



Press Release

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Cornucopia of actions can improve water environment

As families come together to give thanks during the holiday season, a cornucopia of environmentally-friendly activities can help improve the water environment. The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) has compiled a short list of best practices that can be followed now and throughout the year:

#1 Conserve water

When brushing your teeth or washing your hands, turn the water off until needed. Fill washing machines and dishwashers completely before starting the laundry or dish washing cycles. If you are washing dishes by hand, turn the water off while rinsing and instead, fill one sink with rinse water. In addition to saving thousands of gallons every month, you will be saving the energy that is used to process, pump and heat the water.

#2 Minimize use of water before and during storms

Reducing residential water use during rain events allows maximum room for stormwater to enter the sewers and could prevent flooding in your neighborhood.

#3 Dispose of unwanted pharmaceuticals in an environmentally-friendly manner

Sewage treatment facilities are not designed to process medications that have been flushed or poured down drains. Instead, seek out organized pharmaceutical collection programs where unwanted over-the-counter and prescription medications can be properly disposed (pet meds too!); the MWRD partners twice a year with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration to collect unwanted drugs.

#4 Pick up pet waste

Pet waste serves as a food source for disease-spreading pests and contains organic matter and bacteria which can make its way to our waterways and threaten human health and wildlife. It only takes a moment to secure the waste in a bag and discard it into the garbage.

#5 Reuse or properly dispose of plastic grocery bags

It is important that inlets and waterways leading to sewers remain free of debris in order to prevent flooding.

#6 Pick up any remaining lawn waste to prevent area flooding

Grass clippings, leaves, flowers, twigs, brush and tree limbs can block sewers and clog drains.

#7 Purchase and install a rain barrel

Install a rain barrel or two next spring to help minimize flooding and reduce the amount of water running into sewers. They are available from the MWRD for \$58 plus tax and includes delivery. City of Chicago residents may apply for a rebate from the Sustainable Backyards program.

"It is never too late to think about ways to protect our precious waterways," said Commissioner Michael Alvarez, chairman of the Stormwater Management committee. "The holiday season gives us time to reflect on the bounty Mother Earth provides, and we should return the favor by taking care of our water environment." Information about ways to protect the waterways is abundant. Resolve to learn more.

Our Water Environment: Take it personally.

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