



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

Allison Fore
 Public Affairs Specialist
 312.751.6633
 public.affairs@mwr.org
 100 East Erie Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611

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“Small Streams, Big Accomplishments” newsletter highlights efforts to keep waterways clear and prevent flooding

Flooding can intensify when area creeks, streams and waterways become blocked with dead or dying vegetation. Downed trees or low hanging branches, dense weeds, invasive plants and eroding stream banks can also have a negative impact on the ability of streams to flow naturally.

In 2006, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) implemented the Small Streams Maintenance Program to reduce flooding in urbanized areas through immediate remedies. To achieve this mission, the MWRD routinely monitors waterways while working in conjunction with local communities.

MWRD prepares a biannual newsletter, “Small Streams, Big Accomplishments,” to update the public about work MWRD takes to clear blockages, stabilize streambanks and remove dead and dying vegetation. The Fall 2012 edition is available on the MWRD website and by calling 312-751-6633.

“Chicagoland’s topography is flat, so obstructions in one location can lead to flooding upstream,” explained Commissioner Debra Shore, Chairman of the MWRD’s Stormwater Committee. “Blockages in small streams can build up quickly during storms as floating debris piles up, creates a dam and can cause overland flooding.”

MWRD’s successful debris removal program works in conjunction with local communities, which assist with wood chipping and hauling debris away from project sites. One of the earliest examples of the cooperative effort between the MWRD and local communities took place in 2006. The Little Calumet Watershed Planning Council, the Town of Lansing Public Works Division, and the Cook County Forest Preserve District worked together to remove five 60 foot beaver dams and a den in North Creek that created upstream high water and potential flooding in Lansing, Illinois. The blockages generated over 120 cubic yards of debris in the stream.

The largest amount the MWRD has removed in one location was from Thorn Creek in the Sweet Woods Forest Preserve near Glenwood in Sept. 2009. MWRD crews removed a 3,000 cubic yard log jam.

Cubic yards of debris removed by MWRD crews and contractors since the Small Streams program started in 2006:

2006: 7,725	2008: 31,300	2010: 34,721	2012 (to date): 29,651
2007: 17,800	2009: 44,765	2011: 30,762	

Individuals and communities are encouraged to contact the MWRD at (708) 588-3171 if there is a Cook County waterway with accumulating debris or blockages.

Our water environment, Take it personally.



Cover of “Small Streams, Big Accomplishments.”