

**ALLIANCE OF THE SOUTHEAST ♦ ENVIRONMENTAL LAW & POLICY CENTER ♦
FRIENDS OF THE PARKS ♦ ALLIANCE FOR THE GREAT LAKES ♦ CENTER FOR
NEIGHBORHOOD TECHNOLOGY ♦ CENTRO DE TRABAJADORES UNIDOS / UNITED
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DELTA INSTITUTE ♦ ELEVATE ENERGY ♦ FAITH IN PLACE ♦ FAMILY RESCUE ♦
♦ FRIENDS OF THE CHICAGO RIVER ♦ ILLINOIS ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL ♦
♦ JEFFREY MANOR COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION COUNCIL ♦ METROPOLITAN
FAMILY SERVICES - SOUTHEAST CENTER ♦ METROPOLITAN PLANNING COUNCIL ♦
NUCLEAR ENERGY INFORMATION SERVICE ♦ OPENLANDS ♦ PRESERVATION CHICAGO
♦ SIERRA CLUB OF ILLINOIS ♦ TEAM ENTERPRISE NFP ♦ THE WETLANDS INITIATIVE**

June 10, 2024

Mayor Brandon Johnson
Office of the Mayor
City Hall
121 North LaSalle Street
Chicago, IL 60602

Dear Mayor Johnson:

We are writing to again ask that you exert your Mayoral leadership to stop the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers from moving forward with its plan to build a 25-foot high toxic dredged wastes dump tower on 45 acres along the Lake Michigan shoreline on the Southeast Side of Chicago. We have previously requested your assistance on June 7, 2023 and have had multiple meetings and discussions with your staff over the past year. We again ask you to publicly demand that the Army Corps look to alternatives, including finding a disposal site outside of the 10th Ward on the Southeast Side and reducing the amount of disposed dredged wastes material from the Calumet River System and Calumet Harbor.

In 2023, the Alliance of the Southeast and Friends of the Parks, represented by Environmental Law & Policy Center public interest attorneys, filed a lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois to stop the Defendant Army Corps' proposed new vertical Dredged Material Disposal Facility (DMDF) on top of the Confined Disposal Facility (CDF) adjacent to Calumet Park. The lawsuit contends that the Army Corps does not have authority to build its proposed new toxic dredged wastes dump on this lakefront site in the Southeast Side community, and the Army Corps has not fully and fairly explored and evaluated all reasonable alternatives, thereby violating federal environmental and state laws.

Through the legal process, we have learned that the Army Corps has not received the necessary state water quality permits from the Illinois EPA to move forward with its proposed new DMDF. The Judge in the case has said that the Army Corps cannot start building until those three permits are received. The Illinois EPA denied the first of these permit applications due to environmental concerns. As Chicago Department of Environment Commissioner Angela Tovar is aware, Senator Durbin, Senator Duckworth, and Governor Pritzker's staff are also engaged on this issue. Now is the time to demand that the Army Corps move away from its misguided proposal and, instead, identify and choose another alternative that will not further burden the Southeast Side, or any other environmental justice community.

The CDF site was long promised as part of the 1980's legislation agreement to become a public park at the mouth of the Calumet River once the CDF was filled and then restored. Now that the site is available to be converted into the long-promised park, the Army Corps is renegeing on its commitment. The Army Corps' proposed new "vertical expansion" – the towering toxic dredged wastes materials dump (DMDF) – would add more pollution to the Southeast Side neighborhood in Chicago's 10th Ward, an environmental justice community, which has long been overburdened with toxics pollution. Concentrated contaminated dredged material at the CDF poses health risks to the community and threatens Lake Michigan. Climate change is causing higher Lake Michigan water levels and more intense storms and heavy waves threaten the shoreline. Building a new DMDF on top of the CDF does not make sense in light of higher water levels. A toxic release would be potentially disastrous for the community and our water supply.

The Army Corps did not properly evaluate environmental risks or rigorously explore alternative sites outside the 10th Ward for its dredged wastes materials. This effectively forced a choice from a menu of bad options. The Army Corps' proposal is contrary to the Biden's administration's EJ guidelines and goals, is contrary to the Biden administration's Justice40 guidelines and goals, is contrary to Illinois' EJ policies and climate change solutions policies, and is contrary to sound environmental policy and the realities of higher lake water levels combined with more intense storm winds and waves.

The Army Corps' misguided plan is also contrary to your Mayoral administration's commitment to environmental justice. Mayor Johnson, you have said, "no neighborhood should have to suffer the burden of pollution more so than any other neighborhood...the time to act on environmental justice is now." We agree and encourage you to put your words into action to protect the Southeast Side and environmental justice communities!

We ask you to:

1. Oppose the Army Corps' plans to expand upon the current CDF by building on top of this site a new 25-foot high toxic dredged wastes materials disposal dump (DMDF) along the Lake Michigan shoreline on the Southeast Side.
2. Strongly encourage the Chicago Park District to withdraw as the non-federal partner of the Army Corps for this new toxic dredged wastes disposal dump along the lakefront on the Southeast Side.
3. Work with the Chicago Park District, community and environmental stakeholders, and the Army Corps to turn the CDF site into the long-promised lakeshore park for neighborhood residents and all Chicagoans to use and enjoy.
4. Support the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency in its denial of state water quality permits for the Army Corps' proposed new toxic dredged wastes disposal dump at this lakeshore site in the 10th Ward.
5. Work with Senators Durbin and Duckworth, Governor Pritzker, and community and environmental stakeholder leaders to strongly encourage the Army Corps to identify alternative disposal sites outside of the 10th Ward, and not in an environmental justice community.
6. Commit to long-term solutions reducing dredged materials from entering the Calumet River system.

We would be pleased to meet with you and your senior staff to discuss next steps and opportunities for a better solution here. For any questions and to arrange a meeting to discuss this further, please contact Amalia Nieto-Gomez (amalia@asechicago.org) or Sam Corona (sam@asechicago.org). Thank you for your consideration and engagement on this important issue.

Sincerely,



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Signing in support (list of organizations):

Alliance for the Great Lakes
Center for Neighborhood Technology
Centro de Trabajadores Unidos / United Workers' Center (CTU)
Chicago Bird Alliance
Crossroads Collaborative
Delta Institute
Elevate Energy
Faith in Place
Family Rescue
Friends of the Chicago River

Illinois Environmental Council
Jeffrey Manor Community Revitalization Council
Metropolitan Family Services - Southeast Center
Metropolitan Planning Council
Nuclear Energy Information Service
Openlands
Preservation Chicago
Sierra Club of Illinois
TEAM Enterprise NFP
Wetlands Initiative

cc: The Honorable Peter Chico, Alderman, 10th Ward
Dr. Cristina Pacione-Zayas, Chief of Staff
Ms. Angela Tovar, Commissioner, Chicago Department of Environment
Ms. Rosa Escareño, Superintendent, Chicago Park District