



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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MWRD's resource recovery work featured in global documentary



Tom Kunetz (right), Assistant Director of Monitoring and Research, joins British film director Tim Neeves on the red carpet at the world premiere of the documentary "Brave Blue World" at the Paramount Studio Theater in Hollywood, California on Dec. 16, 2019.

A documentary to increase the public's awareness about the work of the water sector worldwide premiered at the Paramount Theatre Hollywood and features actors Matt Damon, Jaden Smith and Liam Neeson and past Water Environment Federation (WEF) president and Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago Assistant Director of Monitoring and Research Tom Kunetz.

The film showcases the work underway by leading researchers, engineers and organizations across the world to protect water quality, increase resiliency, and reduce



Tom Kunetz speaks with Blue Tech CEO and "Brave Blue World" producer Paul Callaghan on camera in the MWRD's greenhouse at Stickney Water Reclamation Plant during filming for the new documentary exploring emerging trends in water management.

water scarcity. Included in the film is an interview with Kunetz who discusses the MWRD's proactive work in sustainability, highlighting the phosphorus recovery facility at the Stickney Water Reclamation Plant (WRP) and the algae nutrient recovery research facility at the O'Brien WRP.

"We were happy to support this project that sheds a bright spotlight on the work of the MWRD and our fellow water professionals across the world working to protect our prized natural resource," said MWRD President Kari K. Steele. "We thank the Brave Blue World filmmakers and our Tom Kunetz for their diligent work and travel across the world to bring these water issues to the forefront."

Following its international premier in Los Angeles, Calif. on Dec. 16, the documentary will be submitted to international film festivals, earning further worldwide recognition for the MWRD. WEF was one of the documentary's major funders, as it sought to support a project that highlighted the diverse range of work across the world to manage water. *(continued)*

MWRD's resource recovery work featured in documentary, *cont.*



Tom Kunetz and Operating Engineer Ray Lendabarker show off the Crystal Green fertilizer that is recovered from the wastewater stream at Stickney Water Reclamation Plant. The slow release fertilizer does not pose a threat to water quality.



International filmmakers descended on the Stickney Water Reclamation Plant to film the MWRD's dynamic process to treat up to 1.44 billion gallons of water per day while working to recover resources from the treatment process.

“After filming for 11 months across five continents, we have completed production of our water documentary ‘Brave Blue World,’” writes producer Paul O’Callaghan. “‘Brave Blue World’ is the first honest and hopeful documentary that will paint an optimistic picture of how humanity is adopting new technologies and innovations to re-think how we manage water. We have been on an incredible journey to meet with pioneers and innovators who are addressing global water and sanitation challenges. Their stories reveal a hopeful and optimistic future for our most precious resource.”

In March, MWRD staff spent two days working with international filmmakers to capture scenes of the MWRD at work. The filmmakers learned about the MWRD’s role protecting the water environment, its rich history in managing water, reversing the flow of the Chicago River, introducing wastewater treatment, and pioneering the major shift from treatment to resource recovery and reuse.

The filmmakers learned how the MWRD is harvesting algae to recover nutrients at O’Brien WRP and developing a slow-release fertilizer recovered from the treatment process at Stickney WRP. The filmmakers caught an intimate glimpse of the world’s largest nutrient recovery facility at Stickney WRP, where cameras were rolling as 22 tons of fertilizer was poured in bulk to be transported by truck. The nutrient recovery process at Stickney provides significant benefits by removing phosphorus that formerly polluted waterways as far as the Mississippi River and Gulf of Mexico and returns it to farmers and other agricultural producers at a time when there is a scarcity of phosphorus left on the planet.

Brave Blue World filmed in Switzerland with clean water advocate and actor Matt Damon and besides Illinois, traveled to film in Singapore, California, New Orleans, Mexico City, Kenya, Spain, Australia, Japan, China, Spain, Ireland, England and Denmark. For more information on the film or to request a screening, visit www.braveblueworld.com.

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Recovering Resources, Transforming Water

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