THE METROPOLITAN WATER RECLAMATION DISTRICT OF GREATER CHICAGO

The Utility for the Future
You Can Rely On Every Day

As the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) celebrates 130 years of dedicated service to the residents of Cook County and the Chicago area, we at the MWRD continue to build on an accomplished record of reliability and ingenuity in protecting the area waterways, public health and the environment.

Throughout its history, the MWRD has made an indelible imprint on the Chicago area and the quality of life for all our residents. The MWRD established this reputation for unflinching dependability and innovative leadership treating the region’s wastewater, managing stormwater and protecting our water resources. While our generations of service are historically significant, there are many more exciting chapters on the horizon.

Since undertaking the extraordinary task of reversing the flow of the Chicago River to protect Lake Michigan, the MWRD engaged in more than a century of progress and continuous innovation to care for our water environment. Those early commitments were aimed at protecting the public’s health and water resources, and while the MWRD maintains that same level of excellence at an exceptional value to taxpayers, we also pride ourselves in cleaning water in the face of an evolving system of water treatment. Today, we are met with a changing climate, record rain events and an increased use in impervious pavement across our flat terrain. As a result, we are continuously challenged to find comprehensive solutions to manage stormwater and prevent flooding, all while grasping emerging technologies to improve local water quality and protect a river that is soaring in popularity. To meet this demand, we are developing new systems to reduce nutrients in our water, decreasing greenhouse gas emissions, conserving and reusing water, recovering renewable resources, and maintaining a tradition of reliability and resourcefulness that has become a hallmark for our agency across the region.

As a utility of the future, the MWRD is also educating the communities it serves and working with stakeholders to create awareness for our water environment. By actively forming new partnerships, engaging the public and urging our communities to consider the countless ways we can all contribute to improving our water environment, we are taking a role of leadership, fostering collaboration, broadening our reach and magnifying our impact.

The perseverance of the MWRD is shown in the resiliency of Cook County. The MWRD continues to rise to the challenge to effectively manage stormwater and mitigate flooding, and that commitment is expected to continue for generations to come. This publication will highlight the many ways the MWRD has grown to become the utility of the future you can rely on every day.

In its daily role of recovering resources and transforming water, the MWRD is protecting the regional water environment and mitigating flooding through its 109 miles of tunnels serving the Tunnel and Reservoir Plan (above), recovering nutrients from water to be reused as fertilizer (above right) and providing thousand to be reused as compost and other soil amendments to help grow plant life (bottom right).

Cleaner waterways spurred by the work of the MWRD has led to healthier wildlife life as well as opportunities for economic development, recreational activities, transportation and social interaction along the Chicago River and the creation of the Chicago Riverwalk.
The MWRD maintains a strong financial position with a AAA bond rating from Fitch Ratings and a AA+ bond rating from Standard & Poor’s Corporation.

**Financial Summary**

The MWRD performs incredibly important services for more than 5.25 million residents in Cook County, while striving to add value to that meaningful work at a fraction of the cost of other utilities. Our task of treating 1.3 billion gallons of wastewater per day is critical to defending public health, and providing this service at an affordable rate is an added bonus to the communities we serve. Fitch Ratings highlighted the MWRD’s role providing an essential service for the third largest metropolitan area in the country. Projected capital expenditures over the next five years total $11 billion, which Fitch Ratings said, “equates to a very manageable approximately $70 per customer” living in the MWRD’s 882-square-mile-service-area.

A single-family residence across the country paid an average of $501 per year in 2017 for wastewater collection and treatment, also known as the sewer service charge, according to the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA) 2017 Cost of Clean Waters Index. By contrast, the MWRD sewer service charge was $344.25 in 2017. This average calculation of MWRD sewer service charge was based on the total levy divided by Equalized Assessed Valuation (EAV) of property within the MWRD’s corporate limits as applies to a home with an average value of $302,552.

Sewer service, however, is only part of the value that the MWRD provides to its constituents every day. In addition to our daily role meeting treatment obligations at our seven water reclamation plants (WRPs), managing stormwater for Cook County, completing vast Tunnel and Reservoir Plan (TARP) projects and maintaining navigable waterways, we also add value in unique ways.

