



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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Waterfalls designed to improve water quality & aquatic habitat in Chicago area waterways open for season

Award winning project a successful combination of form and function

Now that winter is officially over and temperatures are on the rise, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) has turned on its Sidestream Elevated Pool Aeration (SEPA) stations. The five SEPA stations, located along the Calumet-Sag Channel and the Calumet River, improve water quality and provide scenic park-like environments.

The SEPA stations were put into service between 1992 and 1994, and they are designed to replicate one of the most effective reclamation techniques – waterfalls – by adding oxygen to water in turbulent cascades. The aeration process improves water quality, encourages fish populations and prevents unpleasant odors.

Aeration stations are necessary in the Chicago Area Waterway System (CAWS) due to the unnatural form of the waterway. Since the bottom and banks of the man-made portions of the CAWS are smooth and the current is quite slow, there is very little turbulence to aerate the water. The MWRD's SEPA stations pump the water out and up before it cascades over three to five foot drops. The waterfalls naturally increase the dissolved oxygen content before the water re-enters the waterway.

Four of the five SEPA stations are open to the public. Two are located in Chicago at the intersections of the Calumet River and Torrence Avenue and at Indiana Avenue on the north side of the Little Calumet River. The other two SEPA stations are quite popular recreational destinations and are located on

the banks of the Calumet-Sag Channel at Western Avenue in Blue Island and Harlem Avenue in Worth. The SEPA station in Worth is situated next to Water's Edge Golf Course within a 12.5 acre park and attracts many visitors and special events, including weddings and photo shoots. In addition to the adjacent golf course, this area includes a pavilion, benches, walking paths and bridges.

The MWRD's SEPA project received the Outstanding Civil Engineering Achievement Award in 1994. The

award is the highest honor bestowed on a civil engineering project by the American Society of Civil Engineers.

"The MWRD constructed the five waterfalls to improve water quality and improve aquatic life in Chicago area waterways," said David St. Pierre, MWRD executive director. "Not only do the SEPA stations perform the practical function of aerating the water, but they enhance the surrounding property with attractive landscaping for accessible public outdoor spaces."



SEPA 4 in Worth is within a 12.5 acre park and attracts many visitors. In addition to the adjacent golf course, this area includes a pavilion, benches, walking paths and bridges. Three 5 ft waterfalls aerate 310 million gallons per day.

Our water environment...Take it personally

Established in 1889, the MWRD (www.mwrdd.org) is an award-winning, special purpose government agency responsible for wastewater treatment and stormwater management in Cook County, Illinois.