

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 13, 2023

Mr. Daniel Eichinger
Acting Director
Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy
Constitution Hall
525 West Allegan Street
P.O. Box 30473
Lansing, MI 48909-7973

Dear Acting Director Eichinger:

The State of Michigan has been leading the country in tackling forever chemicals, but the contamination of toxic per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) at many sites in Michigan is still a serious, continuing threat to the long-term health of communities across the state. This letter is being sent to express concerns regarding the PFAS remediation plan for one of the prime sources of PFAS contamination, the former Wolverine World Wide, Inc. tannery site in Rockford, Michigan. The proposed plan, the Tannery Interceptor Response Activity Plan, is insufficient to adequately clean-up this site and prevent the spread of these harmful forever chemicals into the Rogue River and surrounding environment.

As the lead author of the PFAS Action Act and one of the most active members in the U.S. House of Representatives to address the PFAS crisis nationwide, I urge the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) to reject current remediation plan proposed by Wolverine World Wide, Inc. and work to ensure that the company submits, as well as ultimately completes, the strongest plan possible to protect our water and the health of every Michigander. Too many communities across Michigan have been forced to live with the health and economic consequences of corporations failing to uphold their responsibility to safely dispose of toxic waste and dangerous chemicals. Throughout Southeast Michigan, I must regularly work with federal, state, and local officials to address chemical leaks and spills in the Huron and Detroit Rivers, and we cannot continue to repeat the same mistakes with insufficient remediation plans.

Wolverine World Wide, Inc.'s former tannery site in Rockford and the surrounding waste disposal areas have contaminated drinking water sources and greatly impacted local residents, causing serious health complications. Given the extensive body of scientific evidence that even small amounts of PFAS chemicals cause cancer, birth defects, and many other negative effects, it is critical that remediation efforts reduce the amount of contamination as much as possible and for clean-up plans to include robust monitoring to measure progress toward that goal. The lack of sufficient testing and monitoring in the Wolverine World Wide, Inc. plan is one of the top concerns voiced by impacted community members and independent experts and should be addressed in a final plan.

In addition to the inadequate measurement and monitoring in the plan, I am also concerned about the location and effectiveness of the interceptor system to prevent dangerous levels of PFAS from entering nearby water bodies. EGLE must conduct a thorough technical review to determine if the distance to the Rogue River, and the effectiveness of the trench design, is actually effective at preventing further water contamination.

Finally, I share the concerns from the surrounding community and environmental advocates who are troubled by the delays that continue to stall clean-up solutions from being implemented. EGLE has a responsibility to help hold Wolverine World Wide, Inc. accountable and ensure that these contaminated locations are returned to the community in a timely manner for future productive uses that are safe for the environment and public health.

Thank you in advance for Michigan's actions and leadership to address forever chemicals. We share a collective responsibility to protect our environment and public health. Therefore, it is of paramount importance that we ensure the clean-up of contaminated sites across Michigan—like the former Wolverine World Wide, Inc. tannery site in Rockford—by the parties responsible for the pollution are carried out swiftly and comprehensively in order to prevent further exposure and mitigate the existing health risks. But it is also important to do so to hold polluters accountable.

I stand ready to continue working with you and all stakeholder to ensure future generations are protected from PFAS contamination, and I respectfully call on EGLE to reject the plan proposed by Wolverine World Wide, Inc., as well as do everything in your power to ensure the strongest clean-up plan possible is finalized and completed. Thank you in advance for considering this request.

Sincerely,



Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress