



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

# Press Release

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## New Cook County Forest Preserves boat launch and local water quality at Schuth's Grove benefit from MWRD green infrastructure



*From L to R: Cook County Commissioner Frank J. Aguilar, MWRD President Kari K. Steele, Illinois Department of Natural Resources Assistant Director John Rogner, Forest Preserves of Cook County General Superintendent Arnold Randall, Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle, MWRD Commissioner Mariyana Spyropoulos and MWRD Commissioner Kim Du Buclet unveil the new canoe and kayak launch at Schuth's Grove off the Des Plaines River.*

A new permeable parking lot funded by the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) is protecting the community from flooding, enhancing local water quality, and attracting boaters to the Forest Preserves of Cook County (FPCC).

Project partners from the MWRD joined the FPCC, Cook County Board leaders and local officials on Oct. 27, to mark the completion of the Schuth's Grove canoe and kayak launch at Cermak Road, west of Des Plaines Avenue near Riverside.

"Thank you to our partners at the Forest Preserves of Cook County, Board President Toni Preckwinkle

and the Cook County Board for their commitment to investing in green infrastructure at Schuth's Grove," said MWRD President Kari K. Steele. "We value your commitment to stormwater management at a time when we are growing accustomed to more and more 100-year rain events and flooding concerns. Your collaboration and actions speak volumes on our mission to build resilience throughout Cook County."

Through the installation of permeable pavement, MWRD engineers estimate that the Schuth's Grove parking lot green infrastructure retrofit now provides 110,700 gallons of stormwater storage each time it rains. Without these systems in place, that is more

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than 110,000 gallons of water invading the forest preserves, topping over the banks of the Des Plaines River and flooding the local community.

The project came to fruition through the MWRD's Green Infrastructure Program. Following an annual call for projects from the MWRD in 2019, the Forest Preserves of Cook County applied for support to retrofit the parking lot. The MWRD responded by agreeing to fund more than \$200,000 toward the completion of the project.

"At the Forest Preserves, we have made a commitment to increasing and improving accessible amenities like the canoe launch. The nearly 70,000 acres of Forest Preserves in Cook County is an amazing resource that belongs to all of us. Everyone should be able to enjoy its benefits of being outside and in the natural world," said President Preckwinkle.

The project mitigates flooding, increases stormwater capacity through the installation of green infrastructure, while also protecting the quality of local waterways and encouraging new accessibility to waterways. Accessing the waterways and nature is a priority of the FPCC.

"Getting out on the river and paddling through the preserves is a fun and unique way to experience nature in our highly developed county. This new launch is open for visitors every day of the year, and it will be a spot for our programming team to lead kayaking events on the Des Plaines for the public," said FPCC General Superintendent Arnold Randall.

Green infrastructure is a stormwater management tool that is designed to capture water and allow it to infil-

trate into the ground before it enters the traditional conveyance system. These engineered installations store, infiltrate, and evaporate stormwater to mimic the natural water cycle. By using natural or biological modes of controlling stormwater, green infrastructure can store water that slowly soaks into the underlying soil. This reduces the amount of water flowing through gray infrastructure and collection systems that are often overwhelmed by increasingly intense rain events experienced throughout the region.

"We praise the Forest Preserves of Cook County for their partnership and commitment to our water environment at Schuth's Grove," said MWRD Commissioner Kimberly du Buclet. "They could have easily rolled out an asphalt lot, but instead encouraged the environmental benefits of permeable pavement and how it can protect our water environment and mitigate flooding."

In addition to the porous pavement, the lot upgrades include bioswales and green islands to capture more runoff in between the pavement. The canoe and kayak launch also benefited from an Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) Boat Area Access Development (BAAD) grant.

The MWRD has now completed more than 80 successful green infrastructure projects throughout Cook County since 2015, with 21 more in progress. In total, once complete, these projects will retain more than 16.5 million gallons of stormwater volume per rain event.

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## **Recovering Resources, Transforming Water**

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*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 [mwrdd.org](http://mwrdd.org).*





*A new permeable parking lot at Schuth's Grove in the Forest Preserves of Cook County was funded by the MWRD to mitigate flooding, protect local water quality and make an attractive space that increases accessibility to the Des Plaines River.*

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