



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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For immediate release

December 17, 2015

MWRD President Spyropoulos covers strong fiscal record, water quality improvements, stormwater management and resource recovery at City Club of Chicago



City Club of Chicago President Jay Doherty, Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) President Mariyana Spyropoulos and former Gov. Pat Quinn joined the City Club to discuss the latest innovations in water at MWRD.



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago President Mariyana Spyropoulos said her agency was able to manage its finances by cutting costs, saving money, investing in the agency and taking proactive maintenance to reduce major costs in the future.

Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) President Mariyana Spyropoulos provided a wide-ranging presentation that encapsulated the MWRD's work to date, present focus and exciting future to come for a sold-out City Club of Chicago audience on Dec. 15.

To view the president's remarks, visit www.vimeo.com/149078913 or visit www.cityclub-chicago.org/videos.

"Thank you to the City Club of Chicago and sponsors for hosting the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago and allowing us the forum to share our important message," said MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos. "We have an obliga-

tion to serve our residents and taxpayers and tell our story of how we strive each day to protect our water environment and serve as global leaders in improving our planet. Over the last year, we have made excellent strides in improving district finances, upgrading water treatment, addressing stormwater management and initiating resource recovery projects, and we are delighted to share our progress."

President Spyropoulos' speech touched on MWRD's history, beginning with the reversal of the Chicago River, followed by a century of growth and ambitious engineering feats, including the latest MWRD marvel—the Thornton Composite Reservoir—which is the largest of its kind in the world, preventing flooding and pollution in area waterways. Other key *(continued)*



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City Club of Chicago *(continued)*



The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago Board of Commissioners promoted the work of the agency at the City Club of Chicago.

findings in the president's speech included:

- Spending for MWRD's overall operations, including capital costs and pension has decreased \$100 million from \$1.023 billion in 2010 to a projected final expenditure of \$921 million for 2015.
- The General Corporate Fund, which covers the MWRD's general operating expenses, decreased slightly from \$330.9 million to \$326.7 million over that same period.
- At the same time, the fund's reserves have increased by 82% from \$142 million to \$259 million.
- The MWRD is working toward becoming energy-neutral by 2023 by using a reverse auction to manage electricity costs, reduce greenhouse gas emissions through renewable/clean energy initiatives and capturing renewable energy from its own systems.
- The MWRD's bond rating is AAA by S&P and Fitch and Aa2 by Moody's, keeping bond fees low.
- After working with legislators in Springfield to pass pension reform legislation in 2012, the pension's unfunded liability saw a marked improvement in 2014, increasing to 55 percent in 2014, up from 50.4 percent in 2012, due to increased employee and employer contributions and higher investment returns.
- The cost of MWRD services falls under the industry norm by more than half; in 2014, the average cost for MWRD services was approximately \$204 for a house valued at \$200,000. The average cost for services in the Midwest region was \$439.
- Based on demand for recreation, the MWRD opened disinfection procedure at the Calumet WRP with O'Brien WRP following next spring.
- As part of the Tunnel and Reservoir Plan, the MWRD opened the Thornton Composite Reservoir to contain up to 7.9 billion gallons of storm-water and sewage, benefiting 14 communities and protecting against about \$40 million a year in flood damage.
- The MWRD has more than 72 storm-water projects moving forward that span immediate construction, preliminary design and design stages.
- In 2015, the MWRD signed agreements with 62 communities and non-government organizations to deliver more than 25,000 rain barrels at no cost to residents.
- Partnering with the Chicago Public *(continued)*



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City Club of Chicago *(continued)*

Schools, the Healthy Schools Campaign, Openlands and the Chicago Department of Water Management, six school yards across the city were converted into sustainable playgrounds, and 30 more are to come over the next five years.

- By conducting pilot studies on five select local communities, the MWRD is in the process of creating a stormwater master plan that will analyze existing flooding problems and develop a comprehensive approach to address those problems on a regional level.
- Through the MWRD's flood-prone property buy-out program and Watershed Management Ordinance, the MWRD is utilizing new tools to tackle flooding issues and ensure future stormwater management are addressed and mitigated.
- Part of MWRD's plan to become energy neutral by 2023, the agency is converting organic material at treatment plants into biogas to be used to heat and cool facilities and sold on the market.
- The MWRD is harvesting phosphorous from waste and selling it through a partnership in the private sector, making it the largest such plant in the world. By recovering this phosphorus, the MWRD can preserve a vital resource that is expected to run out over the next 100 years and reduce the algae blooms that affect the Gulf of Mexico.
- Another recovered resource following the MWRD treatment process, biosolids are a safe product that meets the most stringent standards set by the EPA, and a product that is already used by parks and golf



courses around Cook County to help maintain beautiful landscapes.

- Over the next five years, resource recovery will produce an annual revenue stream of \$10 million per year, and that figure is expected to grow as more possibilities are explored.

The President invited all participants and the public to tour the Stickney Water Reclamation Plant, the largest wastewater treatment facility in the world. Please contact 312-751-6633 to schedule a tour.

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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.