



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

# Press Release

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## Platinum awards reaffirm MWRD as clean water leader

Used water funneling its way into Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) Water Reclamation Plants (WRPs) is treated in an expedient and thorough fashion before it is returned to the environment. Given the force of the water and the enormity of the process for serving the entire Chicago region, there is no end to the potential challenges that could arise when having to meet clean water standards.

The National Association for Clean Water Agencies (NACWA) has recently honored the MWRD for successfully meeting those standards. In recognition of decades of complete and consistent compliance of National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits, the MWRD received Platinum Peak Performance awards at five of its water reclamation plants (WRPs), a distinction provided to treatment plants that have reached this status for five consecutive years.

“We thank NACWA for the recognition,” said MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos. “Our staff work diligently to clean an average of 1.4 billion gallons of water each day, and to accomplish this task is no easy feat. We encourage Cook County residents and business owners to think about limiting what they pour down their drains to help us protect our water environment.”

In fact, all seven WRPs received honors. In addition to the Calumet WRP’s platinum award for 25 years of 100 percent compliance:

- the Lemont WRP received platinum for 20 years;
- the Kirie WRP in Des Plaines received platinum for 12 years;
- the O’Brien WRP in Skokie received platinum for 11 years;



*The MWRD’s Calumet Water Reclamation Plant has received a Platinum Peak Performance Award from the National Association for Clean Water Agencies for achieving excellence for the 25th consecutive year.*

- the Hanover Park WRP received platinum for nine years;
- the Egan WRP in Schaumburg earned a gold award for the third straight year; and,
- the Stickney WRP in Cicero earned a silver award for meeting 99.77 percent compliance.

Platinum Awards recognize 100 percent compliance with NPDES permits over a consecutive five-year period. If 100 percent compliance is maintained beyond the initial award, Platinum Award status is continued. Should 100 percent compliance not be maintained, member agency facilities must receive four consecutive Gold Awards to again be eligible for another Platinum Award in their fifth year of compliance. All seven MWRD WRPs have earned 99.6 percent or higher compliance since 2007.

“In spite of great challenges – including increased local rainfall as a result of a changing global (*continued*)

## Platinum awards reaffirm MWRD as clean water leader *(continued)*

climate, and evolving demands placed on our collection systems by new pollutants and materials – we continue to improve area water quality and transform MWRD into a resource-recovery agency,” said MWRD Commissioner Debra Shore. “We salute our staff for meeting these standards and protecting our waterways.”

The Calumet WRP is the oldest of the seven WRP facilities, treating used water from a 300 square mile area in Chicago and the south suburbs. The plant provides primary, secondary and tertiary treatment thanks to disinfection technologies that utilize a chlorination and dechlorination process. This technology reduces the amount of pathogenic bacteria in the water released into the Calumet River system. Disinfection technologies neutralize or kill bacteria and microorganisms in treated water and reduce the risk of health problems resulting from direct contact with the water while recreating on a waterway. The O’Brien WRP disinfection facility uses ultraviolet (UV) radiation to disinfect water which reduces pathogenic bacteria in the water released into the North Shore Channel.

The WRPs are implementing several innovations in renewable energy, while also developing reuse opportunities for water, biosolids, algae, phosphorus and



*A settling tank at the Calumet Water Reclamation Plant, where the MWRD has met national standards for 25 consecutive years, is part of a three-stage process that cleans water in about eight hours compared to several weeks of natural purification in waterways. Cleaner waters and a strong record of compliance has reaffirmed the MWRD’s status as a clean water leader.*

other nutrients collected during the water treatment process. Each of the seven plants has made strides in helping the MWRD meet its goal of becoming a utility of the future in resource recovery. Through these opportunities, the MWRD will add value in traditional and non-traditional ways while protecting the region’s water quality.

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### Recovering Resources, Transforming Water

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