



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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For immediate release

March 28, 2022

Water infrastructure resiliency: U.S. Sens. Duckworth, Durbin support MWRD work to mitigate flooding, improve water quality

A collaboration between U.S. Sens. Tammy Duckworth and Dick Durbin and the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) is working to protect water quality and mitigate flooding in four selected communities.

The senators joined MWRD President Kari K. Steele and the MWRD Board of Commissioners and local leaders to announce the water resiliency efforts that will benefit Stone Park, Harvey, Riverdale and Dolton. The \$1.5-million initiative will help the MWRD reduce flooding of homes and environmental contamination in these four disproportionately impacted municipalities. A recording of the press conference can be found at <https://youtu.be/dcMplQL1UVg>.

“We thank Senator Duckworth and Senator Durbin for their valuable leadership and collaboration in securing \$1.5 million in funding that will support four historically underserved communities challenged by infiltration and inflow into sanitary sewer systems,” said President Steele. “This effort exemplifies how federal funding can be leveraged to provide multiple benefits and combines many of our initiatives in managing stormwater, treating wastewater and protecting the quality of our area waterways, while also protecting vulnerable communities deserving of our help.”

The senators secured the funding thanks in part to the recent omnibus package that passed the U.S. Senate and now heads to President Joe Biden to be signed into law. In total, Sen. Duckworth and Sen. Durbin, ma-



(Front row, L-R): MWRD President Kari K. Steele, City of Harvey Mayor Christopher Clark, U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth, and U.S. Senator Dick Durbin. (Back row, L-R): MWRD Commissioner Marcelino Garcia, MWRD Commissioner Chakena D. Perry, MWRD Vice President Barbara McGowan, MWRD Commissioner Eira L. Corral Sepúlveda and MWRD Commissioner Kimberly Du Buclet.

jority whip and member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, were able to secure \$211 million total for Illinois projects in 2022.

“Chronic flooding and contamination issues from sewer overflow have plagued towns like Stone Park, Harvey, Riverdale and Dolton for far too long,” Senator Duckworth said. “But thanks to forward thinking from MWRD and our support at the federal level, we’re able to help create a future where sewage flooding, contamination and water pollution aren’t the norm. I was proud to support this MWRD-led project to help improve water infrastructure with Senator Durbin, and I’m pleased we were able to secure it in this year’s omnibus package. I look forward to seeing these repairs and upgrades completed and seeing the impact this critical federal support has on our communities that need it most.” (continued)

Water infrastructure resiliency, *cont.*

“Senator Duckworth and I were able to secure the \$1.5 million in much-needed federal funding through the return of Congressionally Directed Spending, or earmarks, to appropriations bills,” Senator Durbin said. “With the help of this earmark, MWRD is establishing a new initiative focused on increasing flood resiliency in historically underserved communities in our region. Rain in these communities too often leads to flooded homes and environmental contamination from sewer system overflows. The federal funding we announced today will help these communities finally solve these issues by assessing the condition of their aging sewer systems, finding problem areas, and fixing them.”

Dolton, Harvey, Riverdale and Stone Park own separate sanitary sewer systems designed to convey sanitary sewage in dedicated pipes; stormwater is managed separately. Regular maintenance and rehabilitation of these sewer systems is necessary to ensure reliable service to residents and businesses and to prevent excessive infiltration and inflow from entering sewers.

Infiltration and inflow (I/I) is water that enters sanitary sewers through defects such as cracks in the sewers, or through improper connections such as directly-connected downspouts. Excessive I/I can invade sewer systems, rob these pipes of capacity, and contribute to public health risks and pollution through basement backups and sanitary sewer overflows into our waterways. Excessive I/I is also conveyed to the MWRD’s water reclamation plants and can cause operational challenges due to increased flow and increased treatment costs.

Dolton, Harvey, Riverdale and Stone Park will benefit from this funding as it will help them plan and imple-



MWRD commissioners and staff held a roundtable discussion with U.S. Sens. Dick Durbin and Tammy Duckworth and Harvey Mayor Christopher Clark to discuss new initiatives to improve water infrastructure in local communities.

ment projects to inspect their sewers, make necessary repairs to eliminate excessive I/I, and come into compliance with our Infiltration and Inflow Control Program (IICP). The four communities have more than 28,000 linear feet of high priority sewers that have to be assessed and potentially repaired.

In addition, funds will also be used to identify areas where tree canopy is needed, with the goal of planting 100 trees in each of the four communities to reduce the impact of storms, provide shade, improve air quality and provide all of the benefits of trees.

Dolton, Harvey, Riverdale, and Stone Park have pledged to meet the local match requirement for this funding, and we appreciate their support and commitment to protecting our water environment.

To read the senate press release, visit <https://mwrld.org/duckworth-durbin-highlight-support-water-in-frastructure-improvements-underserved-suburban>.

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.