

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 10, 2025

The Honorable JB Pritzker  
Governor of the State of Illinois  
207 State House  
Springfield, IL 62706

Governor Pritzker:

We write to express our profound dismay at your decision to unilaterally suspend Construction Increment IA of the Brandon Road Interbasin Project (BRIP), administered by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Rock Island District. As you know, the Brandon Road Lock and Dam near Joliet, Illinois, has been identified as the critical chokepoint for preventing the upstream movement of invasive carp and other nuisance species from the Mississippi River basin into the Great Lakes through the Illinois Waterway. This unnecessary and unfounded obstruction trades responsible governance for partisan grandstanding, putting our Great Lakes, economy, and communities at needless risk.

On February 10, 2025, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources notified USACE that the State would be postponing the real estate closing agreement required for USACE to commence work on Construction Increment IA. Citing an “anticipated lack of federal funding for the Brandon Road Project,” the State has demanded assurances from the federal government that the funds allocated to BRIP through Pub. L. 117-58 will remain available.<sup>1</sup>

This demand reflects either a fundamental misunderstanding or a deliberate disregard of longstanding federal financial law. Under 31 U.S.C. § 1501, federal funds can only be considered obligated – and thus legally bound for their designated purpose – once a formal commitment, such as a contract, is executed by an agency.<sup>2</sup> However, USACE cannot take this step until the State of Illinois finalizes the real estate closing agreement – a prerequisite that your office is deliberately delaying. As a result, the very funds you claim to be protecting with the pause remain unobligated and at risk of rescission or reprogramming by Congress – an authority that has long rested with Congress concerning unobligated funds still at the U.S. Treasury.

Of course, you would recognize this if your decision to pause the project were not driven by partisan motives. In a February 7, 2025, memorandum shared with your office, USACE confirmed that \$100 million in federal funds was available for the scheduled February 17, 2025, start of Construction Increment IA. Yet, the designated funds now hang in the balance over your insistence on receiving assurances from the Trump administration – assurances that are entirely unnecessary. The reality is that your office has the authority to

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<sup>1</sup> Tina Sfondeles, “Pritzker Halts Joliet Great Lakes Carp Project Until Trump Promises Not to Yank Federal Funds,” Chicago Sun-Times, February 10, 2025, <https://chicago.suntimes.com/politics/donald-trump/2025/02/10/pritzker-joliet-great-lakes-carp-project-trump-withholding-federal-funds>.

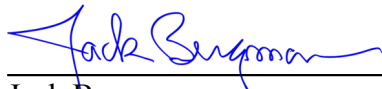
<sup>2</sup> Documentary Evidence Requirement for Government Obligations, 31 U.S.C. § 1501, [https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=\(title:31%20section:1501%20edition:prelim\)](https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=(title:31%20section:1501%20edition:prelim)).

finalize the real estate closing agreement and allow USACE to proceed, making your delay both unjustified and dangerous to the continued health of our Great Lakes.

The commercial, recreational, and tribal fisheries of the Great Lakes generate between \$5 and \$7 billion annually for the economies of the United States and Canada, supporting more than 75,000 jobs.<sup>3</sup> These waters sustain a world-class fishery built on native and naturalized species like whitefish, salmon, and lake trout – species that would be devastated by the spread of invasive carp from the Illinois Waterway. Allowing their introduction would be an irreversible economic and ecological disaster, jeopardizing industries, livelihoods, and entire communities that depend on the Great Lakes.

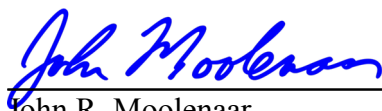
Safeguarding our lakes demands strong leadership that prioritizes responsible action over political posturing. Years of strategic planning and bipartisan collaboration between USACE Rock Island District and the States of Illinois and Michigan have brought us to the threshold of a historic preservation victory for our region’s economy and environment. Your obstruction not only undermines this progress but signals a reckless disregard for the long-term health of the Great Lakes and the millions of people who rely on them. We urge you, in the strongest terms possible, to abandon this self-serving interest, finalize the real estate closing agreement, and allow USACE to move forward with BRIP without further delay. The Great Lakes – and the future of those who depend on them – deserve nothing less.

Sincerely,



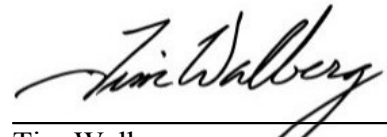
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Jack Bergman  
Member of Congress



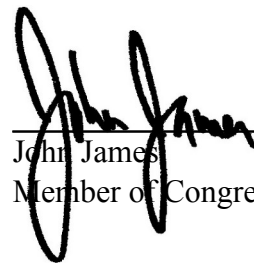
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John R. Moolenaar  
Member of Congress



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Tim Walberg  
Member of Congress



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John James  
Member of Congress

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<sup>3</sup> “The Great Lakes Fishery: A World-Class Resource!,” Great Lakes Fishery Commission, n.d., <https://www.glfcc.org/the-fishery.php>.; Lester Graham, “Report: Great Lakes Recreational Fishing Worth Billions to Economy, but Not as Much as Often Cited,” Michigan Public, January 19, 2025, <https://www.michiganpublic.org/environment-climate-change/2025-01-16/report-great-lakes-recreational-fishing-worth-billions-to-economy-but-not-as-much-as-often-cited>.