

Durbin, Duckworth, Great Lakes Senators urge Trump Administration to release Army Corps Brandon Road Study to stop spread of Asian carp

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) joined Senator Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) in calling on the Trump Administration to release a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers study that recommends specific measures to prevent Asian Carp from reaching beyond the Brandon Road Lock and Dam, a crucial chokepoint in the Chicago waterway system. The study, which is critical to stopping the flow of Asian Carp and other invasive species, was set to be released at the end of February but was delayed by the Trump Administration.

“We request the Administration release the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ draft proposal to prevent Asian carp from reaching and severely harming the Great Lakes,” wrote the senators. “We are concerned by what we understand to be a White House decision to delay and potentially modify this report that has been under development for years. When taken together with the proposal to eliminate all funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative in the fiscal year 2018 budget, delaying the release of this plan to address Asian carp only raises further questions about the Administration’s commitment to protecting our Great Lakes.”

The letter was also signed by Senate Great Lakes Task Force Members Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Al Franken (D-MN), Joe Donnelly (D-IN), Gary Peters (D-MI), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Bob Casey (D-PA), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), and Chuck Schumer (D-NY).

Full text of the letter may be found below:

April 10, 2017

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

The Honorable Mick Mulvaney
Director, Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear President Trump and Director Mulvaney,

We request the Administration release the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ draft proposal to prevent Asian carp from reaching and severely harming the Great Lakes. We are concerned by what we understand to be a White House decision to delay and potentially modify this report that has been under development for years. When taken together with the proposal to eliminate all funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative in the fiscal year 2018 budget, delaying the release of this plan to address Asian carp only raises further questions about the Administration’s commitment to protecting our Great Lakes.

The U.S. Army Corps has been working on the Brandon Road Project Tentatively Selected Plan (TSP) for years at the full expense of federal taxpayers. The Army Corps

publically confirmed a February 28 release date for the TSP before we understand the Administration delayed its posting to the Federal Register. The only details we have received on the rationale for this decision is that “further coordination” with government and non-government stakeholders was necessary. This explanation is hard to comprehend when the draft plan is the very mechanism for providing all stakeholders the opportunity to review and consider its merits.

Halting the release of the TSP not only prevents stakeholder review, it also complicates efforts to develop necessary financial commitments for the project from non-federal entities and further delays the already long process to develop solutions to stop Asian Carp. Given the lack of clarity that now exists on the path forward for and substance of the TSP, we request that answers be provided to the following questions:

- What further coordination has occurred since the release of the TSP was halted in February?
- Who has the Administration designated with the responsibility for facilitating further coordination with stakeholders?
- Are changes to the proposed TSP under consideration and will any stakeholder be given the opportunity to review the plan before its release?
- What is the timeline for releasing the TSP for public comment?

It is of vital importance that the TSP intended for release earlier this year be published to the Federal Register without further delay. Thank you for your consideration of this request and we look forward to your prompt reply.