



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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For immediate release
December 24, 2015

Ribbon cuttings help ring in improvements in water treatment, stormwater management in 2015

Resource recovery initiatives move ahead in 2016



Thornton Reservoir was opened on Sept. 1 and received its first fill of 400 million gallons on Thanksgiving.

Ribbon cuttings in 2015 signified major achievements in water quality improvements and stormwater management in a year highlighted by the completion of disinfection and the Thornton Composite Reservoir as well as the opening of public trails and the use of green infrastructure and rain barrels.

“This has been an immensely productive year for the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago,” said MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos. “We completed dozens of projects on time and on budget, while continuing to serve as a global leader in environmental stewardship.”

Among the many projects unveiled in 2015:

- The Thornton Composite Reservoir resembled an amusement park this summer when more than 3,000 people toured the completed “Grand Canyon of the south suburbs” that is part of MWRD’s Tunnel and Reservoir Plan (TARP). Designed to hold 7.9 billion gallons of stormwater, the reservoir benefits more than 556,000 people in 14 communities, protects 182,000 buildings and provides more than \$40 million in annual flood damage. After going online in September, it held its ground against a significant rainstorm, taking on 400 million gallons, preventing any combined sewer



Senator Dick Durbin joined the MWRD in cutting the grand opening ribbon on the Calumet WRP disinfection facility on July 17. The chlorination/de-chlorination facility adds another layer to the water treatment process, and in turn, enhances recreational opportunities on the waterways.

overflows from occurring in the area and contributing to improved water quality in area waterways.

- In July, the MWRD introduced a new disinfection facility at the Calumet Water Reclamation Plant that incorporates a chlorination/de-chlorination facility that adds another layer to the water treatment process, and in turn, enhances recreational opportunities on the waterways.
- The MWRD helped open the Cal-Sag Trail and Centennial Trail to provide more access and opportunities for residents looking to enjoy local waterways along MWRD property. The west segment of the Cal-Sag Trail, which opened in June, extends 13 miles from Lemont to Alsip. The MWRD dedicated half of the land on which the trail was built. In October, the MWRD opened the Centennial Trail on its property at Columbia Woods Forest Preserve of Cook County, where hikers and bikers will have new foothills and sweeping vantage points of the surrounding landscape and waterways. *(continued)*



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MWRD joined the Wheeling Park District and Village of Wheeling in opening the Heritage Park Flood Control Facility in Wheeling. The facility is situated in the Des Plaines River watershed near the intersection of Dundee and Wolf Roads in Wheeling. The complex provides compensatory floodwater storage upstream of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Levee 37 flood control structure in Mount Prospect and Prospect Heights along the Des Plaines River.



Willa Cather Elementary School on Chicago's West Side and Orozco Community Academy in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood received a \$1.5 million schoolyard transformation from the Space to Grow program, a partnership between Healthy Schools Campaign, Openlands, the MWRD, Chicago Public Schools and the Chicago Department of Water Management. Including the four schools transformed in 2014, this brings the total to six and 30 more will be completed in the next five years.

- The MWRD also joined the Wheeling Park District and Village of Wheeling in opening the Heritage Park Flood Control Facility in Wheeling. The facility is situated in the Des Plaines River watershed near the intersection of Dundee and Wolf Roads in Wheeling. The complex provides compensatory floodwater storage upstream of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Levee 37 flood control structure in Mount Prospect and Prospect Heights along the Des Plaines River.
- Since modifying the free rain barrel program in May and publicizing it throughout Cook County communities, the MWRD has signed intergovernmental agreements with more than 60 communities and non-government organizations and delivered more than 25,000 rain barrels at no cost to residents. This popular program will continue in 2016.
- Another investment in green infrastructure, the award-winning Space to Grow program took more productive steps in 2015 as the MWRD partnered with the Healthy Schools Initiative, Openlands, the Chicago Public Schools and Chicago Department of Water Management to transform two Chicago school grounds

into green spaces that will improve student and community health. The Space to Grow program has now converted six concrete lots across Chicago into sustainable playgrounds with stormwater detention. The partnership will convert 30 more schools over the next five years.

- On Sept. 26, water professionals from around the globe converged at Pershing East Magnet School, 3200 S. Calumet Ave., Chicago, to construct a green infrastructure learning garden as part of the Water Environment Federation's (WEF's) 88th Annual Technical Exhibition and Conference.
- The MWRD worked with the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, the Illinois Department of Agriculture and several environmental groups to develop legislation to make biosolids more accessible to the public. This recognition by the Illinois General Assembly and Gov. Bruce Rauner represented another achievement in resource recovery for a product of the water treatment process that has already received acclaim from farmers, golf course managers, landscapers, municipalities, park districts and homeowners. By mixing the biosolids with tree debris provided by the city of Chicago, (continued)



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MWRD biosolids were mixed with soil to improve the quality of the fields at the new Maggie Daley Park in downtown Chicago. With improved soil quality, the turf grass is healthier, more durable and requires less maintenance. Biosolids provide nutrients but also improve soil structure, help retain moisture and prevent erosion.



(L-R) MWRD Associate Civil Engineer Pat Jensen, Kiewit Job Superintendent Matthew Trotter, MWRD Principal Civil Engineer Carmen Scalise and MWRD Managing Civil Engineer Kevin Fitzpatrick inspected the new tunnel connection at the McCook Reservoir on Nov. 20.

the MWRD is working to have this fertilizer and compost substitute available for public distribution in spring 2016.

The news on biosolids was not the only critical piece of legislation that will impact the MWRD and benefit local water sources, taxpayers and the region as a whole. The proposed Omnibus Appropriations bill that Congress unveiled for 2016 reauthorizes the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) with \$300 million in funding and provides \$9 million in funding to complete the McCook Reservoir. Senators Dick Durbin and Mark Kirk, along with the entire congressional delegation, worked diligently to advance the initiatives vital to water quality improvements throughout the region.

The continuing construction of the McCook Reservoir heads up an ambitious list of projects the MWRD is set to take on in 2016. Larger than the Thornton Composite Reservoir, which is already the world's largest reservoir of its kind, the McCook Reservoir will be completed in two stages to ultimately hold 10 billion gallons of water and work to prevent pollution in local waterways and provide flood control benefits.

Also in 2016, the MWRD plans to unveil a new ultraviolet disinfection system at its O'Brien Water Reclamation Plant in Skokie. Like the new disinfection facility at the Calumet WRP, the O'Brien disinfection project will drastically improve the quality of the region's waterways. In 2016, the MWRD will (continued)



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Installation of one of three phosphorus reactors at the Stickney Water Reclamation Plant in Cicero on July 22, 2015. Once in service in early 2016, the phosphorous facility will be the largest of its kind in the world at the largest water reclamation plant in the world.

also work toward the completion of the world's largest phosphorus recovery facility. The Ostara project at the Stickney Water Reclamation Plant will produce between 9,000 and 10,000 tons of Crystal Green fertilizer annually and reduce the MWRD's nutrient load to the receiving waterways. In addition, the MWRD will continue work on dozens of stormwater management projects to alleviate flooding in the region, while addressing more resource



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recovery projects that will work toward the agency's goal of energy neutrality by 2023.

"Just as our duty to protect our water supply and manage stormwater and flooding issues has expanded, so too has our resource recovery model, where we are working every day to reduce our carbon footprint and attract renewable resources to promote sustainability for the District and the taxpayers we serve," said President Spyropoulos.

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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.