



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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Highly anticipated Cal-Sag Trail connects Southland to waterways



President Mariyana Spyropoulos, Commissioner Debra Shore and others participated in the Cal-Sag Bike trail ribbon cutting recently.



(L-R) Retired Master Mechanic II Tom Butler, President Mariyana Spyropoulos, Commissioners Timothy Bradford and Debra Shore, and Acting Master Mechanic II Ed Jankun enjoyed festivities during the opening of the Cal-Sag Trail.

Officials unveiled the first half of a long-awaited trail that will connect Southland communities seeking recreation along the Cal-Sag Channel.

The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) joined federal and state officials to open the west segment of the Cal-Sag Trail, extending 13 miles from Lemont to Alsip. The MWRD dedicated half of the land on which the trail was built.

“We are thrilled to make this contribution and see the first half of the Cal-Sag Trail come into fruition,” said MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos. “This trail will connect communities and lives, and it is our belief that everyone should have access to our waterways and green space. The Cal-Sag Channel is particularly important to the MWRD, because we have been tasked with protecting and improving it, and we are happy any time we have a chance to highlight our work and utilize this critical resource.”

Although the trail has been more than 10 years in the making, area planning maps from as far back as the 1970s

promoted a multi-use path along the waterway. The trail was eventually made possible thanks to federal and state contributions, MWRD land donations and extensive community outreach and fundraising efforts from local municipalities, Friends of the Cal-Sag Trail and other local organizations.

When totally complete, the Cal-Sag Trail will connect 14 communities within the Southland and Millennium Reserve area, from Lemont all the way to the Burnham Greenway near the Indiana border. The eastern segment is scheduled to be complete by 2017. The 13-mile western segment runs along the Cal-Sag Channel from 131st Street and Cicero Avenue in Alsip on the east to Archer Avenue and Route 83 on the west end. Much of it runs through Cook County Forest Preserves, and it connects with several existing bike trails in the forest preserve system.

While more than 185,000 people live in the 14 communities a mile from the trail, more than 1.2 million people live within a 15 minute drive of the Cal-Sag Trail. Not only will the trail preserve and enhance the natural and

Highly anticipated Cal-Sag Trail connects Southland to waterways *(continued)*

historical qualities of the channel and Calumet River, it will provide an accessible opportunity for recreation and healthy lifestyles, said Steve Buchtel, executive director of Trails for Illinois.

“This is the most important health infrastructure project in Illinois in the last 20 years. There is no hospital, no fitness center, no physicians network in Illinois that’s going to improve the health and wellbeing more for so many people as the Cal-Sag Trail. And as this trail connects to the communities east of Alsip and other trail systems, that health impact is going to grow,” Buchtel said.

When complete, the Cal-Sag Trail is expected to be the longest trail in the Southland and will be the busiest regional trail in the Chicago area after the Chicago lakefront trail.

The trail will be used by bicyclists, hikers and neighbors. In addition to recreational opportunities, the trail is expected to create a rise in business opportunities. The trail connects users to regional trails, transit, retail areas, parks, forest preserves, marinas and nature centers.

“This trail has changed people’s perspective about the Cal-Sag Channel 180 degrees,” Buchtel said. “The towns are talking about incorporating the trail and views of the channel into development and open space projects. People are clamoring to clean up all this invasive brush that blocks view of the river—that’s a word people are using. It’s a river now, because of the trail.”



MWRD staff participated in a bike relay to celebrate the opening of the Cal-Sag Trail.



President Mariyana Spyropoulos and Commissioner Debra Shore offered remarks during the Cal-Sag Bike trail ribbon cutting.

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Recovering Resources, Transforming Water

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.