



STATE OF MICHIGAN
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
LANSING

GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

GARLIN GILCHRIST II
LT. GOVERNOR

VIA EMAIL

May 27, 2020

Director Liesl Clark
Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy
Constitution Hall
525 West Allegan
P.O. Box 30473
Lansing, MI 48909

RE: Review of Edenville Dam failure and dam safety in Michigan

Dear Director Clark,

Late in the afternoon on Tuesday May 19, 2020, the failure of the privately owned Edenville Dam, and the cascading failure of the Sanford Dam, released a torrent of water down the Tittabawassee River. This failure followed on the heels of an estimated 200-year weather event that dropped 5-8 inches of rain on the region over the course of 36 hours. The ensuing surge flooded Edenville, the Village of Sanford, the City of Midland, and beyond. It forced thousands to evacuate, destroyed roads and bridges, ruined homes and businesses, and caused major natural resource damage. Residents are still reeling from these events. And its occurrence on top of the COVID-19 global pandemic only exacerbates the unspeakable hardship that has followed.


That evening, shortly after the failure of the Edenville dam, I declared a state of emergency for the City of Midland and Midland County and dispatched the Michigan National Guard and other personnel across state government to assist in the emergency response and recovery. On Wednesday, May 20, I asked President Trump to declare a presidential state of emergency, which he granted the next day. Since that time, I have expanded the declared state emergency to cover the neighboring counties of Arenac, Gladwin, Iosco, and Saginaw.

I know you share my commitment to prevent a catastrophe of this kind from happening again. Toward that goal, I ask that the Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy lead an investigation into the causes of this disaster. Among other factors, I ask that you examine the storm event, the structural integrity of the dam, the

dam owner's compliance, and the handoff of regulatory oversight from the federal to state government. In addition to investigating this incident, please review the larger issue of dam safety in Michigan and provide recommendations on policy, budgetary, legislative, and enforcement reforms that can prevent these harms from repeating elsewhere. The department can issue its findings and recommendations in one or more reports, but please update me regularly on the progress of the investigation. Regarding the Edenville Dam failure, I request you provide me a preliminary account of what happened no later than August 31, 2020, with the results of the forensic investigation to follow as soon as possible thereafter.

Understand you have the full resources of my administration available to ensure this review is accurate, timely, and thorough. Please call on other departments and outside experts to assist in your review as needed. Thank you for your commitment to this important work that lies ahead.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gretchen Whitmer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "G" and "W".

Gretchen Whitmer
Governor