



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Media Advisory

Allison Fore

Public and Intergovernmental Affairs Officer

312.751.6626

allison.fore@mwrdd.org

100 East Erie Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611

For immediate release

September 23, 2020

Goats and sheep are baaaaaaaack!

Herd grazes on MWRD vegetation, curbs invasive species, maintains native prairie to aid stormwater management



Younger members of the herd are kept close to their mothers, while grazing. The goats and sheep complement each other. What one does not eat, the other will swallow up quickly. They also safely consume several invasive species and munch through thick native prairie landscaping that is as high as 10 feet.

Following a successful pilot scale operation in 2019, the MWRD again recruited a hard-working herd to graze on vegetation on the grounds of an MWRD facility and maintain landscaping in an environmentally responsible way.

This summer the MWRD enlisted the services of 65 goats and sheep from Vegetation Solutions in Wisconsin to help trim—or eat up—overgrowth and invasive species and maintain the MWRD's native

prairie landscaping (NPL) at the MWRD's Calumet Water Reclamation Plant (WRP) on the Far South Side. To check out the work of the herd and learn more about the process, visit the MWRD's YouTube channel at <https://youtu.be/KRQo0A0onBU>

“The MWRD welcomes the animals' unique service and appreciates their hard work improving our grounds,” said MWRD President Kari K. Steele. “The work of the goats and sheep is critical because they *(continued)*”

Goats and sheep are baaaaaaaack!, *cont.*



The MWRD enlisted the services of 65 goats and sheep from Vegetation Solutions to maintain its native prairie landscaping and other plants at the Calumet Water Reclamation Plant. The video can be seen at <https://youtu.be/KRQo0A0onBU>

provide an environmental alternative to maintain our landscaping. Now we do not have to rely on herbicides that can harm our water environment, and we can avoid using fuel or non-renewable energy to power mowers. It is also a more cost-effective solution benefiting our taxpayers.”

In about a month, the herd devoured about a dozen acres of shrubs, plants, overgrowth and NPL. The goats and sheep from Vegetation Solutions also grazed at the MWRD’s Lemont WRP in 2019 to help maintain the MWRD’s NPL. The MWRD has converted more than 30 acres of conventional turf grass to native prairie plants total at WRPs since 2003. Late in 2006, the MWRD installed 15.6 acres of NPL at Calumet WRP, continuing to demonstrate the MWRD’s commitment to responsible land stewardship.

The NPL serves as green infrastructure soaking up more stormwater to improve local water quality, sequesters carbon, and increases biodiversity and wildlife. Instead of coyote and deer running through the NPL like most days, this summer the goats and sheep made it a home, secured inside fencing. By the end of the summer season, the seeds of the native prairie have fallen, and the ground has retained the seeds.

The Calumet Water Reclamation Plant serves more than 1 million people within 300 square miles in southern Cook County, Illinois, including the Far South Side of Chicago and 48 south suburbs. In 2019, the plant treated more than 300 million gallons of water per day.



The MWRD installed more than 15 acres of native prairie landscaping (NPL) at its Calumet Water Reclamation Plant. The NPL reduces long-term cost of grounds maintenance, infiltrates stormwater and improves water quality, increases biodiversity and wildlife habitat and sequesters carbon. However, it also requires significant maintenance, and that is why the herd proves important.



Goats can nimbly eat around thorns and scarf down invasive species like buckthorn and access hard to reach locations that are difficult to mow. Despite folklore, they do not eat everything they come across. They are not fond of vegetation such as monarda or bee balm and they will not eat litter like tin cans.

Based in Richland Center, Wisc., Vegetation Solutions has about 300 goats and sheep in its stable, grazing through cemeteries and parks, clearing out overgrowth at O’Hare International Airport, and other area locations. During warmer months of the year, they are busy munching on vegetation across the Midwest in Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa and Minnesota. The savanna and kiko goats and katahdin sheep will eat almost everything, including poison ivy and invasive species like buckthorn, and they do so safely, and that is why they are so valuable.

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.