



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

# Press Release

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## Work to protect Chicago area waterways creates an award-winning, scenic trail



*Centennial Trail improvements include benches, signage, landscaping and a two-foot wide natural surface mountain bike trail that is approximately 9,750 linear feet in length.*

For an agency that specializes in reclaiming water, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) is also winning praise for its ability to reclaim land. For the second year in a row, the MWRD has won the Illinois Mined Land Reclamation Award from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) -- this time for the MWRD's role in improving the Centennial Hill Trail in Willow Springs.

Faced with the cost and challenge of removing 1.8 million cubic yards of overburden materials during the mining of the McCook Reservoir, the MWRD put the material to constructive use by building two man-made hills along the Centennial Trail in the Columbia Woods Forest Preserve. The finished product became an immediate attraction to bikers and walkers and now is earning statewide attention for the productive re-use of overburden.

"The Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Office of Mines and Minerals congratulates the Metropolitan



*Using overburden from the nearby McCook Reservoir, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago constructed new hills along the Centennial Trail, including one that is 60-feet high and 2,300 feet long and an adjacent hill that is 40-feet high with a length of 5,300 feet.*

Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago as winner of the 2017 Illinois Mined Land Reclamation Award, in the non-coal category. The award is presented to recognize outstanding and innovative reclamation techniques," wrote James Haflinger, director of the IDNR Office of Mines and Minerals, in a letter to the MWRD.

The dirt and other materials were taken from the neighboring McCook Reservoir, which is part of the Tunnel and Reservoir Plan (TARP). When completed, McCook Reservoir will provide 10 billion gallons (BG) of storage to keep combined sewage from discharging to waterways and causing sewer backups. McCook Reservoir Stage 1 will be completed later this year and provide 3.5 BG of storage, while Stage 2 will be completed in 2029 and provide 6.5 BG of storage. The reservoir will also provide more than \$114 million per year in flood damage reduction benefits to 3.1 million people living in 37 communities. For their work in converting the north lobe of the Thornton quarry into the Thornton (*continued*)

## Work to protect Chicago area waterways creates an award-winning, scenic trail *(continued)*

Composite Reservoir, a similar combined sewer overflow reservoir that can hold 7.9 BG, the MWRD and Hanson Material Service were recognized with the same award in 2016.

“You have to be creative and resourceful when mining and constructing the world’s largest combined sewer overflow reservoir, and that’s what our engineers and contractors did in coming up with a beautiful bike trail that takes advantage of a scenic backdrop and adds new hills made from overburden,” said MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos. “We thank the Illinois Department of Natural Resources for this recognition and look forward to many years of using the Centennial Trail while we work to reduce flooding and water pollution at our new McCook Reservoir.”

Approximately 500 truck trips taken were per day to remove overburden. The landscape architect firm, Burns & McDonnell, designed the new trail based on input received during three public meetings coordinated by the MWRD. In addition to the two hills, a hiking trail and rest area were also added. Using the overburden and MWRD’s class A exceptional quality biosolids, the hill offers a rare opportunity for Chicago area cyclists to ride up and down a slope that provides sweeping views of the surrounding landscape and waterways. For riders who prefer flat terrain, the trail provides a new and improved route through Columbia Woods.

“We created a reservoir to protect our homes from flooding and waterways from pollution during heavy rains, and we constructed a beautiful spot for all of the community to enjoy,” said MWRD Commissioner Martin J. Durkan. “We encourage area residents to stop by the Cook County Forest Preserve and take advantage of this new public amenity that is putting tax dollars to work in so many unique ways.”

The award was presented to the MWRD during a ceremony at the annual Aggregate Miner Safety Conference on Feb. 21 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Springfield. The MWRD is now nominated by the IDNR for the Interstate Mining Compact Commission and the National Association of State Land Reclamationists award programs.

The Centennial Trail runs through parts of Cook County, DuPage and Will County forest preserves and was named in 1989 in honor of the 100-year anniversary of the MWRD. The Centennial Trail, which is part of the Illinois & Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor, runs nearly 11 miles on land dedicated by the MWRD: from Columbia Woods southwest through Lemont and Romeoville to Romeo Road/135th Street, where it connects to the nearly 70-mile Illinois & Michigan Canal State Trail that continues south through Lockport and the Joliet Iron Works Historic Site.

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### Recovering Resources, Transforming Water

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