



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

Allison Fore

Public and Intergovernmental Affairs Officer

312.751.6633

public.affairs@mwr.org

100 East Erie Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611

For immediate release

September 3, 2015

No sandbags needed: Completed Levee 37 project prevents flooding in Des Plaines River communities



In the photo (L-R): State Rep. Elaine Nekritz, Dan Injerd, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Prospect Heights Mayor Nicholas Helmer, Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) Vice President Barbara McGowan, Mount Prospect Mayor Arlene Juracek, U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky, MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos, Wheeling Mayor Dean Argiris, U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin, MWRD Commissioner Kari Steele, State Sen. Dan Kotowski, MWRD Commissioner Debra Shore and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Lt. Col. Kevin Lovell cut the ribbon on the new Levee 37 project.

Working together with federal leaders, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), various agencies and northwest suburban communities surrounding the Des Plaines River, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) carried forth its mission to prevent flooding and manage stormwater.

Officials with the MWRD and USACE joined U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin and U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky, along with

state lawmakers, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), Cook County Forest Preserve District and local leaders from Mount Prospect, Prospect Heights and Wheeling to officially open Levee 37.

“Rising river waters is something we are all-too-familiar with in Illinois. Homeowners and businesses along the Des Plaines River shouldn’t have to think about filling sandbags every time it rains,” Sen. Durbin *(continued)*



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

Allison Fore

Public and Intergovernmental Affairs Officer

312.751.6633

public.affairs@mwr.org

100 East Erie Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611

No sandbags needed: Completed Levee 37 project prevents flooding in Des Plaines River communities *(continued)*

said. “Levee 37 will save communities from flood damage and save money – dollars spent on levees like this one help prevent disaster dollars needed down the line. This milestone is the culmination of many years of work and I am pleased to see this federal investment come to fruition to keep communities safe.”

Levee 37, also known as the Mount Prospect/Prospect Heights Levee, is located between Palatine Road to Euclid Avenue on the west side of the Des Plaines River. It will protect more than 600 existing homes and dozens of businesses in Mount Prospect and Prospect Heights from future flooding, with an estimated annual savings of more than \$3 million in avoided flood damage.

“Flood protection is extremely important in our community as each year homes and businesses face threats from rainstorms and the Des Plaines River,” Rep. Schakowsky said. “Levee 37 will provide strong controls to reduce flooding for hundreds of Illinoisans and save millions of dollars. That is exactly the type of preventive action we must take to keep residents safe and avoid property damage. I am proud to have worked with federal, state and local leaders to make Levee 37 a reality.”

The project became closer to reality after the MWRD stepped in to build a compensatory storage facility in Heritage Park in nearby Wheeling, which was needed to fill a 600-foot gap in the levee structure that could prevent additional water levels from escaping downstream. The Wheeling compensatory storage filled that gap.

“This project holds a special meaning to the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago as the Heritage Park Flood Control Facility was our first major stormwater construction project since the Illinois General Assembly granted us stormwater management authority in 2004,” said MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos. “It is also important to us because of the breadth of inter-governmental partnerships forged through this process.



U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin discussed his many visits in the past to the Mount Prospect and Prospect Heights area to view devastating flooding near River Road. The completed Levee 37 project will provide needed protection to those communities.

Through our relationship with the Village of Wheeling, Wheeling Park District, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Illinois Department of Natural Resources, the Heritage Park Flood Control Facility will ensure the benefits of Levee 37 could be realized. On behalf of the District, we are grateful for the opportunity to deliver these quality of life improvements to these communities.”

By developing the plan to provide compensatory floodplain storage for the USACE’s Levee 37 Project on the Des Plaines River, officials estimated they can protect hundreds of homes and businesses, and also provide increased stormwater detention at Heritage Park for the village of Wheeling. At Heritage Park, the MWRD, working with the Wheeling Park District, was able to provide six stormwater storage areas with a total capacity of more than 49 million gallons, as well as recreational improvements to Heritage Park, including new walkways, a pavilion by the lake, a band shell, soccer fields and a baseball complex.

Levee 37 is one of six projects authorized as part of an Upper Des Plaines River endeavor to reduce flooding along roughly 80 miles of the Des Plaines River, which flows through 33 municipalities in Cook and *(continued)*



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

Allison Fore

Public and Intergovernmental Affairs Officer

312.751.6633

public.affairs@mwrdd.org

100 East Erie Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611

No sandbags needed: Completed Levee 37 project prevents flooding in Des Plaines River communities *(continued)*



In the photo (L-R): MWRD Commissioner Debra Shore, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Lt. Col. Kevin Lovell, Wheeling Mayor Dean Argiris, U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky, MWRD Vice President Barbara McGowan, MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos, State Sen. Dan Kotowski, MWRD Commissioner Kari Steele and State Rep. Elaine Nekritz celebrate the opening of Levee 37. The MWRD and village of Wheeling worked together to create the Heritage Park Flood Control Facility, which led to the completion of Levee 37.

Lake Counties. This project and its partner project, Levee 50, are a 65/35 federal/non-federal share. All but about \$100,000 of the \$36 million that went into Levee 37 is federal funding, leaving most of the non-federal share for the construction of Levee 50. The levee projects include a flood warning system.

equipped with pipes that drain landside water and flap gates preventing backflow from the river.

“The Army Corps of Engineers has been privileged to be a part of the team working to reduce the risk of flooding along the Des Plaines River,” said Lt. Col. Kevin Lovell, deputy commander of the USACE Chicago District.

###

Recovering Resources, Transforming Water

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.