

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 15, 2026

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

The Honorable Adam R. Telle
Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works
108 Army Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310

Dear Director Vought and Assistant Secretary Telle:

We write to express concern over the administrative review and pause of the Brandon Road Interbasin Project (BRIP). Moving this project forward is critical to protecting the Great Lakes from invasive carp. It has been thoroughly reviewed by Congress, the Army Corps of Engineers, and local partners, and its funding has been authorized and appropriated by Congress. The current review is unnecessary and could cause delays that put the Great Lakes' ecosystem and fishing industry at risk.

After flooding events in the 1970s, non-native invasive carp entered the lower Mississippi River, and spread to tributaries, lakes, and reservoirs. They have spread as far North as the Illinois River, within reach of the Great Lakes. These invasive carp have created significant problems in waterways, out-competing native species, disrupting local ecosystems and habitats, posing recreational hazards, and harming both commercial and recreational fishing. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, along with state and local partners, spends nearly \$70 million annually to control populations of the carp—a number that would be far more significant if invasive carp make it to the Great Lakes.

Federal investment to prevent the spread of invasive carp has been critical to keeping the fish at bay. The Army Corps of Engineers installed electric barriers in the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal in 2002, 2009, and 2011. Although these barriers serve as a deterrent for upstream movement of the fish, in both 2010 and 2017 invasive carp were found upstream of the barriers, a clear sign that a more permanent solution was necessary.

After several years of studying options and reviewing public feedback, in 2019, the Army Corps of Engineers finalized the plan for the BRIP. In 2020, Congress authorized the project. Congress provided \$225 million for the construction of the BRIP in 2022 and an additional \$47 million in 2023. Illinois and Michigan, the project's non-federal sponsors, have invested more than \$100 million in the project. The federal investment currently is on hold without justification, and additional contracts for the project cannot be awarded due to the funding pause.

The current pause and review could increase the cost and slow the final completion date of BRIP, increasing the likelihood that invasive carp could enter the Great Lakes. If invasive carp were to become established in the Great Lakes, they would outcompete existing fish populations, permanently damage ecosystems, and significantly impair the \$7 billion Great Lakes economy.

Not only does this project have the strong support of Congress and the non-federal sponsors, President Trump also has highlighted the importance of moving the project forward and stopping the invasive carp, saying "it is sort of a bipartisan thing when you get right down to it's a very expensive thing...I looked at the numbers. I said, well, but we have to save Lake Michigan because these fish that they eat everything in their way, including the other fish."

In light of strong support for this project from the President, Congress, and local sponsors, we urge you to end the pause and review of BRIP and release federal funds to the Amry Corps of Engineers Rock Island District without delay. Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Elissa Slotkin
United States Senator