

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1501

April 28, 2022

The Honorable David Price
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing and Urban Development, &
Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing and Urban Development, &
Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Price and Ranking Member Diaz-Balart:

As you begin crafting the fiscal year 2023 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, & Related Agencies Appropriations bill, I respectfully request that you include \$3,425,000 in community project funding for the City of Guttenberg Ponds Rehabilitation Project, located at 502 S 1st Street, Guttenberg, IA 52052.

The City of Guttenberg is a northeast Iowa river city with a population of approximately 11,000 residents who used to take pride in its historic and outdoor recreational attractions for tourists and residents alike to enjoy. Guttenberg was one of the first communities settled in the narrow flood plain along the Mississippi River; it is home to Lock and Dam #10 and the Lockmaster's House Heritage Museum, the only remaining lockmaster house on its original site along the Upper Mississippi River.

In the 1970s, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) installed a levee system with multiple ponds as part of a flood control program for the city. After installing ponds that the City of Guttenberg did not request, the federal government required that the city be responsible for all operations and management of such ponds. While the USACE flooding project is intended to benefit the community, the expansive system, when combined with schools, churches, and other public property, eliminates about 33 percent of the city's taxable land. This severely limits the city's ability to generate revenue to be spent on public safety and improvement projects, such as operating and maintaining these ponds.

Since the 1970s, there have been highways constructed nearby that constantly fill the ponds with sediment and biomass, which has converted what was once an ecologically-sound amenity and recreational space into an unhealthy and unsightly body of water. For example, one of the ponds covers approximately 2.5 acres and has an average depth of six feet – it is estimated that there is an average of three feet of sediment in the pond. This has entirely diminished any recreational

value and severely reduced flood mitigation value, as it has reduced the pond's water capacity by 50 percent and allowed algae growth and bio-intruders that have depleted the oxygen in the pond and thus its ability to support aquatic life.

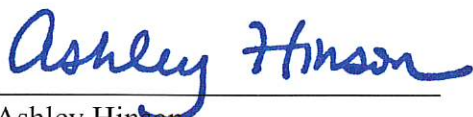
Local businesses have recorded complaints regarding the stench and discoloration, concerned about the potential public health implications. Use of nearby playgrounds, tennis courts, sports fields, and other public amenities has noticeably reduced due to their proximity to the foul ponds. There is yet to be official data or research on the health impacts, but many local residents have recorded complaints of increased respiratory illness in the recent years. At this point, the ponds hardly serve their intended flood management purpose because they are filled with sediment and can only retain a fraction of the stormwater they were originally built to store.

Prior to their decay, the ponds served as a focal point for community gathering, physical activity, and tourism. The city boasted annual fishing parties, planned in coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the local chamber of commerce. The ponds are located around the Scenic Byway that serves as the entryway to Guttenberg, and many visitors would spot the lit-up fountain in one of the ponds and turn to drive through the city, stopping at local shops, or to fish, ice skate, kayak, and canoe. The city would like to be able to utilize the fountain again, as well as add a second fountain to the larger pond to draw the visitors and reinvigorate the depleted tourism industry.

Providing this project with federal funds would allow the city to dredge and rehabilitate the ponds. This project is an economic development opportunity to revitalize the tourism industry, attract new economic opportunities, and restore population growth in the City of Guttenberg. Best of all, these funds would rectify problems created by the federal government that are threatening the longevity of a proud, historic, rural Mississippi River community.

I strongly urge the Committee to include this community project funding request in the FY23 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, & Related Agencies Appropriations bill. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Ashley Hinson
Member of Congress
Committee on Appropriations