



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

# Press Release

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For immediate release

October 16, 2012

## WEFTEC utility executives' forum focuses on utilities of the future

Staff representing the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago assembled in New Orleans, Louisiana last month to participate on several wastewater-related panels during the Water Environment Federation's annual WEFTEC conference.

Executive Director David St. Pierre participated in a panel discussion focusing on opportunities for transformational change for water utilities. He summarized the MWRD's current work and explained future plans. "As the owner and operator of the largest wastewater treatment facility in the world, it is only fitting that we work to become the premier utility in the world," St. Pierre said.

While the MWRD continues to pursue additional uses for fertile biosolids, other efforts are under consideration as well. "The wastewater treatment digestion process produces methane and carbon dioxide, called biogas, which can be used to produce energy," St. Pierre said. "Biogas has numerous sustainable uses such as producing electricity or vehicle fuel. The MWRD is pursuing the possibility of adding organic wastes such as food wastes and restaurant grease into its digesters to increase its production of biogas."

The MWRD is also pursuing best practices for the recovery and reuse of phosphorus and nitrogen from the wastewater treatment process. In excessive amounts, phosphorous and nitrogen are nutrients that impact water quality, but if they are removed from the water stream, they can be returned to the soil as fertilizers for agriculture production.

Reclaiming and reusing the water that results from wastewater treatment processes also offers possibilities for reducing the reliance on our most precious resource, fresh water. "The processes that the MWRD is currently looking at are cutting-edge technology," said St. Pierre. "We pride ourselves on being in the forefront of utilities nationwide, but we are also committed to preserving and protecting our environment now and in the future."

Senior Environmental Microbiologist Toni Glymph-Martin participated in a comprehensive full-day workshop that focused on the nutrient removal from biosolids. The session was held at the Jefferson Parish Wastewater Treatment Plant. Glymph-Martin, along with leading practitioners, shared their experiences in six interactive 45 minute presentations that covered activated sludge and biological nutrient removal basics.

Senior Civil Engineer Lou Storino participated in a roundtable discussion that focused on "improving the quality of life for communities on the blue planet." He discussed the Pulaski Park Rain Garden service project that was a collaboration between the WEF, the Illinois Water Environment Association, the Center for Neighborhood Technology, the Chicago Park District and the MWRD. The Pulaski Park rain garden is designed to receive runoff from the rooftop of the adjacent pool house building on Park District property.

Next year's WEFTEC conference will be held in Chicago.

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**Our Water Environment: Take It Personally!**

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