

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 15, 2025

Governor Gretchen Whitmer  
State of Michigan  
111 S Capitol Ave  
Lansing, MI 48933

Director Phillip Roos  
Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes,  
and Energy  
525 W Allegan Street  
Lansing, MI 48909

Governor Whitmer and Director Roos:

I write to follow up on the April 9 meeting between my team, the Whitmer Administration, the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE), and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to express continued concern and growing frustration on the uncertain path forward for the essential dredging of Grand Haven's Inner Harbor. This project was initially scheduled for 2025 to ensure that cargo ships could pass unhindered and without overly cumbersome light loading. Despite months of communication and requests for action, it is now clear that the dredging timeline is at risk, with serious implications for West Michigan's economy. Your office still has the ability to act and keep dredging on track—I write this letter in hopes of working with you to rectify this issue and support the communities and businesses that call Grand Haven home. Our joint work to fix the roads this summer depends on it.

Since early January 2025, my office has been working in good faith with your Administration and USACE to ensure that federal dollars are spent as they were intended—for a timely and efficient dredging of the Grand Haven Inner Harbor. USACE's Detroit District was ready to dredge Grand Haven's Inner Harbor this year, with Congressionally-appropriated federal dollars slated to fund the project. However, USACE's Headquarters explained that the project could not proceed until EGLE issued the necessary guidance for the Corps to begin its work. Ultimately, EGLE sought to enforce a standard it had yet to finalize, leaving the Corps without a clear goal to work toward in its scheduled dredging.

With the serious potential for federal dollars to be redirected to another project in the state, my team and I reached out to yours directly to explore potential solutions. We proposed convening a joint conversation between the Administration, EGLE, USACE, and my office, and your teams declined that offer until April 9. With EGLE only finalizing its guidance on April 8, Grand Haven's Inner Harbor is increasingly likely to miss a dredging cycle. Any further delays are unacceptable—not only for our local economy, but the entire Great Lakes economic ecosystem.

I share the state and EGLE's concern that there could potentially be PFAS in the dredged material, and if it is discovered, it could potentially be in such an amount that might cause harm. Care is needed to craft a standard to ensure that dredging projects do not release a dangerous amount of these harmful chemicals and pollutants into our Great Lakes, but we do not have endless time. The dredging cycles are carefully set by the USACE to ensure passable waterways based on rising sediment throughout the seasons. Much like our agricultural growing seasons, these timelines are dictated by nature, not by government agencies. Failure to act also presents *actual* environmental concerns. There are significant and known environmental benefits to shipping these materials by cargo ship—one of the most environmentally friendly ways to move goods. Those known environmental benefits cannot be realized if our channels are not passable.

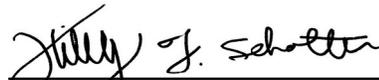
Grand Haven Harbor is an economic powerhouse, sustaining over 450 jobs totaling \$29.5 million in wages annually, as well as producing a regional impact of \$88.8 million per year. A missed dredging cycle will come

at a high price. Delays will directly affect our partners across the state who rely on materials to complete transportation projects and agriculture operations, with road-building materials, concrete, asphalt, and fertilizer expected to increase in cost by more than \$1 million annually. Further, if we see delayed dredging, goods being shipped through Grand Haven may increase in cost by roughly \$3 to \$5 million annually—costs that will likely be passed through to consumers. In the instance that Grand Haven becomes unnavigable for commercial vessels, it is understood that neighboring harbors do not have the capacity to accept those supplies. Failure to dredge Grand Haven’s inner harbor will pose serious harm to Grand Haven’s commercial shipping operations and exacerbate the economic hardships Michiganders are already feeling. At a time of grave economic uncertainty and rising prices due to tariffs for the industries, we do not need to add to the increased production costs. This problem is still solvable.

I formally request your Administration take all necessary measures to immediately implement alternative permitting options to keep the Grand Haven Inner Harbor dredging project on time, including the issuance of a one-time permit or a temporary extension of the current permit. This would allow Grand Haven’s Inner Harbor to be dredged while broader standards on disposal are finalized. My team and I remain available to assist in coordinating with USACE to move this project forward quickly and responsibly.

When it comes to the shipping, construction, and agricultural industries, time is not a luxury we have. I remain hopeful we can find a solution that honors both our environmental values and our economic obligations, and I urge your Administration and EGLE to work with my office to find a path forward to dredge Grand Haven’s Inner Harbor this year. Thank you for your continued attention to this matter. I look forward to your response and working together to best support Grand Haven.

Sincerely,

  
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Hillary J. Scholten  
Member of Congress