



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

Allison Fore

Public and Intergovernmental Affairs Officer

312.751.6626

allison.fore@mwrdd.org

100 East Erie Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611

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Managing the flow: MWRD protects Chicago area waterways

Report obstructions and waterway pollution to MWRD Citizen Incident Reporting

As summer winds down and boaters exit the Chicago River and local waterways, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) reminds visitors to the Chicago Area Waterway System (CAWS) to report any debris left behind and potential blockages or pollution that threaten local water quality and navigation.

Waterway blockages, odors, water pollution, or other incidents can be reported to the MWRD by visiting mwrdd.org and scrolling down to the Citizen Incident Reporting (CIR) system, or by calling (800) 332-3867. Incidents can also be reported on iOS devices by downloading the free CIR app from iTunes. Search for MWRD CIR or visit <https://apple.co/2LTtEa8>.

The MWRD recently removed a boat that submerged into the North Branch of the Chicago River near the Ravenswood Manor neighborhood. While boat removal is not an MWRD service, when it becomes debris or impedes navigation and the flow of water, the MWRD's fleet of boat operators work hard to clear obstructions.

"The MWRD is happy to assist with removing debris to keep our waterways clean and navigable," said MWRD President Kari K. Steele. "If you see an obstruction or polluted waterway, we encourage you to contact us today."



A crane on the MWRD's debris boat lifts trash, logs and other large objects that block the Chicago Area Waterway System (CAWS). The 36-foot boat is equipped with a 25-foot by 50-foot barge that patrols all 76 miles of the CAWS, year-round.

The MWRD controls 76 miles of navigable waterways, which are part of the inland waterway system connecting the Great Lakes with the Gulf of Mexico. The MWRD operates a 36-foot debris boat with a 25-foot by 50-foot barge for removing larger objects and two skimmer boats that collect floatable trash. In 2021, the MWRD recovered 1,682 cubic yards (CY) of river and canal debris, including 182 CY of debris collected by skimmer boat crews. The debris is taken to MWRD dumpsters set along the waterways at various locations.

Waterway blockages can also cause overbank flooding and disrupt the natural flow of water. That's why under the MWRD's Cook County *(continued)*

Managing the flow: MWRD protects Chicago area waterways, *cont.*

Stormwater Management Plan, the MWRD also enlists a Small Streams Maintenance Program (SSMP) that relieves flooding in urbanized areas. The SSMP also removes obstructions and debris in the waterways that impede the drainage of small streams and rivers. The SSMP promotes clean water and reduces flooding by removing these downed trees or low hanging branches, dense weeds, invasive plants and addresses eroding stream banks. Since 2007, the SSMP crews have removed close to 400,000 CY of materials, including 16,893 CY in 2021.

If a dump or spill into a sewer or Chicago area waterway is reported, the MWRD dispatcher refers it to the MWRD's Industrial Waste Division, and an MWRD pollution control officer launches an investigation. The officers strive to complete their investigation within five business days. Some cases may be open longer due to the nature of the event and the involvement of other agencies. Depending upon the circumstances, services may be needed from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, or the U.S. Coast Guard.

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The screenshot shows the MWRD Citizen Incident Reporting page. At the top left is the MWRD logo. The main heading is "MWRD Citizen Incident Reporting". Below this, there is a welcome message in English and Spanish. The English text says: "Welcome to the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District Citizen Incident Reporting System. You may use this site to notify MWRD of issues in your area or you may call 800-332-3867." The Spanish text says: "Para reportar olores, contaminación de agua, obstrucciones en las vías de agua u otro incidente, por favor póngase en contacto con 855-323-4801." There are two main buttons: "Submit a New Incident" and "Locate Your Incident". The "Submit a New Incident" button is accompanied by the text: "Report Odor, Water Pollution, Waterway Blockages, or Other Incidents." The "Locate Your Incident" button is accompanied by the text: "If you have already submitted an incident, you can view its details." Both buttons are blue with white text.

Visit mwrld.org and scroll down to the middle right of the home page and click on "Incident Reporting." An MWRD dispatcher monitors the reporting system and hotline 24 hours per day.

"Protecting the Chicago River system is a team effort," said MWRD Commissioner Cam Davis. "The District's dedicated staff work through the Small Stream Program and use debris skimmer boats to complement citizen cleanups. We all have an important role."

Recovering Resources, Transforming Water

Established in 1889, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) is an award-winning, special purpose government agency responsible for wastewater treatment and stormwater management in Cook County, Illinois. Learn more at mwrld.org.