



LOUISE M. SLAUGHTER
CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
25TH DISTRICT, NEW YORK

March 27, 2013

The Honorable Jo-Ellen Darcy
Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works)
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
108 Army Pentagon, Room 3E446
Washington, DC 20310-0108

Dear Assistant Secretary Darcy:

I write today to strongly urge the Army Corps of Engineers to obligate funding made available in H.R. 152, the Disaster Relief Appropriations Act (P.L. 113-2) for the maintenance dredging of federally authorized harbors in Lake Ontario impacted by Hurricane Sandy.

It has come to my attention that several federally authorized harbors in Lake Ontario, including Irondequoit Bay, Wilson Harbor and Oak Orchard Harbor, are being evaluated by the Corps to assess damage caused by Hurricane Sandy and, if necessary, utilize funding provided in P.L. 113-2 for maintenance dredging to repair damage caused by Hurricane Sandy. I strongly support this effort.

Last October, the southern shore of Lake Ontario was impacted by Hurricane Sandy. The storm brought winds of 55 mph inland and 60 mph along the lakeshore, along with 15 foot waves, with the worst damage occurring in the low-lying areas along the Lake Ontario shoreline spanning from, Parma, Greece, Irondequoit, Rochester and Webster.

In Irondequoit Bay, a four mile-long recreational harbor located in my district on the southern shore of Lake Ontario and adjacent to the city of Rochester, N.Y, the accumulation of silt in the channel after the storm has obstructed 75 percent of the entrance of the channel, making navigation difficult for boaters. Irondequoit Bay is a convenient and popular site for recreational boating in the region and provides considerable economic benefits to the local economy. Most importantly, Irondequoit Bay is also a harbor of refuge for boaters to seek safety in cases of emergency. The channel to the bay has a dredging frequency of five years and was last dredged in 2008.

The recreational harbors of Wilson and Oak Orchard on Lake Ontario to the west of Irondequoit Bay have also experienced significant sediment buildup within their harbors over recent years, making navigation difficult for fisherman and recreational boaters and hampering economic activity associated with the port. Hurricane Sandy's impact on Lake Ontario has only further exacerbated the buildup of sediment and obstruction for vessels. Oak Orchard Harbor was last dredged in 2004 and requires maintenance dredging every three to five years while Wilson Harbor was last dredged in 2000 and also requires maintenance dredging every three to five years.

Additionally, I strongly encourage the Corps to evaluate any possible damage caused by Hurricane Sandy to Rochester Harbor and, if necessary, obligate funding from P.L. 113-2 for maintenance dredging to address any damage. Similar to the issues in Irondequoit Bay, buildup of sediment in the Rochester Harbor channel has threatened the viability of a local company, Essroc, and the jobs that rely on their business. Essroc is a distributor of cement in the Upstate region and failing to dredge the port could lead them to close their facility, putting people out of work and driving up the cost of construction through the region.

The economic success of many of these small communities is heavily reliant on the use of these harbors. Without proper maintenance, these valuable harbors that serve so many of my constituents and neighboring residents run the risk of closing.

Once again, I respectfully urge the Army Corps of Engineers to provide relief to these communities by obligating funding made available in P.L. 113-2 for maintenance dredging of all federally authorized harbors in Lake Ontario impacted by Hurricane Sandy. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Louise M. Slaughter
Member of Congress