



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District *of* Greater Chicago

# Press Release

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## MWRD celebrates African American History Month with flag raising and commitment to promote health and wellness

Lifting every voice and singing, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) maintained its annual tradition of raising the Pan-African Flag in commemoration of African American History Month, only this time raising it at all seven water reclamation plants and promoting health and wellness.

MWRD commissioners joined staff and area dignitaries to hoist the flag at the MWRD headquarters, 100 E. Erie St. on Feb. 1. To watch the event video, visit:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ODghrRGsGzE>

“This flag raising ceremony is just the beginning of the MWRD’s celebration of African American History month,” said MWRD President Kari K. Steele. “As we all know, health and wellness are especially vital during these times. This month we will explore physical health, mental health, and financial health, and pledge our commitment to diversity, support for the Black community and honor the achievements of African Americans in the fields of health and wellness.”



From L to R: MWRD Commissioner Kim Du Budet, Cook County Judge Dominique C. Ross, Commissioner Josina Morita, Commissioner Chakena D. Perry, President Kari K. Steele, Vice President Barbara McGowan, Commissioner Eira L. Corral Sepúlveda, Commissioner Mariyana Spyropoulos and Cook County Commissioner Frank Aguilar commemorate African American History Month during a flag raising ceremony at the MWRD’s Main Office Building on Feb. 1, 2022.

(continued)

## African American History Month *cont.*

In addition to the flag raisings, the MWRD will host a live Zoom panel discussion on Feb. 24 and post videos on social media and the MWRD website highlighting African Americans who have positively influenced the health and wellness of all. The panel will focus on “Black Health and Wellness” and will be moderated by MWRD Vice President Barbara McGowan. To register, visit <https://bit.ly/3GjQUX5>.

“The MWRD’s celebration of African American History month began in the 1980s, and each year we work to make the celebration more meaningful,” said Vice President McGowan, who was inducted into the Civil Rights Hall of Fame in 2020. “This year’s national theme for African American History Month is ‘Black Health and Wellness.’ My speech at the flag raising ceremony centered around events that occurred which are also a part of our history. As we raise the flag, let this month, and this year, be a call to action for each one of us to work towards improving our health and wellness.”

The theme of “Black Health and Wellness,” chosen by the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH), will observe the disproportionate impact that the COVID-19 global pandemic has had on African Americans and how past and present health challenges have brought about change in the medical profession and prompted resilience and excellence in the face of uncertainty.

The MWRD has also proven resilient in its call to protect the water environment during the pandemic. MWRD staff have continued to report to work around the clock to provide critically important water reclamation operations and stormwater management services. These tasks ensure the region’s wastewater is cleaned and that public health and the environment are protected.

Although traditional MWRD gatherings for African American History Month are not possible due to the pandemic, the MWRD has evolved, celebrating diversity on the MWRD’s social media pages and website.

A leader in diversity, inclusion, and equity in managing wastewater and stormwater, the MWRD has long been a regional leader in promoting equal opportunity in services, contracts and hiring. The MWRD was one of the first area agencies to institute an Affirmative Action ordinance in 1977, and in 2021 conducted a disparity study of its minority- and women-owned business enterprise (M/WBE) program to ensure that M/WBEs have equal access to contracting opportunities and that the MWRD’s current program remains successful. In 2020, the MWRD became the first government agency in Illinois to raise the Pan-African flag in celebration of African American History month.



Main Office Building, 100 E. Erie St., Chicago

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## African American History Month *cont.*



Top left: Stickney Water Reclamation Plant, 6001 W. Pershing Rd., Cicero, IL; Top right: Calumet Water Reclamation Plant, 400 E. 130th St., Chicago; Middle Left: Lemont Water Reclamation Plant, 13 Stephen St., Lemont; Middle Center: Kirie Water Reclamation Plant, 701 Oakton St., Des Plaines; Middle Right: Hanover Park Water Reclamation Plant, 1220 Sycamore Ave., Hanover Park; Bottom Left: Egan Water Reclamation Plant, 550 S. Meacham Rd., Schaumburg; Bottom Right: O'Brien Water Reclamation Plant, 3500 Howard St., Skokie

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***Recovering Resources, Transforming Water***

*Established in 1889, the MWRD ([www.mwr.org](http://www.mwr.org)) is an award winning, special purpose government agency responsible for wastewater treatment and stormwater management in Cook County, Illinois.*