



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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Danish minister and delegation visit MWRD to foster water innovation and collaboration



(L to R): MWRD Executive Director David St. Pierre, MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos, Denmark Minister for Environment and Food Esben Lunde Larsen, MWRD Commissioner Debra Shore, Denmark Consul General and Head of Trade Commission, Houston, Jacob Vind, and Denmark Consul General and Head of Trade Commission, Chicago, Jakob Andersen met for a roundtable discussion and presentations on energy reduction, water quality improvement and environmental protection.

Leaders with the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) met with the Denmark Minister for Environment and Food and Danish consul generals from Houston and Chicago to continue an ongoing partnership of collaboration to improve international water environments.

“We have been at work on protecting our water environment for 129 years, but it never hurts hearing from across the world to expand our knowledge and learn how we can improve our practices to promote a healthy and sustainable environment,” said MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos. “We thank Minister Larsen and the many Danish environmental leaders who bring enlightening wisdom to this important partnership.”

The exchange of information and best practices was spurred through a Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2016 by the MWRD and Aarhus Water, an independent regional



Danish Minister Esben Lunde Larsen spoke to MWRD leadership about the critical roles the MWRD and the Ministry of Environment and Food of Denmark can play in protecting water quality while reducing energy consumption.

water and wastewater enterprise owned by the municipality of Aarhus, Denmark. This partnership has led to exchange programs between the two water utilities and the Water Technology Alliance of Denmark. The MWRD has sent several engineers and treatment plant managers to Aarhus to study their practices, while scientists and engineers from Aarhus and the Water Technology Alliance have returned to the Chicago area to evaluate how the MWRD can reduce energy demands at its water reclamation plants.

“It was super interesting to exchange knowledge and visions for sustainable development. We in the Danish government and Danish companies in the water sector look forward to onwards collaboration,” said Denmark Minister for Environment and Food Esben Lunde Larsen.

MWRD Assistant Director of Monitoring and Research Tom Kunez and Treatment Plant Operator Jane Schipma, who recently spent two months at Aarhus, (*continued*)

Danish minister and delegation visit MWRD *continued*

presented on the positive impacts of the exchange program. Denmark Consul General and Head of Trade Commission Jacob Vind, who also heads the Water Technology Alliance, discussed the results of the feasibility study, which showed potential energy reductions at MWRD plants through the use of new turbo blowers and aeration equipment.

The meeting then turned to a productive roundtable discussion about how the two regions of the world can improve the conditions of local water environments. The Danes talked about how meeting benchmarks and utility rankings have led to strong competition among water treatment utilities and environmental improvements. Higher water prices have also driven innovation and water conservation in Denmark, said the minister. The average family in Denmark consumes about a quarter of the water that Americans consume.

MWRD Executive Director David St. Pierre discussed the MWRD's history of innovation, beginning with the reversal of the flow of the Chicago River. He pointed out the MWRD has been improving waterway quality and mitigating flooding through the Tunnel and Reservoir Plan

(TARP) and is working to recover resources and reduce energy demands. The two groups discussed the new multi-dimensional stormwater management projects that have led to not only flood mitigation efforts, but positive economic impacts as well.

By housing both environment and food under one government office, the Danish can better grasp the effects of food production and its impact on the environment and vice versa. Minister Larsen's office keeps close attention to farm applications of pesticides, manure and antibiotics in livestock, leading to a more beneficial water environment as well. The MWRD, on the other hand, works to protect its water environment to prevent these items and others from entering the water stream. The shared lessons make the partnership productive for both sides.

"We are gratified by our international partnership – and we are eager to learn from Danish leaders in public and private enterprise as we continue to seek a better water environment for all of us," said Commissioner Debra Shore. "The next big step in water is one that we will take together."

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Recovering Resources, Transforming Water

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