



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District *of* Greater Chicago

Press Release

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MWRD emergency relief to help protect lakefront shoreline

Funding agreement allows work to proceed to protect Lake Shore Drive



High lake levels and damaging waves threaten to overwhelm the shoreline and Lake Shore Drive near 49th Street. The MWRD will aid emergency shoreline improvements being made by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Chicago Department of Transportation to stem the tide.

Work has begun to repair the Lake Michigan Shoreline in Chicago thanks in part to \$1.5 million funds approved by the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) Board of Commis-

sioners to respond to unprecedented high lake levels and damaging storms in early 2020. The funds will help make repairs along the lakefront near Morgan Shoal between 47th and 51st streets to prevent *(continued)*

MWRD emergency relief to help protect lakefront shoreline, *cont.*

further erosion and protect Lake Shore Drive from damaging waves.

The MWRD entered into an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) with the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) in September 2020 to provide the additional funding needed to address the full scope of the emergency work to be performed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) in partnership with CDOT.

“We hope these critical funds will solidify our shoreline and protect Lake Shore Drive from damaging waves and flooding,” said MWRD President Kari K. Steele. “In our role to manage stormwater and protect the quality of our freshwater supply in Lake Michigan, we are pleased to support the efforts by the City of Chicago and Army Corps to respond to this matter.”

The work will last about six weeks and will supplement emergency protection measures that were completed in early 2020 following a massive storm that occurred Jan. 10-11, 2020. The storm and ensuing waves damaged the lakefront following historically high lake levels. According to CDOT, work will consist of placing 1,500 tons of riprap stone and construction of a 20-foot wide, 800-foot-long concrete revetment, which will also serve as part of the lakefront trail.

Erosion from high water levels threatened structures, roadways, infrastructure, and the public safety. CDOT identified the need to perform additional emergency measures to armor the shoreline of Lake Michigan with new riprap and concrete blocks.

“Chicago’s lakefront shoreline is one of our greatest natural assets, and it is seriously threatened by rising lake levels caused by climate change,” said CDOT Commissioner Gia Biagi. “We are very pleased to be partnering with the MWRD, US Army Corps of Engineers and Chicago Park District to make these critical repairs that



The MWRD will fund much needed lakefront restoration caused by high lake levels and damaging waves that occurred during major storms in January 2020.

will protect the Lakefront Trail and South Lake Shore Drive from damage caused by future major storms.”

Following severe weather in January 2020 that battered Lake Michigan’s shoreline, recreational areas and infrastructure, Governor JB Pritzker issued a state disaster proclamation for Cook and Lake Counties to help communities recover. On Feb. 7, 2020, Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot, U.S. Senator Dick Durbin and other officials also requested emergency declarations from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The MWRD worked quickly to assist, with the MWRD Board of Commissioners authorizing the IGA for shoreline repairs near Morgan Shoal on Feb. 20, 2020. Morgan Shoal, a 32-acre sheet of limestone, teeming with aquatic life, sits about 300 feet offshore from the Hyde Park neighborhood.

“This is a highly visible area, and I’m sure many people who enjoy the lakefront will be happy when the work is completed,” said Commissioner Kim DuBuclet. “We appreciate that CDOT and the U.S. Army Corps have prioritized this project.”

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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 mwrld.org.