



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

# Press Release

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For immediate release

February 14, 2020

## Infrastructure Forum highlights growing need for water investment

The importance of infrastructure investment in protecting the region's water quality will take center stage on Feb. 16 as presidential candidates will take part in "Moving America Forward: A Presidential Candidate Forum on Infrastructure, Jobs and Building a Better America" in Las Vegas.

The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) has benefited from strong federal support for continued water infrastructure investment through our Illinois congressional delegation, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Chicago District and other federal agencies; however, in other parts of the country, Americans live without indoor plumbing or efficient water supplies, according to the U.S. Water Alliance. According to the Value of Water Campaign, at least two million Americans live without access to water.

"We all know that water is essential for life but too often it is forgotten among a number of other issues facing our nation," said MWRD Commissioner Frank Avila. "Now is the time that all Americans be reminded of the value water plays in our lives."

The MWRD recognizes the need for continued maintenance of infrastructure to continue treating an average of 1.4 billion gallons of wastewater while managing the unpredictable nature of stormwater brought upon by climate change and weather patterns.

On May 16, the MWRD will open its doors to four water reclamation plants (WRPs), including the Kirie WRP in Des Plaines, which is celebrating its 40th anniversary. In addition, the Calumet WRP on the Far South Side, Stickney WRP in Cicero and O'Brien WRP in Skokie will be open for tours. The annual open house allows visitors to meet staff and commissioners and learn how their wastewater is cleaned through various activities and trips through the plants. Visitors will also take



*The MWRD's Kirie Water Reclamation Plant in Des Plaines is commemorating 40 years of essential service to treat more than 50 million gallons of wastewater every day for more than 260,000 residents living in the northwest suburbs.*

home samples of the MWRD's free EQ Compost as well as oak tree saplings that are part of the MWRD's "Restore the Canopy" campaign to replenish the region's tree population. As an added feature this year, the internationally-acclaimed documentary "Brave Blue World" will be shown. It highlights stories across the globe that show how communities throughout the world are adopting new technologies and innovations to re-think how we manage water.

"The film shows the great efforts some communities around the world must take to ensure their water is clean, accessible, reliable and affordable," said Commissioner Kimberly Du Buclet. "It really is eye-opening, so I strongly encourage the public spend some time with us."

The tours are also part of the national campaign promoting awareness about the impact that infrastructure has on local economies, workers and communities. The campaign encourages visitors to appreciate the critical infrastructure that impacts their lives every day and the continued maintenance required to shield the environment. *(continued)*

## Infrastructure Forum highlights growing need for water investment, *cont.*

In 1977, the federal government contributed 63 percent of water infrastructure capital spending. In 2014 the figure was 9 percent, according to the Value of Water. This upkeep is critical because so much of sewer and drinking water infrastructure was built more than a century ago to provide benefits to public health, economy and environment. But constant maintenance is required as that infrastructure nears the end of its useful life. The American Water Works Association estimated that \$1 trillion in

upgrades is needed to replace aging underground pipes across the country. In addition to protecting water infrastructure, these investments can also strengthen the economy through the creation of more jobs.

To learn more about the annual open house in May, visit [mwrld.org](http://mwrld.org). To learn more about water infrastructure investment, visit [thevalueofwater.org/](http://thevalueofwater.org/)

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### ***Recovering Resources, Transforming Water***

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