



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

# Press Release

**Allison Fore**

Public and Intergovernmental Affairs Officer

312.751.6626

allison.fore@mwrdr.org

100 East Erie Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611

For immediate release

October 28, 2020

## MWRD's dedicated essential service earns platinum praise

Despite the unpredictable nature of stormwater running off streets and sidewalks and wastewater funneling from homes, businesses and industrial corridors, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) has again achieved the highest standards for transforming billions of gallons of wastewater into clean water and protecting area waterways.

The National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA) recognized the MWRD with six Platinum Peak Performance Awards for at least five consecutive years of meeting stringent permit guidelines at six MWRD water reclamation plants (WRPs), including the Calumet WRP, which earned platinum honors for meeting full compliance for 28 consecutive years.

"Thank you to our innovative staff who work the front lines every day to protect the quality of our region's water and reclaim it to benefit our environment," said MWRD Vice President Barbara McGowan. "Although these awards commemorate our work in 2019, it is this same staff who we applaud in 2020 as heroes for sacrificing so much to come into work each day to manage our region's wastewater and improve the quality of life for residents and the environment around them."

The annual awards honor treatment plants for meeting 100 percent compliance of National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits. The MWRD was lauded with platinum status at six WRPs for achieving 100 percent compliance for at least five consecutive years at each. The following facilities have earned Platinum status:

- Calumet Water Reclamation Plant, Chicago, 28 years
- Lemont Water Reclamation Plant, Lemont, 23 years
- James C. Kirie Water Reclamation Plant, Des Plaines, 15 years
- O'Brien Water Reclamation Plant, Skokie, 14 years
- Hanover Park Water Reclamation Plant, Hanover Park, 12 years
- John E. Egan Water Reclamation Plant, Schaumburg, 6 years



*The Calumet Water Reclamation Plant, 400 E. 130th St., in Chicago, has continued its sterling reputation for transforming wastewater into clean water from its service area that covers 300 square miles.*

The Calumet WRP, which treated more than 300 million gallons per day in 2019, was placed into service in 1922, followed by the O'Brien WRP in 1928. The MWRD treated more than 536 billion gallons of water in 2019, or about 1.47 billion gallons of water per day. More intense rain events combined with impervious pavement, a flat terrain and increasing demand to shelter the region from pollution all make the MWRD's around-the-clock service essential to protecting the public health and the local water environment. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic the MWRD continues to provide critically important water reclamation operations and stormwater management services to ensure the region's wastewater is cleaned and that public health and the environment are protected.

"We are honored to receive this platinum recognition from the National Association of Clean Water Agencies," said MWRD Commissioner Mariyana Spyropoulos. "It serves as reminder of the important work of our Maintenance and Operations staff, pollution control teams and the Industrial Waste Division who ensure clean water for our environment no matter what flows their way."

In addition to its role as the regional stormwater authority for Cook County, the MWRD treats wastewater (*continued*)

## MWRD's dedicated essential service earns platinum praise, *cont.*

for residents and businesses for an equivalent population of 10.35 million people across an 882-square-mile area that includes Chicago and 128 suburban communities. The MWRD's treatment process is protected by a pretreatment program to guard against hazardous substances and toxic chemicals. The MWRD routinely monitors industries and non-residential sources to assure that wastes are disposed of in an environmentally responsible and lawful manner.

NACWA officials honored water utilities Oct. 28 during a presentation recorded in Washington, D.C.

"Our public utility members are the backbone of the communities they serve, providing safe, reliable access to clean water services day-in and day-out. The Peak Performance Award ceremony is our chance to shine a national spotlight on those outstanding clean water utilities that have demonstrated operational excellence with no more than five permit violations in a calendar year, and, for our Gold and Platinum Award winners, zero violations," said Adam Krantz, Chief Executive Officer of NACWA. "These utilities represent the top performers in the whole country and go above and beyond in their mission to protect public health and the environment. On behalf of NACWA's Board of Directors, I extend my con-



*The MWRD's Lemont Water Reclamation Plant was recognized for meeting 100 percent compliance of National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits for 23 consecutive years. The Lemont plant treated an average of nearly 3 million gallons of water per day to serve 20,000 residents of Lemont.*

gratulations and gratitude to all this year's award winners and I thank them for their service and their incredible compliance with increasingly rigid Clean Water Act standards. This year has seen unprecedented challenges in the wake of the pandemic, and the Peak Performance Award winners have more than risen to the occasion."

###

### ***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](http://mwrld.org).*