



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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Infrastructure Week open house tours offer free compost, tree giveaways

Nearly 600 visitors gained a newfound appreciation and education into how the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) infrastructure works each day to protect their water environment. The MWRD opened its doors at six water reclamation plants (WRPs), where visitors learned firsthand about MWRD practices and initiatives to recover resources and transform water that flows to the MWRD for treatment.

Visitors also took home more than 400 of the MWRD's new 40-pound bags of free EQ Compost as well as about 100 free oak tree saplings that are part of the MWRD's "Restore the Canopy" campaign to replenish the region's tree population to absorb stormwater and mitigate flooding.

"We strive to engage and educate our communities on the best practices for water usage and conservation," said MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos. "Events like the open house tours provide a memorable experience and help area residents gain a better understanding of our commitment towards excellence and how we each play a role in protecting our environment."

The tours were given as part of the sixth annual Infrastructure Week, a national campaign promoting awareness about the impact that infrastructure has on local economies, workers and communities. The campaign encourages policymakers and stakeholders to conceive novel solutions to infrastructure-related issues and to focus on innovation with long-lasting results. In accordance with the goals of Infrastructure Week, the MWRD is showcasing the unique ideas that are used to conserve energy and reclaim water. In keeping with



Cub Scout Troop 398 from Tinley Park was part of the 200-plus guests who visited the Stickney Water Reclamation Plant as part of the MWRD's Infrastructure Week open houses.

this innovation, the MWRD has created a resource recovery model that ensures sustainable materials removed from the treatment process are not wasted but rather returned and reused to protect the environment.

In addition to reclaiming water, the MWRD has an ambitious goal to achieve energy neutrality by 2023. When the goal is reached, the MWRD will be producing as much energy as the agency uses, and that energy will be produced in numerous forms. The MWRD intends to increase biogas production at its WRPs to provide energy cost savings and a renewable supply of resources to heat and cool the WRPs. Biosolids used locally in MWRD compost products can also replace nonrenewable landscaping resources, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and hauling costs, and provide another way for the MWRD to sustain energy. The biosolids have been used to improve soil quality at popular destinations like Maggie Daley Park and the 606 Trail and on golf courses and athletic fields at *(continued)*

Infrastructure Week open house tours *(continued)*

both public parks and schools in the Chicago area for more than 20 years.

“Millions of people depend on the MWRD’s services every day, but this vital work often takes place in locations that are hidden from view,” said Commissioner Debra Shore. “The District opens the treatment plants to share with the public we serve – not just equipment and buildings, but also our commitment to protecting and improving the water environment.”

“Tours are a great opportunity for the public to interact with us and for the MWRD to provide the public with a greater understanding of what we do,” said Commis-

sioner Josina Morita. “We genuinely appreciate anyone who is interested in our work.”

For those who could not attend the open house tour or would like to schedule another, private tours are held year-round, Monday through Friday between 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Participants should schedule a tour at least one month in advance. Tour groups can have up to 25 guests and are open to adults and children in seventh grade or higher. For more information on tours and other MWRD projects, please contact the MWRD Office of Public Affairs at (312) 751-6633 or email public.affairs@mwrld.org. Other information can be found by visiting mwrld.org.



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.