

DEBBIE DINGELL  
12TH DISTRICT, MICHIGAN

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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON  
ENERGY AND COMMERCE

SUBCOMMITTEES ON  
COMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY  
DIGITAL COMMERCE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION  
ENVIRONMENT

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

July 27, 2018

DISTRICT OFFICES:

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

Dear Acting Administrator Wheeler:

This letter is in regard to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) planned closure of the Large Lakes Research Station in Grosse Ile, Michigan. Its closure could be detrimental to the region, workforce, and the EPA's ability to carry out its core mission to protect human health and the environment. As we approach fiscal year (FY) 2019, more clarity on the EPA's decision is needed and a full status report of the timing of this closure is requested.

The location on Grosse Ile has had a long history and evolving mission in service to the country. Starting in the 1920s, it served as Naval Air Station Grosse Ile and then transitioned in the 1960s to a laboratory for the Public Health Service before EPA took it over in the 1970s as a center for addressing pollutants and polluting activities on freshwater ecological systems.

Today, the Large Lakes Research Station is the base of operations for EPA first responders in the region. These hardworking men and women lead cleanup efforts at hazardous waste sites and are on call to respond to major environmental events, for instance the Marathon refinery fire, Enbridge Line 6 rupture, McLouth Superfund sites, investigating former Detroit lead smelters, and the Flint drinking water crisis. In addition, the Station houses the Criminal Investigation Division that investigates such crimes as illegal storage and disposal of hazardous waste, improper removal of asbestos, illegal export of electronic waste, public corruption, and EPA program fraud. It also houses the Great Lakes National Program Office, which, together with federal, state, tribal, local, and industry partners, works to restore and maintain the Great Lakes Ecosystem.

It is my understanding the station was expected to close originally in August 2018 and consolidated with the EPA's National Vehicle and Fuel Emissions Laboratory in Ann Arbor. This move has been delayed many times and now has been postponed until March 2019. Constituents, stakeholders, and local governments in my district are growing more concern each day and fear the loss of this station will not only affect their livelihoods, communities, and jobs, but it will weaken the EPA's ability to protect public health and the environment in the surrounding region. Attached to this letter are two resolutions supporting the EPA's On-Scene Coordinators Office on Grosse Ile, for your reference and consideration.

In addition, and on behalf of my constituents, please answer the following questions regarding the EPA's decision to close and relocate the Large Lakes Research Station:

1. What evaluation was used to determine the closure for Large Lakes Research Station?
2. What assistance is being provided to affected employees?
3. Many are concerned that the closure and move to Ann Arbor will result in a significant delay for emergency responders. Has EPA studied how this move and consolidation will impact emergency response times for environmental emergencies across the region?
4. In the past, EPA policy had allowed emergency responders at the Large Lakes Research Station to take their emergency vehicles home when on call to improve response times. Has EPA studied, or would EPA consider reinstating this policy moving forward?
5. As you know, in the FY18 Omnibus bill's explanatory statement, it made clear the "Committees do not expect the Agency [EPA] to consolidate or close any regional offices in fiscal year 2018," and "does not include any of the requested funds for workforce reshaping."<sup>1</sup> Additionally, in testimony before the House Appropriations Committee on April 26, 2018, former EPA Administrator Pruitt stated that he was revisiting all planned office closures and would reconsider whether closure was indeed necessary or beneficial.<sup>2</sup> As the new acting administrator, are you committed to carrying out this same commitment to review all plans to close EPA regional offices? And should you deem that any EPA offices need to be closed in FY2019 or beyond, will you submit a programing request to Congress first as Administrator Pruitt committed to doing early this year?
6. Three years ago, the EPA issued its "Conclusion of the EPA Lab Study: EPA Synthesis of Findings and Recommended Actions." The presentation showed the EPA took in outside expert advice; balanced the EPA's research, science, and technical support needs; and addressed Executive guidance and GAO recommendations to improve cost-effectiveness and reduce its footprint. The EPA determined the optimal scenario included keeping the Grosse Ile office as a field station. This assessment was a 30-year life-cycle review of Agency assets, what changed? Has there been another similar comprehensive review?

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<sup>1</sup> H.R.1625 Vehicle for Consolidated Appropriations Act 2018, DIVISION G, Explanatory Statement, p. 50; <https://docs.house.gov/billssthisweek/20180319/DIV%20G%20INTERIOR%20SOM%20FY18%20OMNI.OCR.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies, *FY 2019 Budget Hearing - Environmental Protection Agency*, April 26, 2018; <https://appropriations.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=395262>

Thank you in advance for considering this important request that matters to many of my constituents. Any additional information you can provide me on the status of this office moving forward would be appreciated.