We have distributed more than 55,000 free tree saplings since April 2016; we have acquired 58 flood-properties in partnership with local municipalities and the Cook County Land Bank Authority; we lease approximately 75 percent of non-corporate land holdings to public agencies for parks and riverfront recreation; we are participating in ground-breaking research to understand the microbial health and composition of area waterways and we will perform over 550,000 lab tests at the seven WRPs in 2019 that will improve operations and ensure the quality of water in our waterways and the biosolids we beneficially reuse to improve area soil health. We are expanding our resource recovery program, managing energy costs, reducing greenhouse gas emissions through new energy-efficient infrastructure, and capturing renewable energy from our own systems. The MWRD also utilizes a strong asset management plan to maintain its facilities in an economically and environmentally sustainable manner.

The MWRD’s 2019 budget is $1.2 billion. This supports day-to-day operations and general expenditures, bond redemption and interest, the MWRD’s Retirement Fund, stormwater management activities, insurance and a Capital Improvement Program for designated projects and pay-as-you-go capital projects. The MWRD’s current operations are funded primarily through property tax receipts. Other revenue sources include user charge revenues, personal property replacement tax receipts and land rentals. The Capital Improvement Program is funded primarily through State Revolving Fund loans and general obligation bond sales. Guided by robust financial policies, the MWRD preserves a Corporate Fund reserve to provide for unexpected shortfalls in revenue or economic uncertainty. The MWRD is also committed to increasing the Retirement Fund funded ratio to 100 percent by 2050 and Other Postemployment Benefits Trust to a 100 percent funded ratio by 2027 to ensure the long-term financial health of the MWRD and the retirement programs.

**TAX LEVY**

The overall 2019 tax levy is estimated at $642.8 million, an increase of $20.4 million, or 3.3 percent, from the 2018 adjusted levy.

**TAX RATE**

The overall estimated tax rate for 2019, based on the most recent equalized assessed valuation, totals 40.97 cents per $100 of assessed property value, a 0.14 cent increase from the 2018 adjusted rate.

**Students participate in a planting day at Daniel J. Corkery Elementary School through the Space to Grow program.**

For a $100,000 home, the 2019 estimated MWRD tax is $121.38, a decrease of $0.41 from 2018.

### WHERE MWRD MONEY COMES FROM

- $1,222.9 M 100.0% TOTAL
- $313.6 M 25.6% Net Tax Sources
- $361.3 M 29.5% State Revolving Fund
- $46.0 M 3.8% User Charge Income
- $21.5 M 1.8% Land Rentals
- $17.0 M 1.4% Miscellaneous
- $11.3 M 0.9% Grants
- $0.9 M 0.1% Sewer Permit Fees

### WHERE MWRD MONEY GOES

- $551.7 M 45.5% General Support
- $291.9 M 23.5% State Reimbursement
- $219.4 M 17.6% Water Reclamation
- $102.7 M 8.4% Collection
- $351.1 M 28.7% Flood & Pollution Control
- $88.5 M 7.2% Solids Processing
- $27.5 M 2.2% Solids Utilization
- $131.5 M 10.5% Capital Improvement Program
- $62.2 M 5.1% Solids Disposal
- $55.4 M 4.5% Corporate Administration
- $11.3 M 0.9% Miscellaneous
- $12.8 M 1.0% Corporate Services
- $0.3 M 0.0% Capital Improvement Reserve
- $1,222.9 M 100.0% TOTAL

**Financial Summary**

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OUR HISTORY

Reversing the Chicago River, Revitalizing a Community

Although the MWRD’s name has changed a few times and the scope of our work has expanded, the quality of service remains the same. Today’s projects are as ambitious as they were more than 100 years ago, making profound impacts both locally and across the entire region.

Managing today’s water invokes an incredible need for the expertise of the MWRD, but it was the dire conditions of the local water environment in the 19th century that first demanded our services.

As a response to a public health crisis coupled with the city’s exponential growth, the MWRD was originally organized as the Sanitary District of Chicago in 1889 under an act of the Illinois General Assembly. The enabling act was in direct response to contamination of the Lake Michigan water supply and nuisance conditions of the rivers. During that time, a polluted river flowed directly into the lake and caused waterborne illnesses. The Sanitary District’s first priority became reversing the flow of the Chicago and Calumet River Systems to prevent the discharge of sewage into Lake Michigan. The water instead discharged into the Des Plaines River where, it could dilute as it flowed into the Illinois River and eventually the Mississippi River. To make this happen, the Sanitary District’s dedicated staff constructed a 61.3-mile-system of canals and waterway improvements. The canals cut through the subcontinental dividing ridge, allowing the river to flow by gravity away from the lake and down a steeper slope. Workers blasted, dug and hauled heavy rock and deepened, straightened and widened waterways to convey sewage and stormwater to improve the quality of area waters.

