



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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MWRD, U.S. Army Corps' 3.5 billion gallon McCook Reservoir unveiled



U.S. Senator Dick Durbin and MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos hold the large scissors used to officially inaugurate McCook Reservoir Stage I. They are surrounded by (L-R) MWRD Vice President Barbara McGowan, IL EPA Director Alec Messina, Commissioner Josina Morita, Col. Aaron Reisinger, Commander, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Chicago District; and MWRD Chairman of Finance Frank Avila.

The McCook Reservoir was formally unveiled December 4, 2017, as U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin, U.S. Rep. Mike Quigley (5th), U.S. Rep. Dan Lipinski (3rd), municipal leaders and officials with the U.S. EPA and Illinois EPA joined the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) and project partner, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), to celebrate cleaner water and protection from flooding for 3.1 million area residents.

Stage I of the McCook Reservoir can hold 3.5 billion gallons of storage capacity and will protect residents of Chicago and 36 suburban communities from flooding. It can provide an estimated \$114 million per year in flood reduction benefits, while also capturing untreated water that formerly overflowed into waterways in rainy weather. This stored water will be pumped from the reservoir to water reclamation plants to be cleaned and released when the treatment plant has capacity to treat the water after significant rain events.

“We are excited to announce the completion of Stage I of the McCook Reservoir and this immense public works infrastructure that will help millions of people in Cook County,” said MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos. “We could



Congressman Mike Quigley (5th) gives remarks during a ceremony to unveil Stage I of the McCook Reservoir. The reservoir is complete and ready to take on 3.5 billion gallons of water to prevent pollution in local waterways and flooding in streets and basements. Back row (L-R): Robert Kaplan, acting regional administrator for USEPA Region 5; Col. Aaron Reisinger, Commander, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Chicago District; MWRD Exec. Director David St. Pierre; Commissioner Martin Durkan; IL EPA Director Alec Messina, Commissioner David Walsh; Senator Dick Durbin; Sierra Club Executive Director Jack Darin; MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos; Congressman Dan Lipinski (3rd); Commissioner Kari Steele; Cook County Commissioner and McCook Mayor Jeff Tobolski; former MWRD president Kathleen Therese Meany, former MWRD president Terry O'Brien and MWRD Chairman of Finance Frank Avila. Front row (L-R) MWRD Commissioner Josina Morita, Commissioner Debra Shore, and Vice President Barbara McGowan.

not have accomplished this Herculean project on our own and therefore thank our partners, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Senator Durbin, our congressional leaders in Washington D.C. as well as the contractors and neighboring communities that were instrumental in helping us complete this project.”

Funded by the MWRD and the USACE, McCook Reservoir is located along the Stevenson Expressway between the Des Plaines River and Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal. It is part of the MWRD's Tunnel and Reservoir Plan (TARP), one of the country's largest public works projects for pollution and flood control. TARP covers a 375-mile area that includes Chicago and 51 suburbs that rely on a combined collection system that conveys both stormwater and used water. *(continued)*

MWRD, U.S. Army Corps' 3.5 billion gallon McCook Reservoir *(continued)*



Congressman Dan Lipinski (3rd) gives remarks during a ceremony to unveil Stage I of the McCook Reservoir. Back row (L-R): Robert Kaplan, acting regional administrator for USEPA Region 5; Col. Aaron Reisinger, Commander, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Chicago District; MWRD Exec. Director David St. Pierre; Commissioner Martin Durkan; IL EPA Director Alec Messina, Commissioner David Walsh; Senator Dick Durbin; Sierra Club Executive Director Jack Darin; Congressman Mike Quigley; MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos; Commissioner Kari Steele; Cook County Commissioner and McCook Mayor Jeff Tobolski; former MWRD president Kathleen Therese Meany, former MWRD president Terry O'Brien and MWRD Chairman of Finance Frank Avila. Front Row (L-R) MWRD Commissioner Josina Morita, Commissioner Debra Shore, and Vice President Barbara McGowan.

"The completion of Stage I of the McCook Reservoir is critically important for the quality of our waterways and the safety of millions of people and structures in areas prone to flooding," Senator Durbin said. "I'm proud to have helped secure funding for this project and will continue working to ensure that MWRD and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have the federal resources needed for construction to stay on track."

