

May 26, 2020

Kerrie E. Kuhne
Chief, Permit Evaluation Western Branch
Regulatory Office
Corps of Engineers, Detroit District
477 Michigan Avenue
Detroit, Michigan 48226-2550

Re: Request for Comment Period Extension and Public Hearing on Corps File No. LRE-2010-00463-56-A19

Dear Ms. Kuhne:

The undersigned environmental and civic organizations, businesses, and Tribes, representing millions of citizens throughout Michigan and the Great Lakes Basin, respectfully requests that the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) extend the public comment period on Corps File No. LRE-2010-00463-56-A19 by a minimum of 120 days beyond the currently scheduled public comment deadline. We also write to request a public hearing be held to consider this application when it is safe to convene members of the public after the risk of COVID-19 transmission subsides.

On May 15, 2020, USACE public noticed Corps File No. LRE-2010-00463-56-A19. The application is for a proposed pipeline tunnel under the Straits of Mackinac between Mackinaw City and Saint Ignace, Michigan. The notice provides a twenty (20) day public comment period, which currently closes on June 4, 2020.

Twenty days is insufficient to give this proposal the meaningful review and analysis it requires. The proposal involves many complex technological and scientific, issues related to tunnel construction beneath in the bottomlands of the Great Lakes, petroleum transportation, and the ecology of the Great Lakes, including the Straits of Mackinac and adjacent wetlands. Development of thoughtful comments in the time provided is clearly unachievable and is therefore inconsistent with providing adequate or lawful public participation. We believe 120 days is an appropriate amount of time necessary for the public to comprehend the complexity, expansiveness, and potentially significant impacts of this project.

An additional confounding factor is that the public notice was issued when the State of Michigan is in the midst of a State of Emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic. On April 30, 2020, Governor Gretchen Whitmer, finding that COVID-19 had created emergency and disaster conditions across the State of Michigan, issued Executive Order 2020-67 to continue the emergency declaration under the Emergency Powers of the Governor Act, as well as Executive Order 2020-68 to issue new emergency and disaster declarations under the Emergency Management Act. It is extremely challenging, if not impossible, for individuals to provide public comment or to devote resources toward engaging in this process when there are more pressing health and family concerns.

Given these difficult circumstances, we request that a public hearing be scheduled only after health officials confirm that the risk of transmission has subsided and stay-at-home orders have been lifted. This is especially critical for individuals who are affected by the proposed project and are vulnerable to

serious illness from COVID-19. Many residents in Northern Michigan are without reliable internet access or the ability to effectively participate in virtual hearings. To allow for meaningful public input on the application and the USACE's public interest review, a public hearing must be held in person.

We respectfully request that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers extend the public comment period for at least an additional 120 days, or until no earlier than September 14, 2020, and for and for a public hearing to be held to consider Corps File No. LRE-2010-00463-56-A19.

Should you have any questions regarding this request, please feel free to contact Jennifer McKay, policy director Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council at jenniferm@watershedcouncil.org or 231-347-1181.

Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Bryan Newland, President
Bay Mills Indian Community

Rev Pinkney
Black Autonomy Network Community Organization

Larry Bell
Bell's Brewery, Inc.

Therese Povolo
Champion Hill Farm

Jane A. TenEyck, Executive Director
Chippewa Ottawa Resource Authority

Mary Brady-Enerson, Michigan Director
Clean Water Action

Kim Phillips
Clearwater Lakeshore Motel

David Kranker
David Kranker Creative

James N. Bull, Fund Development and
Environmental Policy Coordinator
Detroit Audubon

Charlie Wunsch
Edible Grande Traverse

Margrethe Kearney, Senior Attorney
Environmental Law & Policy Center

Nicholas Lefebre
Ethanolology Distillation

Liz Kirkwood, Executive Director
FLOW (For the Love of Water)

Jill Ryan, Executive Director
Freshwater Future

Timothy Fitzgerald Young
Food for Thought

Grant Piering
Grant Piering, LLC

Phil Roos
Great Lakes GrowthWorks

Chris Treter
Higher Grounds Coffee

Louise Nolta, Justice and Peace Coordinator
Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters, USA-JPIC

Edward L Michael, Govt Affairs Chair
Illinois Council Trout Unlimited

Nathan D. Griswold
Inhabitect, LLC

Jill Crafton , MN Division – IWLA National
Director

Izaak Walton League – Minnesota Division

Juliette King McAvoy
King Orchards

Christina Schlitt, President
League of Women Voters of Michigan

Peter Laing
MAWBY Vineyards

Sean Hammond, Policy Director
Michigan Environmental Council

Lisa Wozniak, Executive Director
Michigan League of Conservation Voters

Anne Woiwode, Chair, Executive Committee
Michigan Sierra Club

Mike Shriberg, Great Lakes Regional Executive
Director
National Wildlife Federation

Greg Reisig, Co-Chair
**Northern Michigan Environmental Action
Council**

Sean McBrearty, Campaign Coordinator
Oil and Water Don't Mix

Irene Senn, Coordinator
Religious Coalition for the Great Lakes

Richard Bergmann
Round Lake Group Hospitality

Le Roger Lind, President
Save Lake Superior Association

Lori Andresen, President
Save Our Sky Blue Waters

Travis Solberg
Solberg MFG

Bill Latka
Storylicious

Autumn Sands
Sustainable Research Group

Pete Kirkwood
The Workshop Brewing Company

Jennifer McKay, Policy Director
Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council

Jean Ross, Board President
Vote-Climate

Bill Wood, Executive Director
**West Michigan Environmental Action Council
(WMEAC)**

Dick Dinon
Wineguys