The agency’s first projects, reversal of the Chicago and then the Calumet River, were engineering marvels that not only improved environmental conditions but also helped to distinguish the agency around the world. The monumental achievements set a tone of impressive environmental engineering accomplishments and scientific breakthroughs. From there, the Sanitary District built intercepting sewers, pumping stations and water reclamation plants to clean water. The agency’s mission grew from protecting the lake to creating a new flourishing waterway system. These early advancements were followed by a century of innovation in water treatment technology. These early projects were effective and also well documented. The engineers surveying the property and construction activities also photographed their work, leaving behind an archive of 14,000 images.

From 1955 through 1988, the District was called the Metropolitan Sanitary District of Greater Chicago. In order to provide a more accurate perception of functions and responsibilities, the name was changed again in 1989 to the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago. Over that time, we went on to construct tunnels and reservoirs, aeration stations, nutrient recovery facilities and green infrastructure projects. We now operate the world’s largest water reclamation facility, the world’s largest nutrient recovery facility, the world’s largest wastewater treatment ultra-violet (UV) installation, and the world’s largest combined sewer reservoir.

Today, the MWRD is working to reduce the impact of flooding while also recovering resources. In its daily role, the MWRD strives to protect the health and safety of the public throughout a 882.1-square-mile service area across Cook County, protecting the quality of the water supply source in Lake Michigan, improving the quality of water in watercourses in its service area, protecting business and homes from flood damages, and managing water as a vital resource for the area. The MWRD serves an equivalent population of 10.35 million people each day, including 5.25 million residents of Chicago and 128 suburban communities, 4.5 million in the commercial and industrial sector, and a combined sewer overflow equivalent of 0.6 million people.
ESSENTIAL SERVICES

Treating Water and Protecting a Region’s Health

Every day, the MWRD treats an average of 1.3 billion gallons of water after it goes down drains, leaves households and industrial and commercial facilities, and runs off streets and sidewalks.

With a total treatment capacity of more than 2 billion gallons, the MWRD collects, cleans and returns that water to the environment in a matter of hours. The efficient manner in which the MWRD works is a crowning achievement in a rich history that strives to protect public health and the environment. Annually the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA) honors MWRD water reclamation plants (WRPs) for meeting decades of compliance in National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit requirements and federal Clean Water Act standards.

The MWRD owns and operates seven WRPs. One of these is the Stickney WRP, the world’s largest for full secondary treatment by volume. The MWRD also owns and operates 560 miles of intercepting sewers, which are larger sewers that receive flow from approximately 10,000 local sewer system connections, and force mains, which are pipes that move water under pressure by using pumps or compressors. The WRPs mimic the purification process that occurs naturally in rivers, condensing what would take one or two weeks to less than 12 hours. Once considered waste, the discarded water that flows to our plants for treatment is now considered a collection of resources to be recovered and reused beneficially. In addition to cleaning water for reuse and discharge into our waterways, the process works to recover solids and nutrients that are beneficially returned to the environment. The process also strives for energy efficiency, energy generation and recovery to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, promote a more sustainable society, generate savings for taxpayers and enhance our water treatment operation.

How Sewers Work

Local municipal sewers carry wastewater to MWRD’s larger intercepting sewers, which flow the contents to one of seven WRPs across Cook County. If the intercepting sewers, water reclamation plants and reservoirs reach capacity during heavy rain, the local sewer continues to drain, or “overflow,” to a waterway. This is known as combined sewer overflow, which is happening less thanks to TARP expansion.

Illustration is for explanatory purposes only and is not drawn to scale.
Water Treatment Process

The WRPs mimic the purification process that occurs naturally in rivers, condensing what would take one or two weeks to less than 12 hours.

1. PRELIMINARY TREATMENT: COARSE SCREEN
A screening process utilizes large combs that rake through coarse screens to remove large objects which are deposited on conveyor belts and taken to landfills. The screens are a first line of defense to protect pumps from items that range from unwanted trash to huge tree limbs.

