Metropolitan Water Reclamation District *of* Greater Chicago

Press Release

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Water rises to the top of MWRD's McCook Reservoir to protect region

Water collected from the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago's tunnels filled the 3.5 billion gallon McCook Reservoir stage I. Between two tunnel systems and the reservoir, more than 5 billion gallons were collected and stored in the McCook system, preventing flooding and pollution.

An empty McCook Reservoir Stage I shows the amount of space needed to fill it. It's so large that 11 Soldier Field Stadiums can fit inside it, and is nearly deep enough to stack another 11 on top of that. But after nearly two days of steady rain mixed with snowmelt, the reservoir filled with 3.5 billion gallons of water.

Less than two months after coming into service, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago's (MWRD) McCook Reservoir was filled, collecting billions of gallons of water from across Cook County that previously flooded communities and polluted area waterways.

The recently completed McCook Reservoir Stage I and adjoining tunnels were full, demonstrating a working system that functioned to store more than 5 billion gallons of water that previously entered streets, basements and polluted waterways. To view the time lapse video of the reservoir filling, visit the MWRD YouTube channel, or click here for a one minute version and here for an 8 minute version.

Approximately 2.77 inches of rain fell at the MWRD's Stickney Water Reclamation Plant between the morning of Monday, Feb. 19 and Wednesday, Feb. 21, and it is estimated that the McCook Reservoir service area took on an estimated 12 billion gallons of water, not including several billion gallons of snowmelt that came as a result of 60-degree weather. Because of the reservoir's holding capacity, Lake Michigan was protected from a river reversal.

"The McCook Reservoir passed its first test, showing a fully operational system that was crucially needed," said MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos. "While we know we have more work to accomplish to ensure more basements and streets are free from the burden of flooding, we do know that without the reservoir, billions of gallons of water could have entered our homes and waterways."

Part of the MWRD's Tunnel and Reservoir Plan (TARP), McCook Reservoir Stage I captures and stores combined stormwater and used water that previously overflowed from collection systems into waterways in rainy weather. The stored water is pumped *(continued)*

Water rises to the top of MWRD's McCook Reservoir *continued*

from TARP to MWRD water reclamation plants to be cleaned before being released to waterways. When complete, the four TARP tunnel systems and three huge reservoirs the tunnels flow into, will have a capacity of more than 20 billion gallons.

The recently completed McCook Reservoir Stage I, which contains 3.5 billion gallons, provided working relief for approximately 20 hours of the most significant rainfall. Prior capacity in this size event would have filled in a couple of hours. The TARP system as a whole captured an estimated 9.2 billion gallons of water. Once McCook filled up, the excess flow that could not make it to treatment plants overflowed into waterways, similar to what happened prior to TARP's construction. Fortunately, as part of that first flush, the most polluted portion was captured by TARP.

"With flash flood warnings throughout the region, the McCook Reservoir proved a serviceable tool to better prepare us for the inundation of water," said President Spyropoulos. "This latest round of storms reminds us of the importance of conserving water at home, because the less water down our drains combined with rainwater will mean less polluted water overflowing into our waterways. By conserving water during heavy storms, we can help protect our valuable waterways."

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