



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

# Press Release

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For immediate release  
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## Senators Durbin, Kirk, Congressional delegation work to improve Great Lakes, local waterways in federal Omnibus Appropriations bill



*Crews are working quickly to mine and prepare the MWRD's McCook Reservoir to take on water in two phases beginning in 2017. The reservoir, located along the Stevenson Expressway (I-55) between the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal and Des Plaines River, will serve 37 communities and hold 10 billion gallons of combined stormwater and sewage that previously would have been destined for area waterways.*

The proposed Omnibus Appropriations bill that Congress unveiled for 2016 will provide direct benefits to area water quality improvements and the work of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD).

The bill reauthorizes the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) with \$300 million in funding, and provides \$9 million in funding to complete MWRD's McCook Reservoir. It also creates new public reporting and notification requirements authored by U.S. Sen. Mark Kirk for combined sewer overflow (CSO) discharges into the Great Lakes. It also expedites the Brandon Road Study, a shipping lock on the Des Plaines River in Joliet, which will address the threat Asian carp and

other invasive species pose by entering the Great Lakes basin by traveling upstream from the Mississippi River basin.

“We thank Sen. Dick Durbin, Sen. Mark Kirk and our local members of Congress who were instrumental in securing funding that will bring local water quality issues to the forefront for our region,” said MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos. “When Congress passes the Omnibus Appropriations bill and President Barack Obama signs it shortly thereafter, they will be supporting critical infrastructure investment in water management that will allow the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago the opportunity to complete the McCook Reservoir on time and on

budget and help advance key initiatives that will improve and sustain our precious Great Lakes and area waterways. It's great to have senators and a congressional delegation who understand the importance of our country's waters, especially the Great Lakes, our national treasure.”

The \$300 million appropriated for the GLRI makes this effort the largest single recipient of funds within EPA's Geographic Programs, exceeds the president's budget by \$50 million and ensures future support of innovative projects on the Great Lakes. Launched in 2010, the GLRI is working to protect and restore the largest system of fresh surface water in the world by promoting fresh and clean water, *(continued)*



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## Omnibus Appropriations bill *(continued)*

preventing and controlling invasive species, reducing nutrient runoff that contributes to harmful algal blooms and restoring habitat to protect native species.

The McCook Reservoir will be built in two stages, and the \$9 million appropriated by Congress will allow the MWRD and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to meet the federal consent decree schedule and have the first stage in operation by December 31, 2017. Part of the MWRD's ambitious and highly regarded Tunnel and Reservoir Plan (TARP), the McCook Reservoir is on track to become the world's largest reservoir of its kind, with a capacity to hold 10 billion gallons of stormwater and sewage that previously would be directed to local waterways and area basements. The first stage to be completed in 2017 will hold 3.5 billion gallons, while the second stage will hold an additional 6.5 billion gallons when scheduled for completion in 2029. Between its 109 miles of tunnels and three reservoirs, the MWRD will be able to take on more than 20 billion gallons of water to improve water quality in Chicago area waterways and protect Lake Michigan from pollution caused by sewer overflows.

New CSO reporting and notification authored by Senator Kirk and included under the Omnibus Appropriations bill for 2016 will require the EPA administrator to work with the states and the MWRD to create public notice requirements for CSO discharges.

Once the Brandon Road Study is completed, the USACE



*Construction workers complete the confluence of the McCook Reservoir Connecting Tunnel (left) and the Mainstream Tunnel (right) as part of the MWRD's Tunnel and Reservoir Plan. New funds provided by Congress' Omnibus Appropriations bill for 2016 will allow the MWRD to complete the McCook Reservoir's first stage by 2017.*

was directed to pursue authorization from Congress for any changes to the Brandon Road Lock and Dam. The USACE was also directed to establish formal emergency procedures, including rapid response to prevent Asian Carp from passing beyond Brandon Road.

In addition to the many water quality improvements supported by the Omnibus Appropriations bill, Congress also moved to expand public-private partnership programs through a new pilot program advanced as part of USACE projects.

Senator Durbin's press release "Congress Agrees To Fund Great Lakes Restoration Initiative At 300 Million" can be found at [www.durbin.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/durbin-congress-agrees-to-fund-great-lakes-restoration-initiative-at-300-million-1215](http://www.durbin.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/durbin-congress-agrees-to-fund-great-lakes-restoration-initiative-at-300-million-1215)

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**Recovering Resources, Transforming Water**

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