



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

# Press Release

Allison Fore

Public and Intergovernmental Affairs Officer

312.751.6626

allison.fore@mwr.org

100 East Erie Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611

For immediate release

July 31, 2023

## Field Day at MWRD site explores strategies to manage nutrients for downstream water quality protection



*Farmers, water professionals, researchers, professors, scientists and students gathered under a tent in Fulton County at the MWRD's research and demonstration site to learn about the latest studies and practices being used to reduce nutrient losses and protect downstream water quality.*

An annual summertime tradition in downstate Fulton County presented opportunity for collaboration between the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) and the agricultural community working together to protect water quality throughout the world.

The annual Field Day near Canton, Illinois on June 20 was made possible through a partnership between the MWRD and Illinois Farm Bureau (IFB), bringing together the Fulton and Cook County farm bureaus, the University of Illinois College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences (ACES), the Illinois Nutrient Research & Education Council (NREC), Illinois Sustainable Technology Center, and National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA) all striving to reduce nutrient runoff.

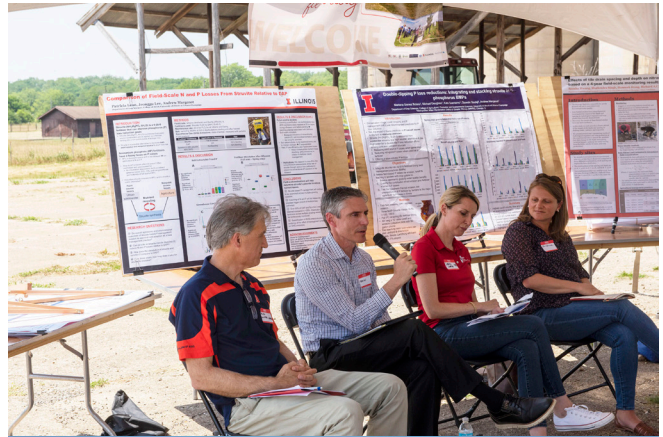
MWRD Commissioner Daniel Pogorzelski was joined by MWRD Executive Director Brian A. Perkovich and state Rep. Norine Hammond (94th Dist.), MWRD soil sci-

tists and staff, local farmers, university researchers, regulators and wastewater professionals to share and learn about the latest agricultural nutrient research and treatment plant efforts. It is these combined efforts and research that will help farmers and water reclamation plants protect soil and water health.

“Between farm fields and water reclamation plants, we are learning how to better manage nutrients and reduce runoff and pollution into our waterways,” said MWRD President Kari K. Steele. “We hope that what was shared at the Field Day will help us and our partners downstate meet the goal of improving downstream water quality.”

In keeping with its mission to protect water quality, the MWRD makes farm fields at its site in Fulton County available for farmers, researchers and partners to conduct research and demonstrations for practices (*continued*)

## Field Day at MWRD site explores strategies to manage nutrients, *cont.*



*(Clockwise from top left): State Rep. Norine Hammond and MWRD Commissioner Daniel Pogorzelski attend Field Day; University of Illinois College of ACES Acting Associate Dean for Research Alex Winter-Nelson, (from left), MWRD Executive Director Brian A. Perkovich, Illinois Farm Bureau Director of Environmental Policy Lauren Lurkins and NACWA Managing Director of Governmental Affairs Kristina Surfus discuss the value of point source and nonpoint source partnerships for nutrient loss reduction; MWRD scientists display how the buffer strips use a mix of grasses with deep root systems and a monitoring system that includes sampling devices and a solar-powered flow meter to track the nutrients runoff from the field; and buffer strips in a 600 foot long by 60 foot wide section reduce runoff from farm fields at the MWRD Prairie Plan property in Fulton County.*

that reduce nutrient loss at field scale. Reducing discharge of nutrients like phosphorus and nitrogen from farm fields can protect water quality downstream in local waterways and as far as the Gulf of Mexico. Nutrients from water reclamation plants and fertilizer from farm fields can cause algal blooms and threaten aquatic life by depleting dissolved oxygen levels in downstream water.

However, new forecasts from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) show that the summer “dead zone” in the Gulf has shrunk compared to its 36-year history of dead zone average measurements in the region. Officials said this is a step in the right direction for aquatic life and MWRD, Illinois Farm Bureau and University of Illinois collaboration to manage nutrient runoff.

“Although our service area is confined to Cook County, we know that water has no boundaries, and we want to work with the agricultural community and other partners throughout the state to ensure water leaving our communities is not negatively impacting communities downstream,” said Commissioner Pogorzelski. “We are en-

couraged to see some of these studies and the progress being made at Field Day.”

Addressing nutrient loss reduction strategies requires a comprehensive approach that tackles the issue from multiple angles, from the water reclamation plants in the Chicago area to the farm fields west of Peoria.

“As we continue to act on our state’s Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy, fostering strong collaborations is a key component of developing education and outreach programs,” said IFB Environmental Program Manager Raelynn Parmely. “Through the Field Day in Fulton County, an extended web of stakeholders and partners from MWRD, IFB, state universities, and others were able to come together to learn about innovative techniques that agricultural partners are using to reduce nutrient losses, as well as the ways that point source and nonpoint source groups can collaborate on NLRS-related initiatives.”

To learn more about Field Day, visit the MWRD’s YouTube channel at [youtube.com/watch?v=j-s0fZzXavY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j-s0fZzXavY).

### ***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](http://mwrld.org).*