Stage I of the McCook Reservoir can hold 3.5 billion gallons of storage capacity and will protect residents of Chicago and 36 suburban communities from flooding. It can provide an estimated \$114 million per year in flood reduction benefits, while also capturing untreated water that formerly overflowed into waterways in rainy weather. This stored water will be pumped from the reservoir to water reclamation plants to be cleaned and released when the treatment plant has capacity to treat the water after significant rain events. To add to the public benefit, limestone that is mined to form the reservoir is efficiently transported via conveyor for processing by Vulcan Materials Company at the nearby McCook Quarry into high quality construction aggregate that is used to build and repair valuable local infrastructure including roads, highways, bridges, homes, schools, buildings and airports.

"Because of the topography of our city and the impact of changing weather patterns in our region, Chicago residents and businesses are uniquely vulnerable to the costly and dev-



MWRD Commissioners display a commemorative plaque that was installed on a large fragment of 400-year-old dolomite limestone that was mined from the newly-completed McCook Reservoir Stage I. (L-R): Commissioner Kari K. Steele, President Mariyana Spyropoulos, David Walsh, Martin Durkan, Chairman of Finance Frank Avila, Debra Shore, Vice President Barbara McGowan and Josina Morita.

astating effects of urban flooding," said Rep. Quigley. "The McCook Reservoir is a key component in the now decades-old plan to address this problem, and it will meaningfully benefit the city of Chicago and 36 suburbs by aiding flood mitigation. As the only Illinois member of the House Appropriations committee, I'm proud of the funding I've been able to secure for the Army Corps of Engineers and for the McCook project to help protect local homes and businesses from damaging flooding. I also congratulate MWRD on this accomplishment and look forward to continuing the effort to ensure that the next phase of the important flood abatement reservoir moves forward effectively."

The region has seen tremendous ecological recovery of the waterways during the implementation of TARP. Since the tunnels were completed in 2006, the number of CSO events per year have been cut in half. Since Thornton was placed in service in 2015, CSO events have been nearly eliminated in the Calumet River System. Officials expect further improvements to area waterway quality with the addition of the McCook Reservoir.

"This is a great day for my constituents because completion of this project will prevent flooded basements and will also reduce pollution in Lake Michigan," said Rep. Lipinski. "I'm proud to have worked with my colleagues in Congress to provide the funding to make this possible and I thank the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District and the Army Corps of Engineers for their work."

"The McCook Reservoir is a nationally significant engineering marvel," said Col. Aaron Reisinger, Commander, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Chicago District. *(continued)*

MWRD, U.S. Army Corps' 3.5 billion gallon McCook Reservoir *(continued)*

“The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is proud to deliver this project with our partners at the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District. The project will provide flood risk reduction benefits and improve water quality for Chicago and 36 suburbs, an area with 1.5 million structures and 5 million people.”

“We applaud the vision, creativity and dedication of the entire team,” said David Clement, Central Division President, Vulcan Materials Company. “The McCook Reservoir is an example of what’s possible when local, state and federal government and the private sector work together to improve the quality of life and environment for millions of people.”

As a result of TARP and other water quality enhancements, Chicago area residents now see the river system as a major asset. Marinas, riverfront trails and riverside restaurants abound; river recreation and tourism are booming; waterfront real estate values have soared and game fish have returned to the Chicago Area Waterway System. Prior to the launch of TARP in the early 1970s, there were only two fish species in

the river system, whereas today MWRD fish monitoring has documented more than 70.

“The McCook Reservoir is a major step forward in protection of the Chicago River and our Great Lakes,” said Robert Kaplan, acting regional administrator for USEPA Region 5. “Many years of hard work and dedication went into this project. EPA is proud to have been a part of it.”

When completed in 2029, the final phase of the reservoir will add an additional 6.5-billion-gallon holding capacity for a total of 10 billion gallons, the equivalent of 200 million rain barrels, surpassing Thornton Composite Reservoir as the largest of its kind in the world. Stages I and II of McCook Reservoir will provide an estimated total of \$143 million per year in flood reduction benefits. The reservoir is 300 feet deep and 3,000 feet long.

Video of the ribbon cutting ceremony can be found on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/wXU815fvCzA>

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Recovering Resources, Transforming Water

Established in 1889, the MWRD (www.mwrld.org) is an award winning, special purpose government agency responsible for used water treatment and stormwater management in Cook County, Illinois.