



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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Water pros arrive in Chicago, develop clean water solutions

The 92nd Annual Water Environment Federation's Technical Exhibition and Conference convenes talented water stewards from across the globe to exchange knowledge, engage the community and introduce latest innovations to help protect the water environment



Scenes from WEFTEC: MWRD President Kari K. Steele (top left) provided welcoming remarks at the 92nd Annual WEFTEC at McCormick Place, while the MWRD's Sewer Rats (top right) competed in the Operations Challenge. Commissioner Marcelino Garcia, Assistant Director of Monitoring and Research Tom Kunetz, president of the Water Environment Federation (WEF) joined other MWRD and WEF staff to build a rain garden at Maria Saucedo Scholastic Academy in the Little Village neighborhood.

Water pros arrive in Chicago, develop clean water solutions, *cont.*



The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) underscored its work in a variety of ways in welcoming more than 22,500 water professionals to the shores of Lake Michigan to share knowledge and develop innovative solutions to the many 21st century issues facing water.

Staff and commissioners with the MWRD played many roles at the 92nd Annual Water Environment Federation's Technical Exhibition and Conference (WEFTEC). MWRD experts gave presentations and led workshops, guided tours at MWRD facilities, assisted students and young professionals interested in careers in water, competed in the Operations Challenge, and joined WEF and other water professionals to perform educational outreach and plant a rain garden at Maria Saucedo Scholastic Academy, at 2850 W 24th Blvd. Not only did MWRD President Kari K. Steele deliver the opening remarks welcoming visitors to Chicago, but she was followed by MWRD Assistant Director of Monitoring and Research Tom Kunetz, who presided over the conference as president of WEF.

"This was an incredible opportunity to showcase our talent and the work we have done to build a thriving and resilient Chicago region where life is so closely connected with our water resources," said President Steele. "Thank you to WEF for choosing Chicago, their many efforts to coordinate a wonderful conference and the thousands of water professionals who dedicate themselves to protect and improve our water resources."

WEFTEC is considered one of the largest conferences of its kind in North America, providing water quality professionals with education and training and access to an expansive show floor displaying cutting-edge technologies. In addition to peer-to-peer networking and domestic and international business opportunities, WEFTEC promotes the skills and trades of water reclamation plant (WRP) experts at the annual Operations Challenge. MWRD's team, known as the Sewer Rats, competed valiantly against other teams from around the world in five events that covered collection systems, laboratory, process control, maintenance and safety trials. Each competition tested the diverse skills required for the maintenance and operation of MWRD facilities during emergency-like settings.

There were many highlights from the conference and extra events, including:

--MWRD staff joined WEF volunteers, 12th Ward Ald. George Cardenas, Chicago Department of Water Management (CDWM) officials and the Chicago Public Schools to host the annual WaterPaloosa educational fair on Sept. 20. Students, teachers, and parents enjoyed a fun-filled day of engaging, hands-on environmental activities at Saucedo Scholastic Academy, provided by water companies, the MWRD and other governmental agencies, and non-profit organizations from across the country.

--The MWRD returned to Saucedo Academy the following day with WEF's Students and Young Professionals Committee, led by Natalie Cook from Chicago-based Donahue & Associates, to *(continued)*

Recovering Resources, Transforming Water

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

Water pros arrive in Chicago, develop clean water solutions, *cont.*



transform a community space at Saucedo Academy into a rain garden in partnership with the OPEN Center for the Arts for the 2019 Community Service Project.

--MWRD and President Steele joined research partners from Current and the CDWM to announce the launch of a new web application that measures water quality with real time data known as H2NOW. To learn more, visit H2NOWChicago.org.

--MWRD experts also displayed their talent for data analytics, artificial intelligence system and plant operations, taking second place in the second annual Intelligent Water Systems competition. The team of scientists and engineers with the MWRD joined professors and students with Illinois State University to create a system that optimized chemical usage to control odors and corrosion issues at the MWRD's Kirie WRP in Des Plaines.

--Other staff presented on groundbreaking work and

met with water leaders, including Denmark Minister of Environment Lea Wermelin and Daniel Simmons, assistant secretary of the U.S. Department of Energy Office and Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, who also announced at the conference major funding for water technologies.

--At Stickney WRP, the MWRD provided guided tours to participants in WEF's InFLOW (INtroducing Future Leaders to Opportunities in Water). The initiative strives to identify promising students from underrepresented minority groups and introduce them to careers in water.

“Our work in protecting our water environment is what makes Chicago an attractive place to host a conference on water,” said MWRD Commissioner Cam Davis. “With our wide range of skills and talents, we experienced many moments of excellence at WEFTEC, and playing host to water professionals from around the world makes us proud.”

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