



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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Friends of the Chicago River honor MWRD's work protecting Midlothian and Oak Forest and restoring Natalie Creek



(From L to R): MWRD Chairman of Finance Commissioner Marcelino Garcia and MWRD Commissioner Eira L. Corral Sepúlveda accepted a Chicago River Blue award from Friends of the Chicago River Board President Sally Fletcher and Friends of the Chicago River Executive Director Margaret Frisbie. (Photo by Ian Vecchiotti)



(From L to R): MWRD Commissioners, Eira L. Corral Sepúlveda, Chakena D. Perry, Kimberly Du Buclet, Cameron Davis, President Kari K. Steele, Josina Morita, Chairman of Finance Marcelino Garcia and Mariyana Spyropoulos paused after the June 2 Board of Commissioners meeting to recognize the Chicago River Blue Award from Friends of the Chicago River given to the MWRD for flood control work in Midlothian and Oak Forest.

Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) Chairman of Finance Marcelino Garcia and Commissioner Eira Corral Sepúlveda accepted the Chicago River Blue Award from Friends of the Chicago River on behalf of the MWRD at the Big Fish Ball on June 1. This award honors the MWRD's work on the Natalie Creek Flood Control Project.

"Thank you to Friends for highlighting our work on Natalie Creek, where we will reduce flooding for more than 200 structures and protect residents of Midlothian and Oak Forest from rising waters," said MWRD President Kari K. Steele.

"Working together with the communities in Midlothian and Oak Forest and the team of 'Floodlothians,' we are addressing heavy rains, improving local water quality, and creating resilience for future generations of residents facing excessive stormwater," said Commissioner Garcia.

The Natalie Creek project, which broke ground in 2018, mitigates the costly effects of overbank flooding along 15,800 linear feet of Natalie Creek. The MWRD increased the size of culverts, widened the channel at several locations, created a new stormwater storage basin along the channel, and restored and reshaped parts of the channel with erosion control measures and sediment removal. As a result, the improvements will provide flood reduction benefits for more than 200 structures affected by overbank flooding along Natalie Creek in Oak Forest and Midlothian.

MWRD leadership thanked Friends of the Chicago River for the award and the organization's continued partnership and advocacy work protecting area waterways and the region's most precious natural resources.

"I had a great time at Friends of the Chicago River's Big Fish Ball," said MWRD (continued)

Friends of the Chicago River honor MWRD's work, *cont.*

Commissioner Eira L. Corral Sepúlveda. “Their powerful advocacy has had a tremendous impact in restoring health to our waterways and the communities, ecosystems, and critters that depend on them. Alongside Commissioner Marcelino García, I was proud to accept the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District’s award for our Natalie Creek Flood Control Project.”

In a letter to the MWRD, Friends Executive Director Margaret Frisbie praised the Natalie Creek Flood Control Project for its work not only for its flood control aspects and enhancements to local water quality and stream protection.

“We are very pleased to bestow this award on your project, which embodies the principles of supporting a thriving Chicago and Calumet River system that is clean, ecologically healthy, and accessible to all,” said Executive Director Frisbie. “We feel that the Natalie Creek Project provides an innovative approach to flood mitigation, using small stream restoration and naturalization techniques. We are excited to see MWRD taking on these types of projects, especially in key tributary areas of the watershed.”

Since the first awards in 2010, Friends of the Chicago River has recognized a total of 77 projects that represent both large-scale initiatives and the equally important individual actions of river-edge property



In addition to restoring Natalie Creek and local infrastructure, the MWRD’s Natalie Creek Flood Control Project will increase the level of protection to existing residential and commercial structures that are prone to flooding in frequent storm events.

owners and elected officials to improve and protect the Chicago-Calumet River system. The MWRD has been a recipient of past Friends’ awards for its work on completing the Thornton Composite Reservoir to mitigate flooding and protect local waterways as part of the MWRD’s Tunnel and Reservoir Plan (TARP), and its Space to Grow partnership to convert Chicago schoolyards into permeable and vibrant places to play. To learn more about the Friends of the Chicago River’s Chicago Blue River Awards and recipients, visit <https://www.chicagoriver.org/programs/public-policy-and-planning/chicago-blue-river-awards>.

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 mwrld.org.