



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

Allison Fore

Public and Intergovernmental Affairs Officer
312.751.6626
allison.fore@mwr.org
100 East Erie Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611

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MWRD promotes international learning exchange embracing culture and science to address water solutions



MWRD Commissioner Patricia Theresa Flynn (3rd from left) and MWRD Commissioner and Chairman of Finance Marcelino Garcia (4th from left), co-chairs of the international 2023 Water and Waste Management Conference, present ceremonial diplomas to each of the esteemed conference speakers. Dr. Jnyana Ranjan Mohanty (from left), registrar of the Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT), joined Kale Tech Principal Chetan Kale, Commissioner Flynn, Commissioner Garcia, and MWRD Senior Electrical Engineer Sam Pappu on stage.

Just as water's flow reaches every corner of the world, so, too, has the network of partners that the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) has collaborated with to implement innovative practices in water reclamation and the recovery of renewable resources.

MWRD Chairman of Finance Marcelino Garcia and Commissioner Patricia Theresa Flynn, along with former MWRD engineer Dr. Prakasam Tata, executive director of the Center for the Transformation of Waste Technology, served as co-chairs of the 5th Annual International Conference and Expo on Water and Waste Management (WWM) held at the Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India. WWM is a team of consultants, scientists, engineers and academics from the

U.S., Australia, Canada, Europe, Singapore, and India with an average experience of more than 30 years in water and waste management. The group provides a learning exchange platform for governments, industry and the public to share knowledge. Other staff participants included Syama Pappu, Senior Electrical Engineer; Khaja Moinuddin, Senior Civil Engineer; Sanjay Patel, retired O'Brien Water Reclamation Plant Manager; Hitesh Shah, retired Egan Water Reclamation Plant Manager and painter Mark Flynn.

"The MWRD is an award-winning agency in the water environment field recognized by our peers on the international stage. Our success is built on engagement with professionals who are innovating and willing to share their learnings," says President Kari K. Steele. "I thank Commissioners Flynn and Garcia for (continued)

MWRD promotes international learning exchange, cont.



Other staff participants included Syama Papu, Senior Electrical Engineer; (2nd from left) Khaja Moinuddin, Senior Civil Engineer; (3rd from left) Sanjay Patel, retired O'Brien Water Reclamation Plant Manager; Hitesh Shah, retired Egan Water Reclamation Plant Manager; and (6th from right) painter Mark Flynn.

assembling this impressive group that will continue to develop the skills and energy to advance our mission.”

The delegation received special training and support to make the most of their time together before, during, and after the conference. The program consisted of five tracks: water resource management, water treatment technology, solid waste management, water reuse and the circular economy, and innovation and business opportunities. Several of the seminars were presented by current and retired MWRD staff.

“It’s so important for our staff to be engaged. After all, our success is due to our workforce. It was a proud moment to see the contributions by our staff on their expertise in stormwater and sanitation improvements,” said Commissioner Flynn. “They are proactive, collaborating, and have a genuine passion.”

Highlights included projects by Ruth Abbe, president of Zero Waste USA, on smart waste management in cities; DuPage County Department of Stormwater Management’s streambank restoration efforts; Purdue University Agricultural and Biological Engineering Professor Dr. Pankaj Bhatt’s research on the use of bacteria, algae and fungi to remove toxic pollutants from wastewater; and former Michigan state Rep. Padma Kuppa, who inspired the audience with a memorable presentation.

“We realize we cannot manage our water alone,” said Chairman of Finance Garcia. “Addressing climate change and protecting our water environment requires partnerships, collaboration, and a cultural shift in how we think about water management.”

The MWRD has a long history of international partnerships, working with world-renowned institutions to exchange knowledge and advance science and technology for the protection of water resources throughout the globe. Earlier this month, the



Attendees at the 5th Annual International Conference & Expo on Water and Waste Management reunited MWRD commissioners and staff with like-minded water professionals from India and other parts of the world.

MWRD Board of Commissioners approved a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to engage in a knowledge exchange program with international wastewater utilities that own and operate large diameter deep tunnel systems. The Public Utilities Board (PUB) from Singapore invited the MWRD to participate in the Global Tunnel Exchange (GTX) with representatives from PUB, the Greater Paris Interdepartmental Sanitation Authority and the City of Yokohama.

In 2022, commissioners authorized the MWRD to join a multi-lateral MOU with Dubai Municipality, PUB, Singapore; the Greater Paris Interdepartmental Sanitation Authority; Bazalgette Tunnel Limited and Thames Water Utilities Ltd. in London, to explore opportunities to share best practices in the areas of sustainable infrastructure development and operations for stormwater, wastewater, and water reuse. Also in 2022, commissioners continued a long-running partnership with Aarhus, Denmark and the Consulate General of Denmark in Chicago through an MOU with the Danish Water Technology Alliance for a similar knowledge exchange program. This is the third agreement between the MWRD and the Danish Water Technology Alliance, dating back to 2014, in which MWRD engineers have traveled to Aarhus, Denmark to cultivate the learning exchange.

The MWRD has partnered with numerous universities and academic researchers to address renewable energy opportunities and nutrient loss reduction strategies. Scientists with the MWRD and the U.S. Department of Energy’s Argonne National Laboratory partnered to complete a groundbreaking seven-year study exploring the metagenomics and microbial health of the Chicago Area Waterway System. The MWRD is currently partnering with local and national research partners and health departments to explore wastewater-based epidemiology studies to shed light on the spread of the COVID-19 virus and other viruses detected in wastewater.

Recovering Resources, Transforming Water