



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

PRESS RELEASE

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Pride Month at MWRD acknowledged with flag raising and commitment to inclusion, respect and opportunity



From L to R: MWRD Chairman of Finance Marcelino Garcia, Commissioner Mariyana Spyropoulos, Commissioner Patricia Theresa Flynn, Commissioner Yumeka Brown, President Kari K. Steele, Executive Director Brian A. Perkovich, Commissioner Daniel Pogorzelski and Commissioner Cam Davis raise the Pride Flag.

In hard hats, uniforms and business suits, commissioners and staff with the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) demonstrated their diversity and solidarity for support of the LGBTQ+ community and Pride Month by raising the rainbow flag throughout its facilities.

The MWRD celebrated the kickoff of Pride Month on June 1, with flag raisings at its Barbara J. McGowan Main Office Building as well as seven water reclamation plants.

“In our work to promote diversity and equality for the MWRD staff and the wider population we serve, the MWRD became one of the first government agencies in Illinois to raise the flag in 2019 and expanded to all of our water reclamation plants

in 2021,” said MWRD President Kari K. Steele. “The flag raising represents an opportunity for the MWRD to highlight its values of inclusion, acceptance, and fairness, while also honoring those who blazed a trail before us.”

The month of June is recognized as Pride Month to pay homage to the June 28, 1969, raid at the Stonewall Inn, a place of celebration and community for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people in New York City. The uprising became the catalyst for a developing LGBTQ+ rights movement and the first Pride celebrations. Chicago was one of the many cities that began celebrating Pride and the LGBTQ+ community in 1970.

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Pride Month at MWRD acknowledged with flag raising, *cont.*



Calumet Water Reclamation Plant



Egan Water Reclamation Plant



Hanover Park Water Reclamation Plant



Kirie Water Reclamation Plant



Lemont Water Reclamation Plant



Stickney Water Reclamation Plant



O'Brien Water Reclamation Plant

In addition to raising the flag at its facilities, the MWRD Board of Commissioners also presented a resolution to Equality Illinois CEO Brian C. Johnson to salute the organization's work to assist the LGBTQ+ community, including sponsoring educational workshops geared toward equality in the workplace; hosting voter registration drives; and informing the non-LGBTQ+ community regarding the difficulties endured. Established in 1991 as the Illinois Federation for Human Rights, Equality Illinois was created to support, preserve, and safeguard the fundamental rights of people belonging to the LGBTQ+ community in Illinois. Equality Illinois is the oldest and largest LGBTQ+ organization in Illinois.

Due to the advocacy of Equality Illinois, several laws have been passed or amended, including: the Human Rights Act (2005); the Safe Schools Act (2010); the Illinois Religious Freedom Protection and Civil Union Act (2010); and the Illinois Religious Freedom and Marriage Fairness Act (2013).

Likewise, the MWRD has strived to serve as advocates for the LGBTQ+ community by assuring equal access to clean

water services and opportunities for employees and MWRD contracts. The MWRD expanded the benefits and healthcare coverage for same sex couples and advanced policy to allow more opportunities for small business enterprises owned and operated by members of the LGBTQ+ community. The rainbow flag represents these advancements and an opportunity to celebrate that pride.

"The rainbow flag is a symbol of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer and/or questioning, intersex, and asexual and/or ally pride and LGBTQIA social movements," said MWRD Chairman of Finance Marcelino Garcia. "The colors reflect the diversity of the LGBTQ community, as the flag is often used as a symbol of gay pride during LGBTQ rights marches. While this use of the rainbow flag originated in San Francisco, it is now used worldwide. The symbol is one of several uses of rainbow flags."

To view the flag raisings and remarks by MWRD commissioners, visit the MWRD's YouTube channel at youtu.be/ak795zgWVy4.

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 mwr.org.