



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

# Press Release

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## Flag raising kicks off Black History Month celebration at MWRD



*(L-R) MWRD Commissioner Yumeka Brown, Commissioner Eira L. Corral Sepúlveda, Commissioner Mariyana Spyropoulos, President Kari K. Steele, Vice President Kimberly Du Buclet, Commissioner Patricia Theresa Flynn and Commissioner Daniel Pogorzelski display the Pan-African Flag raised on Feb. 1 in commemoration of Black History Month.*

For the fourth year, commissioners, staff and friends gathered at the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) facilities throughout Cook County to formally kick off Black History Month. If you missed it, the video can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ybKJDsRXXQ>.

The MWRD celebrates Black History Month throughout February each year to highlight its commitment to diversity, support the Black community, promote environmental justice and advocate for equity in affording everyone protection for their water quality. Despite the cold weather, MWRD officials shared thoughts and joined together to raise the flag at the McGowan Main Office Building downtown and seven water reclamation plants to kick off Black History Month on Feb. 1.

“The flag raising and our commemoration of Black History Month acknowledges those who came before us and celebrates the progress that continues to be made by African Americans here at the MWRD and worldwide,” said MWRD President Kari K. Steele. “By taking time to rec-

ognize Black History Month, we demonstrate our commitment to our communities which are strengthened by our commitment to excellence, our commitment to increase diversity and working to make sure resources are distributed equitably and fairly.”

The design of the Pan-African flag has special meaning:

- The red represents the blood of African people shed for liberation.
- The black represents people of African descent.
- The green represents the continent of Africa and all its natural wealth, the land from which African people descended.

“This first day of February has special meaning for us here at the MWRD,” said MWRD Vice President Kimberly Du Buclet. “Together, our community has striven to shine a light on our diversity and celebrate the many contributions African Americans make in the protection of our water environment and in our daily lives.

*(continued)*

## Flag raising kicks off Black History Month celebration at MWRD *cont.*

The flag raising also represents a kickoff to several MWRD events that the agency holds each February in honor of Black History Month.

On Thursday, Feb. 16, at 5 p.m. the MWRD will host a Black History Month celebration at the McGowan Main Office Building boardroom, 100 E. Erie St. in Chicago. Vice President Du Buclet will moderate a panel to discuss environmental justice issues and how community leaders and others advocate for equity. Panelists include: WBEZ Data Projects Editor Alden Loury, Blacks in Green™ Founder/CEO Naomi Davis, People for Community Recovery Executive Director Cheryl Johnson, SEIU Healthcare President Greg Kelley, Faith in Place Policy/Advocacy Director Pastor Scott Onqué, and MWRD Environmental Justice Section Principal Civil Engineer Lolita Thompson. President and CEO of the Chicago Urban League and former Gary Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson will also be on hand to provide remarks. Guests can register at <https://mwrdd.org/black-history-month-program>. Seating is limited.

On Wednesday, Feb. 22 at 4 p.m., the MWRD will host a virtual business roundtable to discuss how community leaders advocate for equity in contracting and how minority-owned business enterprises can learn more about business opportunities with the MWRD. MWRD staff, including Dr. Regina Berry, Diversity Administrator; Dr. Catherine O'Connor, Director of Engineering; and Darlene LoCascio, Director of Procurement and Materials Management, along with business leaders will participate.

Register at <https://mwrdd.org/black-history-month-virtual-panel-environmental-justice-and-advocating-equity-contracting>.

The MWRD will also participate in the Black Creativity Science Café at the Museum of Science and Industry, 5700 S. Du Sable Lake Shore Drive, on Feb. 23 and 25, to engage students in STEM careers and shed light on the important work of the MWRD protecting the region's water environment.



*In the photo (clockwise, L-R): Pan-African flag-raising at Calumet WRP, Egan WRP, Hanover Park WRP, Kirie WRP, Lemont WRP, O'Brien WRP and Stickney WRP.*

### ***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](https://mwrdd.org).*