Stepp, Regional Administrator for EPA Region 5