2. AERATED GRIT TANK
Next, pumps move water to aerated grit tanks. The air bubbles keep lighter materials suspended, while grit, sand and gravel sink to the bottom. A conveyor scrapes the larger material on the bottom into a drain. It is then taken to a landfill.

3. PRIMARY TREATMENT
The water now flows into primary settling tanks. A revolving conveyor with slats skims off the floating fats and oils while solids settle to bottom. The slats push the solids to a drain so that they can be conveyed to a solids treatment process. The floating fats and oils are moved to a drain and then they are sent to a landfill.

4. SECONDARY TREATMENT
Next, water enters the aeration tanks that receive pumped, filtered air and a carefully maintained population of microorganisms, collectively called “activated sludge.” These organisms break down the remaining suspended solids and remove soluble organics, ammonia, and, at some WRPs, phosphorus, and aggregate themselves to settle in the final settling tank.

5. FINAL SETTLING TANK
In the final settling tanks, liquid from aeration tanks flows by gravity through the center of the tank. Solids sink to the bottom where revolving blades scrape them into a drain. About 97 percent of the solids are sent back to aeration tanks, while the remainder is sent to solids treatment process. The water at the top of the tank is now clean and ready for discharging to the waterway or tertiary treatment.

6. TERTIARY TREATMENT
During disinfection, the MWRD uses a variety of measures at different WRPs to add a final layer of treatment before water is released into neighboring waterways. The DNA of microbes are deactivated using a chlorination/de-chlorination application process or an ultraviolet (UV) light disinfection system that prevents them from reproducing or growing. These disinfection processes drastically improve the microbial quality of the water produced by the MWRD.

WEST SIDE PRIMARY SETTLING TANKS
In 2018, the MWRD constructed nine 160-foot diameter primary settling tanks (PST) and six 132-foot long aerated grit tanks, associated support facilities, service tunnels and conduits at the Stickney WRP. These new tanks and treatment equipment replaced labor-intensive tanks that had been in use since 1928. This major upgrade provides a significant increase in digester gas production that will cover energy costs. The new tanks also increase and improve grit removal, protecting downstream piping and equipment, and reduce water recycling as well as odors that will be better captured and removed to support our goal of being a responsive neighbor to the communities we serve.
Recovering Resources, Transforming Water and Protecting the Environment

For 130 years, the MWRD has been protecting the water environment. In that time, the agency’s view of water has evolved. We now see water as a collection of raw resources to be recovered and reused.

With new technology came new awareness and new opportunities to rethink and reuse many beneficial resources, and today we are making those visions a reality. The MWRD produces clean water as well as sustainable resources like biosolids, energy and nutrients like phosphorus thanks to increasing in scarcity and value. Resource recovery is a new frontier that provides both a return on investment that benefits taxpayers and the environment.

WATER
The MWRD returns treated water to the water cycle for reuse in many forms. In the future, changing economics may make it beneficial to distribute treated water for industrial use, cooling, or irrigation. When used appropriately, recycled water can satisfy many water demands. It presents financial savings while promoting water conservation resulting in the decrease of water withdrawals from Lake Michigan. In addition to being harnessed, water itself is also reused directly throughout the MWRD treatment process. Every day, 15.1 million gallons of treated water for reuse in many forms. In the future, changing economics may make it beneficial to distribute treated water for industrial use, cooling, or irrigation. When used appropriately, recycled water can satisfy many water demands. It presents financial savings while promoting water conservation resulting in the decrease of water withdrawals from Lake Michigan. In addition to being harnessed, water itself is also reused directly throughout the MWRD treatment process. Every day, 15.1 million gallons of treated water is reused in pipeline flushing, blower motor cooling, post-centrifuge centrate flushing and tank cleaning. The MWRD is producing cleaner water for reuse than previous generations, thanks to new MWRD innovation and the MWRD’s Industrial Waste Division that controls pollutants, such as metals, that were formerly discharged back into the environment due to industrial uses.

ENERGY
Water is a meaningful source of energy. At our Lockport Powerhouse where the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal drops 38 feet into the Des Plaines River, hydroelectric power is generated and converted to clean, renewable electricity. It is one of dozens of measures that the MWRD is taking to control our energy future. For decades, we have been creating clean, renewable energy from organic material removed from the wastewater. Biogas that is produced in anaerobic digesters is used to fuel boilers which produce steam or hot water to heat buildings and processes at the WRPs. This renewable biogas offsets the need to purchase about 6 million therms of natural gas each year. We have been pursuing energy reduction activities, including complete building energy assessments, and optimizing the aeration processes through implementation of new sensor and computerized control technology.

