



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

Allison Fore

Public and Intergovernmental Affairs Officer

312.751.6626

allison.fore@mwrdd.org

100 East Erie Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611

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MWRD staff yield harvest of pumpkins at Calumet Water Reclamation Plant

A pumpkin patch is sprouting just in time for Halloween and is among the many projects that demonstrate MWRD staff's resourcefulness and pride for their workplace.

Two years ago, Calumet Water Reclamation Plant (WRP) hoisters and laborers spread 10 yards of the MWRD's Exceptional Quality (EQ) Compost processed nearby at the Calumet Solids Management Area. The blend of Class A biosolids and wood chips stimulated the soil and spurred growth for decorative trees that staff could view from their offices. This year MWRD employees went a step further and planted nine pumpkin seeds and waited for rain. Shortly thereafter, five vines sprouted and the bulbs began to emerge and grow into full size pumpkins ready to be decorated for the Halloween season.

"We appreciate the sense of pride our staff has in improving their workplace and their ability to support our mission of recovering resources, turning treated solids into a beneficial resource that enriches soil and cultivates new harvests," said MWRD President Kari K. Steele.

Calumet WRP staff also took advantage of ample EQ Compost availability to create planter beds and grow flowers to improve the grounds and support pollinators. The MWRD's EQ Compost is a sustainable and environmentally beneficial product derived from the water reclamation process. The MWRD partners with the City of Chicago and other organizations by



MWRD staff at Calumet Water Reclamation Plant show off their recent pumpkin harvest grown on site.

collecting wood chips from routine tree trimming programs and blends this with MWRD biosolids in open windrow machines. Wood chips, grass clippings and leaves are used as a bulking agent. The process raises the temperature of the biosolids and bulking agent mixture which destroys pathogens.

The Buildings and Grounds team at Calumet have been busy planning for milkweed seeding to support the MWRD's participation with the Illinois Monarch Project. This summer they also supported and managed a herd of sheep and goats who ate overgrowth to maintain the native prairie landscaping at Calumet, Lemont WRP and Thornton Composite Reservoir.

Compost will be available to the public for free at the Calumet WRP and five other MWRD WRPs through October 10. Bring a bucket and shovel and load up their vehicles for their own *(continued)*

MWRD staff yield harvest of pumpkins at Calumet WRP, *cont.*

gardens. The program will be on hiatus until the Spring. Watch for updates at: <https://mwrdd.org/eq-compost>.

“It’s great that our staff realize the value of the compost product we produce and are demonstrating its effectiveness in a fun way,” said Commissioner Mariyana Spyropoulos.



It is not a full pumpkin patch yet, but the vines and pumpkins sprouting at Calumet Water Reclamation Plant evoke the full potential of resource recovery and solid teamwork to benefit the environment and the grounds.

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Recovering Resources, Transforming Water

Established in 1889, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) is an award-winning, special purpose government agency responsible for wastewater treatment and stormwater management in Cook County, Illinois. Learn more at mwrdd.org.