

March 27, 2018

Northwest Regulatory Branch Chief
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Attn: Brice McKoy
Strom Thurmond Federal Building
1835 Assembly Street, Room 865 B-1
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

To Whom It May Concern:

I am attaching a copy of the letter sent to Administrator Pruitt last week highlighting the challenge we are facing abating the toxic coal tar deposits in the Congaree River and its effects on our revitalization efforts.

We would appreciate the opportunity to discuss this at your convenience. Please feel free to reach out to my office by contacting Shalaine Archie at sdarchie@columbiasc.net.

Sincerely,

Stephen K. Benjamin
Mayor
Columbia, South Carolina



CITY OF COLUMBIA
SOUTH CAROLINA
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

March 14, 2018

Environmental Protection Agency
Attn: Scott Pruitt, Administrator
Office of the Administrator 1101A
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Pruitt:

As you are likely aware, I have been monitoring the plans to clean up the Congaree River coal tar with great interest. My office is actively working to revive the Columbia, South Carolina riverfront district by supporting a future park and greenway as well as other redevelopment efforts. I see thorough removal and remediation of the toxic coal tar in the Congaree River as critical to these revitalization efforts.

I was encouraged when South Carolina Electric & Gas Company (SCE&G) agreed to fully remove the toxic material from the Congaree River several years ago. As I understand it, however, SCE&G was unable to secure a permit from the Army Corps to dam a portion of the River and execute this work. Instead, the Company has abandoned this plan and recently received your approval to put a permeable cover over about a third of the tar-covered area.

I am convinced we can – and must – do better than the current proposal. In fact, I have personally had conversations with the EPA leadership to specifically convey this message.

I write to express my support to the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SC DHEC) and Congaree Riverkeeper in their efforts to better understand why *all* coal tar removal options were rejected or abandoned. Specifically, I am curious as to:

- 1 – Whether the Corps imposed a “no elevation rise” condition during low flows on any option that would involve partially damming the river;
- 2 – Where a “no rise” requirement came from; and
- 3 – If your Agency would consider any modified removal option that would partially dewater the river.

My office and the people of Columbia have been left largely in the dark about why we and future generations must be burdened with this toxic legacy. I urge your Agency to arrange a meeting with SCE&G, DHEC and the Congaree Riverkeeper – together – as well as a representative from EPA Region 4. All parties need to be in the same room to ask questions and come to a common understanding of what can be done to clean up this pollution. My staff is available to attend such a meeting or to convene one if that would help move the process along.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Stephen K. Benjamin
Mayor
Columbia, South Carolina