



Dear Senators Katie Britt, Senator Tommy Tuberville, Representative Shomari Figures, and Representative Barry Moore,

We are writing you today as a unified coastal Alabama community to ask you to stop the Corps of Engineers from dumping millions of cubic yards of mud into Mobile Bay over the next 20 years.

To be clear: we are not against the deepening, widening, and maintaining of our ship channel, and we are for the economic growth of our state through the Port of Mobile. However, we stand united against the current plans to dispose of millions of cubic yards of mud directly into Mobile Bay. Mud dumping harms our waters and, therefore, our way of life.

Mobile Bay is a gem of our state. It is rich with life, and once had even more riches. Our coastal communities were founded upon a reliance on our waters, and these waters are a part of the fabric of our economies and cultures.

When we dump mud in our bay, it kills our seagrass and our oyster beds, which are the anchors of our habitat – not only for aquatic species, but also for humans. Mobile Bay has seen a decrease in populations of shrimp, speckled trout, blue crab, and oysters. We rely on these keystone species for ecological function, but we also rely on them to keep our recreational and commercial fishing industries alive. And, both industries are suffering under the Corps' current disposal practices. More acutely, Alabama's wild oysters are nearly gone, and with them could go generational family businesses - unless you act swiftly.

The harm not only affects our fishing industries, but tourism as well. Baldwin County's tourism industry alone supports over 65,000 workers and their families. As you know, the lynchpin of coastal Alabama's tourism is our waters. As water quality degrades due to this mud dumping, we fear fewer people will want to visit our beaches and bays during their hard-earned vacations.

And water quality not only affects visitors – it may even more strongly affect our property owners. Studies have shown that just a 10% improvement in water clarity can cause a \$200 million increase in property values for waterfront property along Mobile Bay.

All Alabamians have something to lose if we continue to allow the Corps to degrade our waters.

We also write you today to ensure you know that our proposed solution to this problem is a win-win for all parties.

Thank you for your calls for increased collaboration on beneficial use of dredged material for environmental restoration. We know of at least eighteen restoration projects requesting dredge material from the Corps. The organizations proposing these projects have been told by the Corps that there is no dredge material available. Until we end mud dumping in Mobile Bay, not all stakeholders will get serious about the much-needed restoration work in coastal Alabama.



However, we must make clear: for all dredged material unable to be used for restoration projects, dumping in the open waters of Mobile Bay cannot be a disposal option.

Furthermore, we have no indication that ending mud dumping in Mobile Bay would harm the Port of Mobile operations in any way. There is ample federal funding, there are viable alternative methods of dredge disposal – which were used for decades when mud dumping was previously banned – and there is a critical need for the mud dumping to end.

The Corps of Engineers had \$1.4 billion surplus specifically designated to harbor maintenance in 2024 – a mismanaged surplus that the Trump administration is threatening to take away if not used.¹ Proper disposal for our dredge material would only cost between \$9M and \$25M annually – a more exact number is unobtainable without direct input from the Corps, which has not yet been given. And, that potential cost increase could be offset by eliminating the wasteful government spending of mud dumping: using the Corps' own stated estimates that 35% of dredge material dumped into Mobile Bay must be re-dredged, an end to mud dumping would save \$11 million annually.

The Corps of Engineers knows how to properly dispose of dredged material in Mobile Bay, as mud dumping was banned here from 1986 until 2012.

Further, there is new equipment available for the Corps to use for proper dredge disposal, with the availability of new hopper dredges and other equipment under construction.

Most importantly, this is what our community – and your constituency – wants and needs. There have been over 24,000 letters sent to Alabama's federal delegation since July 2024 calling for an end to the mud dumping. Look at the signatories of this letter: commercial fishermen, oyster farmers, charter guides, property owners, realtors, tourism workers, scientists, and elected officials. We are united and asking for change, but it is needed now. Our oystermen tell us they can't endure another year of this mud dumping.

With these reasons in mind, we ask that you act swiftly to do the following:

During appropriations this summer, we ask that you:

- Fund proper disposal of dredge material by appropriating an additional \$9M-\$25M to the Mobile District via CDS or appropriations to the Regional Dredge Demonstration Program established by Senator Shelby.
- Restrict all harbor maintenance funding from being used for transitional thin-layer placement in the open waters of Mobile Bay.
- Fund, via CDS, the creation of a sanctuary oyster reef in South Mobile County to naturally replant our harvestable reef to make up for some of the damage done. This reef will use oyster harvester labor for planting and monitoring, in order to further heal the economic harms experienced by this industry.
- Next year, permanently ban the use of transitional thin-layer placement in the open waters of Mobile Bay via the Water Resources Development Act of 2026.



We are grateful for your leadership on behalf of our state, in this and all other matters. With your leadership, we can ensure that we leave our future generations with both a vibrant Port and economy and a healthy ecosystem. We look forward to thanking you for acting on our behalf in D.C. this summer.

Sincerely,

William Strickland

William Strickland
Executive Director
Mobile Baykeeper

Chip Brown *T. Jesse* *Matt Simpson*

Rh. LeJeune

Robin LeJeune
Mayor, City of Daphne

Henry Barnes

Henry Barnes
Mayor, Bayou La Batre

Robert Craft

Robert Craft
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Chris Elliott
Alabama State Senator
Senate District 32
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