



To:  
Governor Whitmer  
Representative Witwer  
Senator Anthony  
Representative Hood  
Senator Irwin

CC: State Budget Director Harkins, Senior Advisor Cook

Subject: Urgent need to make non-federal match funding on contaminated sediment remediation in the Detroit and Rouge Rivers

Dear Governor, Appropriations Chairs Witwer and Anthony, and EGLE Subcommittee Chairs Hood and Irwin,

Recently, the State of the Strait Report ([State of the Strait 2023 | Great Lakes Institute for Environmental Research](#)) issued a call to action to clean up long-standing contaminated sediments in the Detroit and Rouge Rivers – two Great Lakes Areas of Concern. As you may have heard, the U.S. EPA and Michigan EGLE identified up to 5.1 million cubic meters of contaminated sediments on the U.S. side of the Detroit River that need remediation. Additionally, an estimated 344,800 cubic meters of contaminated sediment also require remediation in the lower part of the main stem of the Rouge River.

There is good news: on November 15, 2021, President Biden signed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) (Public Law 117-58, also known as the “Bipartisan Infrastructure Law”) into law, a portion of which allocates over \$1 billion in direct funding to support legacy polluted sediment cleanup efforts in the Great Lakes, specifically targeting Areas of Concern. These allocated dollars will directly provide 65% of the funding requirements for cleanup efforts in the Detroit and Rouge Rivers, both Areas of Concern. The catch: **these funds require a 35% non-federal match.**

For the Detroit River, U.S. EPA and EGLE staff estimate the total cost of sediment remediation at over \$900 million. Of that total cost, they are hopeful that over \$580 million will be covered by the U.S. EPA through the Great Lakes Legacy Act and \$245 million will be covered by

industrial partners. **That leaves approximately \$75 million needed to cover all the likely orphan sites in the Detroit River.**

For the Rouge River, U.S. EPA and EGLE staff are estimating the total cost of sediment remediation at over \$470 million. Of that total project cost they are hopeful that over \$254 million will be covered by the U.S. EPA through the Great Lakes Legacy Act and \$200 million will be covered by industrial partners. **That leaves approximately \$25 million needed to cover all the likely orphan sites in the Rouge River.**

**We have a unique opportunity to bridge this gap today! We ask state legislators to earmark the \$100 million in bridge funding needed to provide the 35% cost share for the known orphan sites in the Detroit and Rouge Rivers.**

Experience throughout the Great Lakes has shown that remediating contaminated sediments can lead to restoring habitats that leads to reconnecting people with water through greenways and water trails that leads to community and economic revitalization. Simply put, investing in remediation means investing in revitalization.

For more than a half century, historically overburdened communities have been walled off from their neighborhood rivers and adjacent greenspace. Contaminated sediment lying quietly beneath the waters of the Detroit and Rouge Rivers pose major hurdles for community efforts to restore a relationship with these important natural resources. Communities like Southwest Detroit, River Rouge, and Ecorse, to name a few, have been waiting for decades for consequential responses to long-standing issues of poor air quality, contaminated sediments, contamination associated with industrial brownfields, noise pollution from truck traffic, and water inequity. These residents deserve meaningful action and improvement in their ecosystems, communities, and lives, and to see movement toward a more sustainable and just society. This investment will be the first 'domino' needed to move forward with tangible community investments including access to green spaces, non motorized trails, economic redevelopment and more.

The Minnesota State Bond program provided \$25 million in the St. Louis River Area of Concern in Duluth, and industrial partners provided \$100 million to help make non-federal match requirements. In Michigan, we recommend that there be a similar "special appropriation" to Michigan EGLE to help make the necessary match on this sediment remediation.

**With only five years remaining to spend down federal Great Lakes Legacy Act funding,** we ask that legislators consider this historic opportunity and **see the urgency to support earmarking these non-federal match dollars.** If this window of opportunity is missed, there is no guarantee that comparable federal money will be available

in the future.

We ask that Michigan legislators consider their important role in solving a long-standing pollution challenge in our region. We have a once-in-a-century opportunity to address it for both present and future generations.

Thank you for considering this urgent need.

Signed,

Michigan Environmental Council  
Conan Smith, President & CEO

Great Lakes Water Authority  
Sue Coffey, PE, CEO

University of Michigan-Dearborn  
Domenico Grasso, Chancellor

Detroit Riverfront Conservancy  
Mark C. Wallace, President & CEO

Friends of the Rouge  
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Southwest Detroit Environmental Vision  
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Detroit River Canadian Cleanup  
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Sierra Club Michigan Chapter  
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Precovery Labs, and Resilience 21 Coalition

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International Wildlife Refuge Alliance  
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Be Kind. (re)Design.  
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Corvias Infrastructure Solutions  
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The Cleanup Club  
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Lovall Associates  
Sam Lovall, Landscape Architect

City of Wyandotte  
Joseph Gruber, Community and Economic Development Director  
Downtown Development Authority

City of River Rouge  
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Southeast Michigan Council of Governments

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NTH Consultants  
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Charter Township of Canton  
Anne Marie Graham-Hudak, Supervisor

City of Ecorse  
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National Wildlife Federation  
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Marc Smith, Policy Director

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Jennifer McKay

Michigan Land Conservancy  
Jack R. Smiley, President

City of Trenton  
Mayor Steven Rzeppa

Detroit River Project (Underground Railroad)  
Kimberly Simmons  
Wyandot of Anderdon Nation  
Grand Chief Ted Roll

SmithGroup  
Dan Kinkead, AIA

Tom Woiwode  
Helen & William Milliken Distinguished Service Award Winner

Marine Pollution Control  
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American Forests  
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Steven C. Nadeau,  
Contaminated Sediment Remediation Professional

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University of Michigan, College of Engineering Charles  
C. Wolf, Managing Director-Urban Collaboratory

PEA Group  
Burke Jenkins, Landscape Architect and Associate

Detroit Greenways Coalition  
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River Raisin Pubic Advisory Committee  
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Huron River Watershed Council  
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City of Detroit  
Jack Akinlosotu, Director, Office of Sustainability

Friends of Rouge Park  
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Ecology Center

Erica Bloom, Toxics Campaign Director

Belle Isle Conservancy

Michele Hodges, Executive Director