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

September 3, 2025

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Mr. Scott Bowen  
Director  
Michigan Department of Natural Resources  
Executive Division  
P.O. Box 30028  
Lansing, MI 48909-7528

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

Mr. Ethan Baker  
Chair  
Great Lakes Fishery Commission  
2200 Commonwealth Boulevard, Suite 100  
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Mr. John Paul Rea  
Chair  
Huron-Clinton Metroparks  
1300 High Ridge Drive  
Brighton, MI 48114-9058

Dear Director Bowen, Director Roos, Chair Baker, and Chair Rea:

This letter is to request information regarding the future of the Flat Rock Dam. This dam is receiving much attention in our Downriver communities, and there is conflicting information as well as a number of issues that require clarification and answers.

This is a complex issue, and I am someone who cares deeply about protecting our natural resources and preserving them for future generations. The Huron River is an important 130-mile-long river in southeastern Michigan that flows through much of my district into Lake Erie. It is associated with 13 parks, game areas, and recreation areas, and passes through the cities of Dexter, Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, Belleville, Flat Rock, and Rockwood, which were developed along its banks. Most of these cities are in Michigan's Sixth Congressional District, which I represent. My understanding is that the Huron River has many dams — 19 on the main stream and at least 96 throughout the entire system — and they are built to slightly increase and maintain water levels in existing lakes to provide drought protection and flood control.

Dams have positive and negative impacts, which make these discussions complex, and answers to these complex questions are not simple. They provide benefits like water storage, flood control, and renewable energy. Dams can also pose significant environmental challenges in the preservation of our natural resources, which is a topic of extensive conversation.

As you know, the Huron River is heavily fished by sportsmen for rock bass, sunfish, bluegill, black crappie, white bass, smallmouth bass, largemouth bass, northern pike, walleye, catfish, trout, muskie, Coho salmon, Chinook salmon, and Steelhead, and suckers and carp are also common fish in the river.

Protecting these waters requires balancing restoration, maintenance, public safety, history, and access. My goal is to ensure the community has clear and objective information about this process, the options under consideration, and a path forward. It is clear that any decision regarding the Flat Rock Dam will have a lasting impact on our Downriver communities and the river corridor for generations to come. It is important that the community has clear facts, understands the issues, stays informed, has the ability to ask thoughtful questions, and be engaged in public process.

To that end, I am asking many of the questions that have been raised, seeking straightforward answers that would be shared with all interested parties. I ask that you please respond to these questions by October 3, 2025:

- What is the current condition of the Flat Rock Dam?
- How many times has the dam been repaired, and what was the nature of those repairs?
- Have failure scenarios been modeled, and is there concern about catastrophic failure?
- What monitoring measures are currently in place for the Flat Rock Dam to ensure safety in the interim?
- What does “partial removal” entail, and how does it differ from full removal?
- What are the implications of leaving the dam in place without removal?
- Can you provide a perspective on the long-term outlook of the Flat Rock Dam?
- How would each option (removal, partial removal, or no action) affect the river’s flow?
- How do the costs, benefits, and ecological impacts of constructing a fish ladder compare with the alternatives of partial removal, full removal, or leaving the dam in place, and to what extent would a fish ladder meaningfully improve fish passage relative to these other options?
- Is the dam structurally or functionally tied to the railroad bridge in any way?

- How would each dam alternative (no action, partial removal, full removal) impact state-listed or federally-listed threatened or endangered species?
- What are the projected costs of each option, and has funding been identified?
- How would each dam alternative create a more biodiverse environment for the river watershed?
- What would the implications be for aquatic biodiversity and spawning conditions?
- Has any sediment testing been conducted to date, and what analyses have been completed on the sediment, and how might those findings inform the next steps?
- Will additional testing be required depending on the decision reached, and will sediment removal be necessary as part of any option under consideration?

Your expertise is essential in helping the Downriver community understand the implications of these decisions. Thank you for your continued commitment to protecting Michigan's natural resources, and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Debbie Dingell  
Member of Congress