

January 14, 2019

The Honorable R.D. James
Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works)
108 Army Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20310

Dear Assistant Secretary R.D. James:

President Trump has stated that he has “an absolute legal right” to declare a national emergency in order to secure the southern border. Recent reports indicate the President had considered using Army Corps funding to build a barrier along the U.S.-Mexico border. We write to request an update on any intentions by your agency to change the spending levels outlined in the Work Plan for Fiscal Year 2019. Namely, we write to receive assurances that the Army Corps is not considering reallocating funding away from the Soo Locks, and other agency projects critical to the safety and wellbeing of Michigan and the entire Great Lakes.

It is imperative that no funding be diverted from the operations and maintenance of the Soo Locks or the initial work necessary to construct a new Poe-sized lock. As you are aware, the Soo Locks in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, is a critical gateway through which 80 million tons of commercial goods pass annually. A sudden closure would have devastating economic consequences and there have been no comprehensive improvements to the facility in nearly 50 years. The FY2019 Work Plan includes \$32.38 million to begin the process for building a much-needed new lock and over \$15 million to ensure the existing locks remain operational. We are on borrowed time and it is imperative that this funding not be reallocated or reduced.

Likewise, it is critical that no funds be diverted from projects essential to Great Lakes navigation and public safety. The FY2019 Work Plan outlines spending for 26 dredging projects within the Great Lakes, totaling \$48 million. This includes five new dredging projects and three projects with additional dredging funds added. Maintenance of these harbors is critical to commercial and recreational navigation, public safety, and the economies of our state and local communities.

Lastly, we would strongly oppose any effort to redirect funding allocated to combat Asian carp. This includes the resources in the Work Plan dedicated to operating and maintaining the electric dispersal barriers in the Illinois River as well as the funding to complete GLRMIS-Brandon Road Chief's Report. This funding is of critical importance in the near- and long-term to preventing Asian carp from causing great harm to the Great Lakes.

We have continually communicated with you in person and in writing the undeniable importance of these projects to the well-being of the Great Lakes and to the economies of Michigan, the region, and the country. We look forward to receiving a prompt response confirming that these funds in the FY2019 Work Plan are not being redirected to pay for constructing a barrier on the U.S.-Mexico border.

