

Preliminary Demands in Response to Bulk Storage Collapse into Detroit River

In the aftermath of the collapse of the Detroit Bulk Storage facility into the Detroit River, it is important to learn from the failures and blind spots at the root of this incident. These issues span topics related to emergency response protocols/systems, water quality testing, the proximity of toxic facilities on waterways and a host of other issues. Each level of government has a role to play in making sure that concerns are addressed systematically. We acknowledge this is not the first time a community has been poisoned, but at risk for their lives and safety, and require addressing as in the Flint Water Crisis which remains unresolved.

Local Stakeholders: Detroit City Council & Mayor Duggan (and executive offices)

1. The City of Detroit, through conditional land use permitting powers, should require regular inspection of shoreline control structures at all industrial facilities & known contaminated sites along the Detroit river to ensure soundness.
2. The City of Detroit should maintain a list of heavily contaminated parcels along the Detroit and Rouge Rivers and ensure that this list is made accessible to the public.
3. Mayor Duggan's office should conduct a comprehensive assessment of the City of Detroit's current emergency response and management systems to identify areas of concern and improvement.
4. Detroit City Council should review and expand the bulk storage ordinance, analyzing high risk sites, reviewing provisions related to setback from waterways, height and weight requirements.
5. Mayor Duggan's office should commit to establishing structures to hold future policy related work on this matter.
6. City of Detroit, GLWA and DWSD should conduct emergency water quality testing protocols in the case of potential hazardous contamination within 24 hours and implement emergency drinking water notification systems

State Stakeholders: Michigan Department of Environment Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE), Governor Whitmer and the Michigan State Legislators (Sen. Chang, Rep Carter, and others)

1. The State of Michigan should adopt new rules or legislation requiring owners and operators of ALL sites along Michigan waters to notify EGLE immediately when there has been a shoreline collapse.
2. The State of Michigan, through EGLE, in collaboration with local stakeholders (GLWA and others), should actively monitor for pollution migrating from contaminated sites into rivers. Water quality monitoring should take place near and downstream of contaminated parcels (either by legislation or by EGLE rulemaking).
3. The State of Michigan, should add additional permitting requirements related to shoreline control structures (seawalls, retaining walls, sheet pile, riprap, etc.) for properties with contaminated soil and/or legacy sites with a history of contamination adjacent to waterways. The permitting process should include regular monitoring.
4. The deficiencies identified in the State Auditor General's report about Great Lakes Areas of Concern program should be addressed immediately, particularly in relation to the Detroit and Rouge Rivers
5. The Governor, EGLE and State legislators should work collaboratively to set up a plan and timetable to clean up and remediate toxic sediments in the Detroit and Rouge Rivers.
6. The State of Michigan should conduct a risk assessment of current and historic industrial facilities along the Detroit River and the impact of climate change and rising water levels and establish necessary safeguards to prevent future incidents
7. Allocate monies within the state budget for the implementation of drinking water investments, emergency response, and reparations for those already contaminated
8. Host regular public open meetings on drinking water safety to update community members on drinking water safety.

Federal Stakeholders: Congresswoman Lawrence, Congresswoman Tlaib & Environmental Protection Agency

1. The EPA, if not already, should monitor water quality near & downstream of contaminated parcels.
2. Given the health, drinking water, and food safety/fish contamination issues present, our federal stakeholders should request additional funds to clean up the Detroit and Rouge Rivers.
3. A priority list of sites listed for future clean-up (based on toxicity and public health threat) should be created and made readily available for the public.
4. Federal stakeholders should conduct an assessment of current communication and emergency response protocols with the Coast Guard and Army Corps of Engineers.
5. Require that Coast Guard and Army Corps of Engineers to report to state environmental agencies when a shoreline collapse of any kind, especially at industrial facilities, occurs.