



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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Preventing flooding through new partnerships explored during MWRD's annual visit to the Illinois General Assembly



MWRD Board of Commissioners (L-R) Debra Shore, Cynthia Santos, Vice President Barbara McGowan, House Minority Leader State Rep. Jim Durkin, President Mariyana Spyropoulos, Kari Steele and David Walsh met in Springfield to discuss MWRD's strategies in preventing flooding. The MWRD had an efficacious year in completing projects in water quality improvement and resource recovery, and is now advancing new legislation in stormwater management.

Earlier this month, Commissioners with the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) descended on the state capitol to talk new strategies and partnerships in the pursuit of improved stormwater management and anti-flooding initiatives.

Flooding is only one of several priorities the MWRD addresses in improving the region's water environment, but it was brought to the forefront during meetings with Illinois General Assembly members. The annual visit to Springfield was part of the commissioner's efforts to advance its legislative initiatives, while keeping legislators informed of MWRD activity. The MWRD has currently nearly 100 stormwater projects in the works, many of which involve local partners to amass available resources and work together to better manage intense rain events.

The MWRD is also working to promote pending House Bill 4659, introducing the Residential Cost Share Program,



(L-R) MWRD Commissioners Kari Steele, Debra Shore, Executive Director David St. Pierre, Vice President Barbara McGowan, Senate President John Cullerton, President Mariyana Spyropoulos, David Walsh and Cynthia Santos met in Springfield to discuss MWRD's legislative initiatives involving stormwater management.

which aims to reduce basement backup flooding of residences and eliminate infiltration and inflow from the sewer system. The proposed legislation would allow the MWRD to provide funding to support work on private property, creating cost share programs with local municipalities for residential improvements, such as sewer lateral re-lining or replacement, installation of overhead sewers or other backflow prevention devices, and use of green infrastructure techniques such as cisterns and rain gardens.

"We are here to help in the fight against flooding and we want our legislators to know we are here to answer the call," said MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos. "Forming partnerships and establishing creative relationships will go a long way towards getting ahead of the next big storm to keep our basements dry and our waterways free of pollution."

Excessive infiltration and inflow into the sanitary sewer system poses a serious problem that contributes to *(continued)*



MWRD staff and commissioners joined House Majority Leader Barbara Flynn Currie to discuss the MWRD's proposal to assist local communities in deterring flooding through a new cost share program that could assist homeowners with overhead sewer systems and green infrastructure projects like rain gardens.

sanitary sewer overflows and basement backups. Excessive infiltration and inflow takes away from sewer capacity intended for sanitary sewage and results in additional sewage treatment and sewer maintenance and operations costs to the public. The MWRD created the Infiltration and Inflow Control Program to correct and rehab local separate sanitary sewer systems.



MWRD Commissioners Chairman of Finance Frank Avila, Vice President Barbara McGowan, President Mariyana Spyropoulos, Kari Steele and Cynthia Santos took to the state capitol earlier this month to discuss the agency's legislative agenda with lawmakers.

The increased frequency and intensity of storms has resulted in millions of dollars of damages to residential homes due to basement backups and flooding across Cook County. A recent study by the city of Chicago indicates that approximately one out of 10 basements in their systems is at risk annually to a sewer backup. The study concluded that rather than constructing additional infrastructure, it is more cost effective to install backflow preventers or overhead plumbing.

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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.