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

RESOLUTION  
OF THE DCC BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
May 3, 2018

Support the retention of the  
On-Scene Coordinator Office, Emergency Response Branch,  
Region 5 Response Section 1  
United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in the Downriver Area

- WHEREAS, the Downriver Community Conference (DCC), a consortium of twenty Downriver communities in Wayne County whose total population exceeds 500,000, has joined in an effort to improve local government and enhance the quality of life for area residents through municipal cooperation; and
- WHEREAS, the mission of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is to protect human health and to safeguard the natural environment; and
- WHEREAS, a Satellite office of Response Section 1, On-Scene Coordinators has been established within the Downriver area in the EPA building in Grosse Ile Township since the early 1970's; and
- WHEREAS, the majority of Region 5, Response Section 1 incidents occur along the I-75 corridor between Toledo and Detroit; and
- WHEREAS, the relocation of the Section 1 On-Scene Coordinators to the proposed Ann Arbor site would delay responses to such incidents, resulting in increased risk to human and environmental health; and
- WHEREAS, the mission of the On-Scene Coordinators is more likely to be successfully executed from its Grosse Ile location, which is located outside of a likely target of a mass casualty attack, especially a densely populated urban area; and
- WHEREAS, it is in the best interests of the residents and businesses of the Downriver area of Southeast Michigan to keep the On-Scene Coordinators based in its present location, where a timely response to an event is possible.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Downriver Community Conference Board of Directors requests that Region 5 of the Environmental Protection Agency retain the presence of their On-Scene Coordinator office in their present location in Grosse Ile Township.

CERTIFICATION

The undersigned duly qualified Board Secretary of the Downriver Community Conference certifies that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of a resolution adopted at a legally convened meeting of the Board of the Downriver Community Conference held on May 3, 2018, and that said resolution has not been rescinded.

  
Tim Keyes, Board Secretary

REGULAR MEETING OF THE RIVERVIEW CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF RIVERVIEW, WAYNE COUNTY, MICHIGAN  
HELD ON MONDAY, JULY 16, 2018 A.D.  
IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS OF  
THE PETER ROTTEVEEL MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
14100 CIVIC PARK DRIVE, RIVERVIEW, MICHIGAN 48193-7689

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 p.m.

Presiding: Mayor Swift

Present: Councilmembers Coffey, Towle, Elmer Trombley, James Trombley, Workman

Excused: Councilmember Blanchette (Vacation)

At the regular meeting of the Riverview City Council, the following resolution was offered:

Motion by Councilmember Elmer Trombley, seconded by Councilmember Workman, that Resolution 18-15, To Support the Retention of the On-Scene Coordinator Office of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (PA) in Grosse Ile Township, be Adopted.

RESOLUTION NO. 18-15  
RESOLUTION TO SUPPORT THE RETENTION OF THE  
ON-SCENE COORDINATOR OFFICE, EMERGENCY RESPONSE BRANCH,  
REGION 5 RESPONSE SECTION 1  
UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY (EPA)  
IN THE DOWNRIVER AREA

WHEREAS, the City of Riverview, a municipality located in Wayne County whose population exceeds 12,000, has joined in an effort to improve local government and enhance the quality of life for area residents through municipal cooperation; and

WHEREAS, the mission of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is to protect human health and to safeguard the natural environment; and

WHEREAS, a Satellite office of Response Section 1, On-Scene Coordinators has been established within the Downriver area in the EPA building in Grosse Ile Township since the early 1970's; and

WHEREAS, the majority of Region 5, Response Section 1 incidents occur along the I-75 corridor between Toledo and Detroit; and

WHEREAS, the relocation of the Section 1 On-Scene Coordinators to the proposed Ann Arbor site would delay responses to such incidents, resulting in increased risk to human and environmental health; and

WHEREAS, the mission of the On-Scene Coordinators is more likely to be successfully executed from its Grosse Ile location, which is located outside of a likely target of a mass casualty attack, especially a densely populated urban area; and

WHEREAS, it is in the best interests of the residents and businesses of the Downriver area of Southeast Michigan to keep the On-Scene Coordinators based in its present location, where a timely response to an event is possible.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Riverview City Council requests that Region 5 of the Environmental Protection Agency retain the presence of their On-Scene Coordinator office in their present location in Grosse Ile Township.

AYES: Mayor Swift, Councilmembers Coffey, Towle, Elmer Trombley, James Trombley, Workman

NAYS: None.

EXCUSED: Councilmember Blanchette

ADOPTED this 16<sup>th</sup> day of July, 2018.

ATTEST:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Andrew M. Swift, Mayor

#### CERTIFICATION

The undersigned duly qualified City Clerk of the City of Riverview certifies that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of a resolution adopted at a legally convened meeting of the City Council of the City of Riverview held on July 16, 2018, and that said resolution has not been rescinded.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Cynthia M. Hutchison, City Clerk