



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District *of* Greater Chicago

Press Release

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MWRD recognizes National Groundwater Awareness Week March 9 - 15

The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) is joining the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) to promote National Groundwater Awareness Week March 9 through 15.

Groundwater filters through permeable surfaces and underground spaces between sand, gravel, and cracks in rock in geological formations called aquifers. Living organisms need water to thrive, and over 90 percent of all public drinking water systems rely on groundwater to supply the population with drinking water. Aquifers also provide water for lakes and replenish streams and rivers.

Because groundwater supplies vary from one area to another, local communities are responsible for protecting a community's groundwater supply, and they do this through rules and regulations.

The 15th annual National Groundwater Awareness Week is designed to educate the public about the importance of groundwater and water well stewardship. Every person can take action to preserve and protect groundwater for human and environmental needs. There are specific actions Cook County residents can take to protect the quality of our groundwater:

- Don't pour harmful substance down your drain or toilet. These substances can eventually enter our aquifers and contaminate groundwater. In addition, water treatment plants are not designed to dispose of products that contain hazardous substances such as medications. Put trash in its proper place. Carelessly discarded materials, such as packaging and plastic bags, are top offenders to water pollution.
- Pick up pet waste. The waste contains bacteria and parasites and when washed into lakes, streams and rivers, the waste decays and can lead to poor water quality.
- No dumping allowed. Hazardous wastes that are dumped or buried in the ground can contaminate the soil and filter into groundwater or be carried into a nearby body of surface water by runoff during rainstorms.
- Limit your purchases of a hazardous product. Only buy products you need and substitute a nonhazardous product when possible.
- Take advantage of community-based pharmaceutical collections. One such collection will be held April 26, when the MWRD and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration team up to collect unused or expired medication.

The U.S. EPA offers the "Citizen's Guide to Ground Water Protection" which encourages citizens to take an active and positive role in protecting their community's ground water supplies. To learn more about the pharmaceutical collection, visit www.dea.gov or call 312-751-6633.

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Our Water Environment: Take it personally.

Established in 1889, the MWRD (www.mwr.org) is an award-winning, special purpose government agency responsible for wastewater treatment and stormwater management in Cook County, Illinois.