



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

# Press Release

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## Buffalo Creek Reservoir expansion and improved aesthetics celebrated by partners, community

Officials with the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Village of Buffalo Grove, Village of Wheeling, and Lake County Forest Preserve District (LCFPD) held a grand opening ceremony on a project that alleviates flooding while improving public recreation spaces at Buffalo Creek Forest Preserve. Watch the ceremony at this link: <https://youtu.be/Hk70FF-5nVc>.

The Buffalo Creek Reservoir was expanded to store an additional 58.6 million gallons and relieve area flooding. Construction removed 107 structures from flooding impacts and more than 2,000 structures along Buffalo Creek and the main stem of the Des Plaines River received some form of flood reduction benefit.

Through a collaborative process with the LCFPD and Buffalo Grove, the project design incorporated LCFPD's planned improvements while offering increased stormwater protection for Buffalo Grove and surrounding communities. The project incorporated other aesthetic and environmental enhancements: wetlands were created and restored; hundreds of new trees and shrubs were planted; upland prairie, west of Schaeffer Road, was restored; two tributaries entering the reservoir were restored while one tributary was stabilized. Public access improvements include new pedestrian boardwalks, raised trails, and an expanded parking lot.

"Flooding doesn't recognize boundaries, so it made economic sense to work with these partners so that residents living nearby receive stormwater management benefits and can enjoy the Lake County Forest Preserves as an amenity," said MWRD President Kari K. Steele.

LCFPD Commissioner Marah Altenberg watched the coveted forest preserve transform over the years. "Set amid bustling suburbs, Buffalo Creek is an emerald island offering a quiet place to relax and recreate with nature. We have received tremendous feedback from the public about the improvements at the beautiful 408-acre preserve."



*From L to R: State Sen. Adriane Johnson (30th Dist.), Lake County Forest Preserve District Commissioner Marah Altenberg, MWRD Commissioner Chakena D. Perry, MWRD President Kari K. Steele, Village of Buffalo Grove President Beverly Sussman, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Chicago District Commander Col. Paul Culberson, and Wheeling Village Manager Jon Sfondilis cut the ribbon on a \$9.7 million investment to expand and improve Buffalo Creek Reservoir and forest preserve.*

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The most recent public access improvements include the addition of 1.7 miles of trails, seven new boardwalks, two scenic overlooks and 39 additional parking spaces.

Buffalo Grove Village President Beverly Sussman has been a resident for more than 50 years. As a village pioneer, she watched the population increase from 12,000 in 1971 to almost 40,000 residents today. The increase in population resulted in new challenges in managing stormwater in Buffalo Grove and downstream communities.

"This project represents a long-standing relationship and an ongoing cooperative effort between the Village of Buffalo Grove, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District and the Lake County Forest Preserve District which began in 1973," explained President Beverly Sussman. "Through the cooperative efforts of the parties, the effects of flooding on our respective communities and regional stakeholders have been reduced. The completion of this project will further reduce the effects of flooding and provide a safe and healthy environment for many years to come. *(continued)*

## Buffalo Creek Reservoir expansion and improved aesthetics celebrated by partners, community, *cont.*



*As part of the Buffalo Creek Reservoir Expansion project, seven new timber boardwalks were installed and pedestrian paths were relocated and reconstructed to remove them from inundation during the 10-year storm event.*

In an effort to relieve flooding during the rapid development of the northwest suburbs during the 1960s and 1970's, the MWRD, the Lake County Forest Preserve District, and the Village of Buffalo Grove entered into an agreement in 1973 to acquire the Buffalo Creek site. The MWRD completed construction on the original reservoir in 1983, including an earthen dam, concrete spillway and 48-inch outlet pipe. A second agreement led to an expansion of the reservoir in 1988, creating the upper pool, as well as modifying the emergency spillway. In 2011, the MWRD published the Lower Des Plaines Detailed Watershed Plan, identifying further expansion of the reservoir to help floodprone areas.

During preliminary engineering, the MWRD developed five different sized reservoir expansion alternatives, and worked with the Army Corps to determine each alternative's economic benefits. The chosen design utilized an additional 180 acre-feet of storage, which the USACE determined would reduce future flood damages by more than \$26 million.

"U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is proud to be a partner in this team. We recognize the importance these partnerships that see the completion of not only this project but others throughout the Chicagoland area," said Col. Paul B. Culberson, Commander, Chicago District. "I know that together through these partnerships we will continue to accomplish great things for the people of the region."



*The Buffalo Creek Reservoir Expansion Project increased storage capacity to alleviate flooding for downstream communities, while at the same time improving public recreation amenities at Buffalo Creek Forest Preserve. The MWRD increased the existing reservoir volume by approximately 180 acre-feet to account for an additional 58.6 million gallons of flood storage.*

Senator Adriane Johnson added that "the much needed expansion will alleviate flooding for the communities downstream and improve public recreation spaces in the 30th District. Thanks to all the agencies that worked in collaboration to accomplish this great addition that will help keep our community safe and healthy."

"Wheeling is pleased to be among the downstream beneficiaries of these improvements, and proud to be participating in this event, much as we were pleased to welcome our own downstream neighbors at the groundbreaking of the Heritage Park Flood Control Facility six years ago," said Wheeling Village Manager Jon Sfondilis. "That project has brought extraordinary aesthetic and recreational benefits to our community, and I'm confident that this one will achieve similar ends."

Lake County Grading Company expanded the reservoir before the MWRD established native plantings. Monitoring and maintenance is underway to ensure the survival of native species at the site. Concurrently, MWRD is also monitoring and maintaining the two reaches of stream restoration along the Buffalo Creek Main Stem and the West Unnamed Tributary.

### ***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](http://mwrld.org).*