Biosolids
The recovery of biosolids also presents a savings in energy costs, especially if we can reuse the soil amendment locally, cutting down on energy costs and carbon emissions to haul the product hundreds of miles away to what were formerly landfills. As the dried organic matter that is settled out of the wastewater. The MWRD returns treated water to the water cycle for reuse in many forms. In the future, changing economics may make it beneficial to distribute treated water for industrial use, cooling, or irrigation. When used appropriately, recycled water can satisfy many water demands. It presents financial savings while promoting water conservation resulting in the decrease of water withdrawals from Lake Michigan. In addition to being harnessed, water itself is also reused directly throughout the MWRD treatment process. Every day, 15.1 million gallons of treated water is reused in pipeline flushing, blower motor cooling, post-centrifuge centrate flushing and tank cleaning. The MWRD is producing cleaner water for reuse than previous generations, thanks to new MWRD innovation and the MWRD’s Industrial Waste Division that controls pollutants, such as metals, that were formerly discharged back into the environment due to industrial uses.

NUTRIENTS
Recovering nutrients like phosphorus and nitrogen can make them available for reuse while protecting our waterways from contamination. In 2016, our Stickney WRP opened the world’s largest nutrient recovery facility that helps protect waterways by removing phosphorus previously released into the waterways. The facility recovers phosphorus and ammonia in the form of a slow-release, environmentally friendly fertilizer. We also utilize a nitrogen removal system at our Egan WRP that lowers the plant’s carbon footprint through a deammonification process. In addition, we are researching the sustainability of growing algae in a “vertical revolving” fashion to recover nutrients; this reduces the footprint to grow an equivalent algae biomass in a surface pond and simplifies the harvesting process.

FULTON COUNTY
Although the MWRD’s daily service area is confined to Cook County, we actively work with the agricultural community and other stakeholders throughout the state to ensure water leaving our communities is not negatively impacting communities downstream. In keeping with our mission, and to be a good neighbor, the MWRD makes land it owns in Fulton County available to the agricultural sector, Illinois Farm Bureau and University of Illinois. The land serves as a live laboratory for conducting research and demonstrations for farmers to see best management practices and strategies to reduce nutrient loss on land that closely resembles actual farming operations. Point sources of nutrient discharge, like WRPs, and non-point sources, like the farming community, must work together to help the state meet national reduction goals for nutrient loss contributing to the hypoxic zone in the Gulf of Mexico, where oxygen levels are being depleted from the excess nutrients. The MWRD initially purchased the 13,500-acre in 1970 to convert the former strip-mined land from a brownfield to a fertile farmland, as part of the award winning “Prairie Plan.”

PHOTOS (left to right): Water flows over a weir during treatment; the MWRD’s Lockport Powerhouse has been generating hydroelectric power since 1907; MWRD solids are blended with windrow turners to create a premium quality compost product; a MWRD lab technician experiments with algae at the O’Brien Water Reclamation Plant.
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entering the waterways. In 2018, there were no overflows in the Calumet River System, thanks to the reservoir.

A solar-powered aerator floats to the surface of water stored in the Thornton Composite Reservoir. Since

urban areas, the Thornton Composite Reservoir is completed in 2029.

The Grand Canyon of the south sub-

The Tunnel and Reservoir Plan (TARP) Mitigates Flooding and Improves Water Quality

The MWRD does nothing small. We are heading into the final decade of the nation’s largest public works project for improving water quality.

The Tunnel and Reservoir Plan (TARP) works to mitigate flooding and reduce pollution in area waterways by providing storage for billions of gallons of water that formerly overwhelmed our streets, basements and riverbanks. It is needed now more than ever.

The MWRD and partners devised TARP in the late 1960s to capture combined sewer overflows (CSOs) that harm the environment and adversely impact water quality. CSOs occur when the MWRD’s intercepting sewers and WRPs reach capacity during heavy rain, causing local sewers to drain to waterways. On schedule to be completed by 2029, TARP will provide more than 17.5 billion gallons of storage capacity for combined sewer systems in a 375-square-mile-area covering Chicago and 51 suburbs. As a result of TARP and other water quality enhancements, aquatic life is thriving in Chicago area waterways and area residents now see the river system as a major asset. TARP was the first system of its kind to address pollution and flooding problems and is now being emulated by cities around the US and the world, in places such as London, Singapore, and Vienna.

The TARP system, commonly known by Chicago area residents as “Deep Tunnel,” is comprised of a network of four tunnel systems and three cavernous reservoirs designed to hold untreated water until it can be cleared at MWRD water reclamation plants. The 109 miles of tunnels, which were completed in 2006, can be as wide as 33 feet in diameter and 240 to 300 feet below ground. In 2019, the MWRD completed the world’s largest combined sewer reservoir at the 7.9-billion-gallon Thornton Composite Reservoir. It will be surpassed in size when the 10-billion-gallon McCook Reservoir is completed in 2029.

The Calumet TARP system has captured billions of gallons of CSO volume, more than 99 percent of the volume of water that enters the system since the reservoir was placed into service. Stage I of McCook Reservoir, completed in 2017, is fully operational and can take on 3.5 billion gallons of water that previously overflowed throughout its massive 255-square-mile area. In its first year of operations alone, McCook captured more than 27 billion gallons of water.

Since 1998, the Majewski Reservoir and the related TARP system have yielded more than $400 million in flood damage reduction benefits to the three communities it serves. The Thornton Reservoir and Calumet TARP system provide an estimated $40 million per year in benefits to 566,000 people in 14 communities. Stage I of McCook is estimated to provide an average of $14 million per year in flood reduction benefits to 31 million people. Stage II of McCook Reservoir will provide another 6.5 billion gallons of storage, delivering an estimated total of $143 million per year in flood reduction benefits.

Stage I of TARP’s McCook Reservoir can hold up to 3.5 billion gallons of water during major storms to save the MWRD from having to reverse water back out to Lake Michigan and save on energy costs that accrue when pumping water during heavy rains. The McCook Reservoir protects Chicago and 36 suburban communities from flooding and relieves each municipality of the burden of designing, building and operating its own system to capture and treat combined sewer overflows. Providing an outlet for two tunnel systems known as Mainstream and Des Plaines, the McCook Reservoir covers a wide footprint of protection from Kenilworth on the north and southwest to Bedford Park. The stored water is pumped from the reservoir to the Stickney Water Reclamation Plant to be cleaned and released.

MCCOOK RESERVOIR

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Water can be elusive and destructive. Before the MWRD can clean it, this water must first be collected. In recent years, the Chicago region has experienced historic weather patterns consisting of rain bursts that overwhelm local collection systems, making flooding a priority issue at the MWRD.

Given the region’s flat terrain, impervious pavement, large population and history of flooding, our role in stormwater management has intensified. The MWRD’s expertise in water pollution control and drainage led us to assume a flood control leadership role in the metropolitan area. After recent years, the Chicago region has experienced historic weather patterns consisting of rain bursts that overwhelm local collection systems, making flooding a priority issue at the MWRD.

The MWRD promotes green infrastructure projects that use natural landscaping to manage water and provide environmental and community benefits.

Today, the MWRD has more than 100 stormwater management projects in design or construction to create new resilient communities. These projects incorporate elements of both gray and green infrastructure, ranging in size between massive reservoirs to green alleys and permeable parking lots. Other ambitious programs include improving Chicago schoolyards to better manage water through a partnership known as Space to Grow and a flood-prone property acquisition program that removes homes built in the floodplain. We have also distributed more than 120,000 rain barrels and 58,000 oak tree saplings to offset the regional loss of ash trees and soak up more stormwater. We realize that we each can play a role diminishing our stormwater challenges.

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A Neighbor You Can Count On

Protecting our water environment requires commitment, expertise, innovation and a relentless drive to be the best in the industry, but the MWRD cannot accomplish this alone.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

We host thousands of visitors for tours of our water reclamation plants, pumping stations and other facilities to educate and also encourage the public’s participation in helping us protect our water environment. We hold open houses for all ages, distribute EQ Compost and free oak tree saplings, and participate in outreach events to educate the public about the importance of protecting our water environment. Our Board of Commissioners and talented staff of scientists, engineers and water experts are speaking in our communities and classrooms and taking leadership roles in professional organizations.

The MWRD in 2018 gave more than 150 group tours of our plants and facilities, including numerous international visits to educate thousands of visitors on our integral work and our actions that speak louder than words, and it is these actions that make the MWRD the utility of the future.

UNWANTED MEDICATION AND CONTAMINANTS

Throughout the year, the MWRD collects unwanted medicine to prevent it from entering our water environment. Working with the medical community, government agencies and the general public, the MWRD has sought ways to reduce the release of pharmaceutical waste into the environment and issue reminders not to flush unused medications down the drain, nor toss expired drugs in the garbage. Together with the Cook County Sheriff’s Office, we have collected nearly 8,000 pounds of unwanted medications. We also coordinate a stakeholder group to address chloride levels in area waterways and educate the public on the damaging effects of microbeads, pesticides and waste runoff that can harm our water environment.

PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION

We improve public recreation spaces on MWRD-owned land to draw more people closer to the waterfront. We also provide ample open spaces next door to our plants and at the site of stormwater management projects that work to manage excessive stormwater and increase recreational opportunities. In fact, the MWRD dedicated half of the land on which the 13-mile Cal-Seg Trail was built, allowing access to our waterways and greenspace, and we were also instrumental in dedicating land and delivering an 11-mile segment of the Centennial Trail through the Columbia Woods Forest Preserve in Willow Springs. Unique hills for the trail were constructed as part of the removal of 1.8 million cubic yards of overburden (dirt) from the neighboring McCook Reservoir. Our impressive real estate portfolio also ushers in a financial return for taxpayers while addressing our mission of stormwater management and riverfront access.

SERVICE EXCELLENCE

We alert the public to combined sewer overflows and encourage citizens to minimize water use on rainy days to reserve space in the sewers. We are responsive and have a sense of urgency when the public informs us of waterway pollution, dumping, blockages and odors through our online Citizen Incident Reporting (CIR) application and our 1-800-332-3867 CIR hotline that also caters to Spanish speakers at 1-855-323-4801. The MWRD is investing millions of dollars in new odor control technologies. We are working with environmental partners to establish new goals in reducing nutrients to create cleaner waterways locally and downstream to the Gulf of Mexico. We are also increasing the recovery of valuable nutrients like phosphorus that has grown scarce throughout the world. We are documenting and analyzing an increasing diversity of fish species in the waterways. We are planting native prairie landscaping to show strong land stewardship, reduce the long-term cost of grounds maintenance, and serve as an example of a best management practice to infiltrate stormwater, increase biodiversity and wildlife habitat, and sequester carbon.

We are offering affordable rain barrels that capture rainwater and prevent it from entering and overwhelming our collection systems. We are distributing free oak tree saplings to help restore the canopy of trees that has been threatened in recent years.

Water can be taken for granted. When it is poured down drains, it can be forgotten. But water plays a vital role in all of our lives, so the MWRD works around the clock to make a better environment now and for future generations. Sometimes it is our actions that speak louder than words, and it is these actions that make the MWRD the utility of the future you can rely on every day.
Visit our facilities.
To schedule a tour, call 312.751.6333 or email tours@mwrdo.org. Tours are offered for groups of up to 25.

Help protect our waterways and sewer systems.
Call our **1 (800) 332-3867** Citizen Incident Reporting hotline to report:

- Dead fish or other aquatic species
- Foul or suspicious odors
- Illegal or suspicious dumping to waterways or sewers
- Waterway blockages

(En Español: **1 (855) 323-4801**)
All calls are logged and routed 24/7.
Submit reports online using our Citizen Incident Reporting (CIR) form at mwrdo.org. In the far right column, select “Report Odor, Water Pollution, Waterway Blockages, or Other Incidents.”

Think Inside the Box for unused medication disposal.
Never flush medications down the toilet or a drain. Instead, use one of our safe collection sites:

**Main Office Building**
100 E. Erie St., Chicago
Open Monday - Friday: 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

**Calumet WRP**
400 E. 130th St., Chicago
Open seven days a week: 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

**O’Brien WRP**
3500 Howard St., Skokie
Open seven days a week: 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

**Stickney WRP**
6001 W. Pershing Rd., Cicero
Open seven days a week: 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Visit our website for a listing of medication collection sites located throughout Cook County.

Get mobile  Download our free CIR app for iOS devices from iTunes to submit an incident from your mobile phone. Search for MWRD CIR or visit: https://apple.co/2LTtEa8.