



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, academics, utilities converge in Chicago to discuss how to address contaminants



*The MWRD and other Midwestern utilities engaged with researchers in a two-day workshop hosted by The Water Research Foundation to learn more about per- and polyfluorinated alkylated substances (PFAS) and wastewater treatment.*

Researchers, academics, water professionals, engineers and scientists descended on Chicago to join the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) to collaborate on addressing emerging contaminants in wastewater.

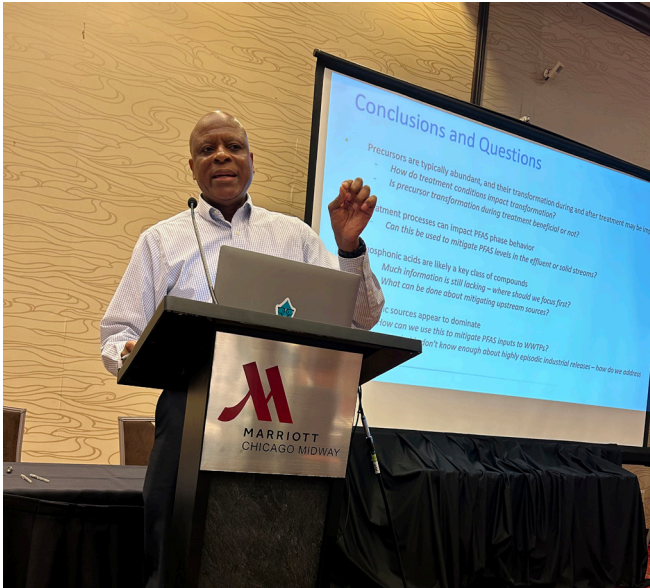
The MWRD and other utilities joined the Water Research Foundation (WRF) for a workshop on PFAS Management for Wastewater Treatment Utilities. PFAS, also known as, per- and polyfluorinated alkylated substances (PFAS) are a group of manmade fluorinated compounds that are designed to be stable and have been in commercial use since the 1940s. The stability of the chemicals makes them difficult to degrade which is why they are often referred to as “forever chemicals,” but that longevity also makes it a challenging for water utilities trying to eliminate them.

“Addressing PFAS in wastewater is paramount in our mission to protect public health and our water environ-

ment,” said MWRD President Kari K. Steele. “While we anticipate future regulations for concerning contaminants like PFAS, we are already taking many actions to address them by bringing together the brightest minds on the subject.”

Immediately before the WRF workshop, the MWRD Monitoring and Research Department hosted the two-day annual U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) 4170 Technical Committee meeting focused on current research on biosolids such as addressing benefits and emerging contaminants. Recovered from the water reclamation process, biosolids sequester carbon, supply organic matter and improve soil structure and porosity, which allows plants to utilize nutrients more effectively. While concentrations of PFAS in biosolids fall below the levels of food packaging, cosmetics and even dust, the MWRD and partners are deliberating and consulting with various partners to best address the issue. *(continued)*

## MWRD, academics, utilities converge in Chicago, *cont.*



From the MWRD's Industrial Waste Division to soil scientists, treatment plant operators and plant managers, the MWRD sent a diverse delegation of staff to the PFAS Management for Wastewater Treatment Utilities. Speakers included MWRD Environmental Monitoring and Research Manager Albert Cox (top left) and WRF Chief Research Officer John Albert (top right, from left) and MWRD Executive Director Brian A. Perkovich, who led the conference with opening remarks.

At the PFAS Management for Wastewater Treatment Utilities workshop, held at the Chicago Marriott Midway, water professionals had the opportunity to hear presentations and engage in panel discussions on results from some of the latest research that highlight the challenges that wastewater treatment facilities face with addressing PFAS. The key to pollution prevention remains addressing the source of PFAS, but speakers also shared the latest research that will help guide decision making. Speakers and panelists reflected on source control, implementing PFAS accumula-

tion and destruction technologies in wastewater, and managing PFAS in land-applied biosolids.

"Through partnership and collaboration with utilities like MWRD, WRF is able to help discover opportunities and solve problems by delivering actionable water research to meet the needs of the communities they serve," said WRF Chief Research Officer John Albert.

A 501(c)(3) nonprofit, educational organization, WRF is the leading research organization advancing *(continued)*

## MWRD, academics, utilities converge in Chicago, *cont.*

the science of all water to meet the evolving needs of its subscribers and the water sector. WRF funds, manages, and publishes research on the technology, operation, and management of drinking water, wastewater, reuse, and stormwater systems—all in pursuit of ensuring water quality and improving water services to the public.

Through WRF, the MWRD has participated in national and international research to advance the science of water to improve the quality of life for all communities. Since 1990, the MWRD has been directly involved in more than 20 WRF research projects, such as investigating PFAS, enhanced biological phosphorus removal, intelligent water systems, utility innovation and other im-

portant topics. WRF in 2022 honored the MWRD with the Outstanding Subscriber Award for Applied Research for making notable improvements to their treatment, delivery, and/or management processes through the successful application of WRF research.

“We’re working hard with partners WRF, USDA, fellow utilities, and researchers to address PFAS and emerging contaminants in wastewater,” said MWRD Commissioner Cam Davis, who authored MWRD’s first-ever PFAS policy that passed unanimously in February. “By bringing experts together we’re one step closer to addressing this critical challenge to public, fiscal, and ecological health.”

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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 [mwr.org](http://mwr.org).*