



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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Riverbank Neighbors, environmental groups and MWRD discuss streambank improvements for north branch of Chicago River

Representatives from the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD), environmental organizations, and Riverbank Neighbors met at Waters Elementary School last week to discuss proposed streambank stabilization improvements to a section of riverbank along the north branch of the Chicago River in Chicago's Ravenswood community.

The project site is located on the eastern bank of the river, between Montrose Avenue and Berceau Avenue, next to a densely developed residential neighborhood. The Chicago Park District's Horner Park is located on the west bank.

The east riverbank slope at the project site has deteriorated over the years due to erosion and slope failures which potentially compromise residential structures that are within 20 feet of the bank rim.

"We are happy to have the opportunity to work with Riverbank Neighbors and our other partners representing a variety of environmental organizations to make sure this project meets the needs of all who are involved," said

MWRD Executive Director David St. Pierre. "Our ultimate goal is to stabilize the streambank and prevent erosion. If we didn't do this project, the riverbank would continue eroding which could eventually place area homes in danger."

The proposed project includes structurally protecting approximately 1330 feet of the existing east riverbank that has been subjected to bank erosion and slope instability in recent years.

Additional habitat for fish will be considered. All existing stormwater outfalls from the bank will be preserved and extended through the layered wall of stones and chunks of concrete known as riprap. Clusters of shrubs will be installed, area openings will be filled with top soil and seeded, dead trees will be removed, and other trees will be pruned.

"Along with incorporating plants and shrubbery that are suggested by the Riverbank Neighbors and our environmental partners, plans include protecting and preserving the existing trees," said St. Pierre.

"We have been waiting a long time for this project," said Riverbank Neighbors representative Pete Leki. "We appreciate all that the District has done thus far, and we look forward to providing input as the project gets underway."

The United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) considers the north branch of the river as a "Traditional Navigable Waterway," which means the next step is for the MWRD to be granted a permit from the USACE to proceed. Once this happens, the MWRD will put the project out to bid. Construction is expected to start next summer.

The group walked along the streambank to see the impacted area. Besides staff from the MWRD, community representatives included: Janie Chen, Natural Resources Defense Council; Aaron Durnbaugh, Loyola University; Margaret Frisbie, Friends of the Chicago River; Susan Donovan, The Nature Conservancy; Hal Sprague, Center for Neighborhood Technology; and, Jared Teutsch, Alliance for the Great Lakes.



(L-R) Hal Sprague, Center for Neighborhood Technology; Jared Teutsch, Alliance for the Great Lakes; Susan Donovan, The Nature Conservancy; David St. Pierre, MWRD Executive Director; Dr. Lakhwinder Hundal, MWRD Acting Supervising Soil Scientist; Justin Vick, MWRD Biologist; and Pete Leki, Riverbank Neighbors representative.

Established in 1889, the MWRD (www.mwrdd.org) is an award-winning, special purpose government agency responsible for wastewater treatment and stormwater management in Cook County, Illinois. **Our water environment, Take it personally.**