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

July 5, 2023

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Mr. Aaron Keatley
Acting Director
Michigan Department of Environment,
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Lansing, MI 48909-7973

The Honorable Debra Shore
Regional Administrator
U.S. EPA Region 5
77 W. Jackson Blvd.
Chicago, IL 60604

Dear Acting Director Keatley and Administrator Shore:

This letter is to express deep concerns on behalf of the Downriver communities I represent regarding the reports of chemical leachate emanating from the northern area of the former McLouth Steel property—owned by the Riverview-Trenton Railroad Company (RTRR)—and polluting the surrounding watershed. It is our shared responsibility to protect human health and the environment as this site is redeveloped and I urge both the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to immediately address this harmful pollution.

Citizens of my district have been reporting to me for several months about seeing white-colored leachate along Jefferson Avenue and in Monguagon Creek. I have raised these leachate concerns directly with EGLE as well, as you know, but while I appreciate EGLE's efforts to keep me informed on the McLouth Steel site, I am concerned more attention and focus on this issue is needed. According to a recent report¹, state of Michigan officials have identified the substance, which was seen released from this site in March 2023, as calcium hydroxide. State officials have also reported dead fish in the Monguagon Creek and caustic pH levels high enough to cause skin burns.

It is my understanding that the state does not have clear knowledge of how long this has been happening or how much calcium hydroxide has contributed to the elevated pH levels at this site over the years. It troubles me that the company was permitted to dig through the EPA installed cap and install railroad lines in the same area found to have leachate chemicals more than ten

¹ Detroit News. "Compound seeping from former McLouth Steel site into creek prompts worries." Detroit News, 2 July 2023, www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/wayne-county/2023/07/02/compound-leaking-former-mclouth-steel-site-monguagon-creek-prompts-worries-riverview/70365759007.

years ago. Right now, it is important for both EGLE—who is the lead agency overseeing this site—and EPA to jointly act to determine the source of this leachate, why it is happening, and how to swiftly address it moving forward. It is unacceptable for this level of pollution to continue.

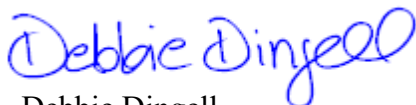
Communication is vital to building trust across a community and providing residents with the knowledge to protect themselves. While I am very familiar with the Superfund Community Advisory Group, having participated in the workshops when it was formed, it is not clear to the community or me how the public can participate in providing input on the Riverview-Trenton cleanup process, how EGLE will evaluate remedial alternatives, or the results of the site characterization.

The memorandum of understanding between the EPA and EGLE says, “corrective actions at the RTRR Facility will achieve the same performance standards for the protection of human health and the environment [as the southern NPL].” Achieving this standard requires public input, so I ask you to redouble all efforts to fully engage the citizens of Riverview, Trenton, and Grosse Ile on both the northern and southern remediations.

The first phase of the former McLouth Steel cleanup and its addition to the Superfund National Priorities List was a historic win for Downriver. Still, there is a reason the former McLouth Steel property remains under EPA and EGLE oversight and cleanup authorities—the job is not done, and much more work is required. Work that must be done safely and carried out with input from residents.

Following these reports, and behalf of all those who call Downriver home, I urge EGLE and EPA to work jointly on immediate actions to protect the public and the Detroit River, and to fully inform the community of the risks and timelines for a cleanup.

Sincerely,



Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress