



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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Garden-side chat at MWRD's pump station features Secretary of the Illinois Department of Human Services Grace B. Hou



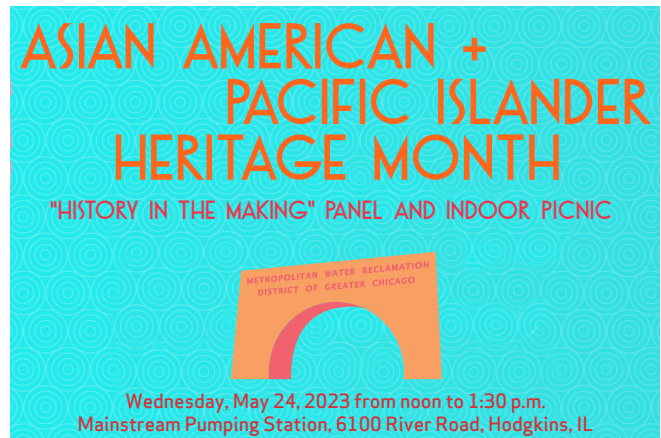
From L to R: MWRD Commissioner Eira L. Corral Sepúlveda, MWRD President Kari K. Steele, Secretary of the Illinois Department of Human Services Grace B. Hou, MWRD Commissioner Patricia Theresa Flynn and Chairman of Finance Marcelino Garcia at the Mainstream Pumping Station on May 24.

Set to a backdrop of massive pumps and critical infrastructure to protect the health of Chicago area residents and area water quality, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) paused to recognize the struggles and achievements of Asian and Pacific Islander Americans through an informative and inspirational guest speaker tasked with providing a safe and healthy Illinois.

MWRD commissioners and staff welcomed Secretary of the Illinois Department of Human Services Grace B. Hou to recognize Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month and shed light on her integral role at the IDHS persevering to protect Illinois residents.

The event was held at the MWRD's Mainstream Pumping Station in Hodgkins, IL, and was hosted by MWRD President Kari K. Steele, Chairman of Finance Marcelino Garcia and Commissioners Patricia Theresa Flynn and Eira L. Corral Sepúlveda.

"We are here today to honor the Asian American and Pacific Islander community," said President Steele. "We designate each May as a permanent symbol of our appreciation and gratitude for Asian American and Pacific Islanders and rec-



ognize their valuable contributions across all levels of government, including our own agency."

In a chat with Commissioner Garcia, Secretary Hou pointed out that government agencies rose to the challenge, especially during the pandemic.

"We had to make decisions really, really quickly. We had to listen, listen, listen and make the best decisions for that moment," Secretary Hou said. "There will always be challenges, and if you want to do anything transformational, it's going to be hard. I think the challenges of public service are plentiful. People are slow to show appreciation but quick to criticize. People don't understand how great government is. Government is good. Government is important and we saw it by leaps and bounds during COVID. People don't know why they have clean water. And they should know that it's because of government. We take it for granted."

"The MWRD and Illinois Department of Human Services are two agencies with overlapping purpose and dedication to keeping communities safe," said Chairman Garcia. "We need to pay close attention to also fostering change in areas that are disproportionately impacted economically, environmentally and socially."

Chairman Garcia and Commissioners Sepúlveda and Flynn travelled to India to work on water issues, *(continued)*

Garden-side chat at MWRD's pump station features, *cont.*



Secretary of the Illinois Department of Human Services Grace B. Hou and MWRD Chairman of Finance Marcelino Garcia have a garden-side chat.

and they highlighted the importance of international communications and partnerships.

“It’s important to continue these collaborations with other countries and those in the Asian American Pacific Islander community so MWRD can continue to be a global leader in water protection, public health, and stormwater management,” said Commissioner Sepúlveda. “Here locally in Cook County, the MWRD remains committed to promoting equity and honoring diversity knowing that our best practices impact our global health.”

Commissioner Flynn said “it was an honor to speak at our AAPI Heritage Month celebration and present a resolution recognizing the role of the AAPI community in wastewater management to two incredible MWRD leaders. I had the pleasure of working with Syama Pappu and Khaja Moynuddin when I co-chaired the International Conference and Expo on Water and Waste Management in Bhubeshwar, India earlier this year with Chairman Garcia. The AAPI community has contributed invaluable knowledge to the field of wastewater treatment and management, and I am so proud to serve on the Board of an agency that is home to a diverse group of employees who have shared their skills and expertise worldwide. I’m also grateful to Secretary Hou for joining us and sharing her experiences as a leader of Illinois and advocate for AAPI and immigrant communities.”



Musicians from the Korean Performing Arts Institute of Chicago (KPAC) performed at the MWRD’s Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month.



As part of the Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month event hosted by the MWRD, Secretary of the Illinois Department of Human Services Grace B. Hou and guests toured the MWRD Mainstream Pumping Station approximately 300 feet below ground.

The event included tours of the pumping station and McCook Reservoir, important components of the MWRD’s Tunnel and Reservoir Plan. These critical pieces of infrastructure are working to protect the waterways from pollution and communities in combined sewer areas from flooding.

To watch the program, visit youtu.be/pQB6SsBwfGo

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.