



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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MWRD releases new video to highlight investments during United for Infrastructure Week, “Infrastructure investments to address odors at Stickney Water Reclamation Plant”

This week is national United for Infrastructure Week, and the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) is releasing a new video highlighting its commitment to addressing wastewater treatment, odor control measures and infrastructure investments to improve quality of life for its neighbors.

The video, featuring MWRD Commissioner Marcelino Garcia, focuses on the MWRD’s many initiatives to manage odors that arise during the natural biological process to treat wastewater at the Stickney Water Reclamation Plant (WRP), one of the world’s largest wastewater treatment facilities. The video is in both English and Spanish and can be viewed on the MWRD’s YouTube Channels at (Spanish) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kD4gebCe1n8> and (English): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3OKBU_mLV0w

“We have made innovative infrastructure investments at our water reclamation plants to meet our goals of serving as a responsible neighbor,” said Commissioner Garcia. “It is important that we keep an open line of communication with our neighbors who we serve. If you smell something or see illegal dumping in our water environment or sewers, blocked waterways or other incidents disrupting our water resources, please let us know by calling 1-800-332-3867, visit mwrdd.org or download our app. Your report can help us improve our work.”

“United for Infrastructure 2021: A Week to Champion America’s Infrastructure” is held nationally, and this



MWRD Commissioner Marcelino Garcia stands before aeration tanks at the Stickney Water Reclamation Plant.

year it is May 10 through May 14. Now in its ninth year, United for Infrastructure brings diverse stakeholders together to seek infrastructure reform by calling the nation’s leaders to bold action. It also raises awareness for these key systems that each day play a role in the lives of Americans, the economy, jobs, public health and national security. The MWRD participates along with other water utilities, businesses, labor organizations and elected officials to acknowledge how important infrastructure is in protecting the region’s water environment. Each day, the MWRD’s facilities treat wastewater for Chicago and 128 suburban municipalities, while also serving as the regional authority for stormwater management for Cook County.

The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) recently released its Report Card for America’s Infrastructure, and gave the nation’s infrastructure an overall grade of C-. The ASCE ranked 17 categories, from roads and bridges to transit and wastewater systems, and 11 of those categories received Ds. *(continued)*

MWRD releases new video to highlight investments, *cont.*

The MWRD's seven WRPs provide critical services that protect the environment and public health by treating water from homes and businesses in the Chicago region. The MWRD constructed the WRPs at low elevations near waterways to convey water before many of the surrounding communities were established around them. In time, as more neighbors moved in, the MWRD has sought to create productive land use opportunities by leasing adjoining land to local park districts for nominal fees. These parks provide athletic fields, open space, and a natural setting for our neighbors. Near other WRPs, the MWRD has also promoted waterway access by designating land to build trails.

With 500 billion gallons of water to manage each year, there can be unpredictable flows of water and accompanying odors that enter these facilities. That is why odor control is a primary focal point for the MWRD.

"Reducing odors from the wastewater treatment process is one of our top priorities," said MWRD President Kari K. Steele. "We have made substantial infrastructure investments in our facilities and staff to help address these matters, and United for Infrastructure Week is an ideal time to highlight why these investments can improve our technology and lead to more protection for our environment and the public health.

At the Stickney WRP, the MWRD's upgrades include odor monitoring controls, misting systems, chemical

dosing, and four new odor control projects that represent a total investment of \$228 million. The MWRD is also installing new odor control systems at its Calumet, Hanover Park, and Egan WRPs. The MWRD has also trained odor patrol technicians who monitor improvements and help determine where more work is required. MWRD staff routinely monitors for odors at dozens of locations at the WRPs.

These calls to action made during United for Infrastructure Week are generating renewed urgency. On April 29, the U.S. Senate passed a package of wastewater, stormwater, drinking water and water reuse infrastructure funding by a vote of 89-2. The [Drinking Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Act of 2021, S. 914](#), sponsored by U.S. Sen. Tammy Duckworth, seeks to reauthorize many core federal water infrastructure funding programs and helps introduce several new programs that can help communities address pressing water infrastructure challenges.

"We thank our federal partners and the Illinois congressional delegation for striving to prioritize water infrastructure funds," said MWRD Commissioner Josina Morita. "This support and additional resources will help us treat wastewater, recover resources, manage stormwater and the effects of climate change, protect our water environment and water resources, address odor control measures and introduce energy efficiency upgrades that improve our planet."

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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.