



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

# Press Release

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For immediate release

April 13, 2023

## MWRD leading the way on water research and innovation at the Megacity Alliance for Water and Climate



*Megacity Chicago's delegation, including Dr. Ashish Sharma (from left), Dr. Cristina Negri, Dr. Sevin Yildiz, Alaina Harkness, MWRD Managing Engineer Jonathan Grabowy, Dr. Thomas Theis, MWRD Principal Environmental Scientist Dr. Kuldip Kumar, Dr. Junhong Chen and MWRD Managing Civil Engineer Joseph Kratzer participated in the UNESCO Program on Megacity Alliance for Water and Climate in New York.*

A delegation of water experts, scientists and engineers from the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) joined academic and research partners from Current Water, Argonne National Laboratory, University of Chicago, Northwestern University, and the University of Illinois System to participate in an international forum in New York to collaborate on innovative water solutions that will better prepare megacities for climate change.

As climate change continues to impact megacities, local governments and water operators are facing increasingly critical needs to establish climate adaptation policies and assess best practices for water systems management. The Megacity Alliance for Water and Climate (MAWaC), a UNESCO program, recently organized a workshop on Water Research and Innovation (WRI) to address these challenges.

The workshop, hosted by New York University and the New York City Department of Environmental Protection in Brooklyn, brought together government officials, policy decision-makers, water operators, and researchers from the Euro-North American Region's (ENAR) megacities to share their experiences, R&D needs, and innovative solutions for metropolitan water ecosystem resilience.

“As a leader in the water industry we are pleased to contribute to this critically important conversation on how the world's largest cities are mitigating, adapting and preparing for climate change,” said MWRD President Kari K. Steele. “Thank you to our exceptional staff and Chicago partners for attending this international forum to cultivate new ideas. Together we can combat climate change and make a lasting difference in the health of our water systems and way of life.” *(continued)*

## MWRD leading the way on water research and innovation, *cont.*

The goals of the workshop were to provide an overview of priority challenges, explore opportunities for synergistic collaboration, support collaborative inter-city R&D projects, and establish a strategic development framework for implementing R&D collaborative projects focused on climate adaptation priority needs.

On the first day, representatives from New York, Paris, London, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Rome provided an overview of their city's adaptation strategies, R&D programs, and early monitoring results of innovative solutions. The second day of the workshop focused on breakout group sessions to explore the best ways for inter-city collaboration on mutually identified themes.

The breakout group sessions focused on themes such as stormwater management, recycling and circular economy, governance policy, infrastructure asset management, and research partnerships, innovation ecosystems, community engagement, and public education for resilient cities. The breakout sessions identified WRI challenges for potential inter-city exchanges and collaborations, the purpose and objectives of participating cities, inter-city information/data sharing modes, platforms, and security challenges, the way forward strategy, resources, and milestones for inter-city collaboration, and potential impacts and contributions to the MAWaC Goals and Metropolitan Sustainable Development Goals.

The group will be developing specific projects for future collaborative research or piloting innovation solutions available from other megacities in the coming months, which will be fi-



nalized during the second WRI Workshop tentatively planned to be hosted by the Megacity London in March 2024.

“The UNESCO Megacity Alliance for Water and Climate has brought the world’s leading water innovators together to help us address climate change and urban water systems,” said MWRD Commissioner Eira L. Corral Sepúlveda. “By attending this important conference and providing input from Chicago, we are building solutions that will improve our region and other similar cities from around the planet.

The MAWaC program provides a valuable platform for megacities to collaborate and share their experiences, R&D needs, and innovative solutions for metropolitan water ecosystem resilience. The workshop’s outcomes demonstrate the importance of inter-city collaboration and the potential benefits of leveraging resources and experience to accelerate the integration and deployment of innovative solutions for climate adaptation.

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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](http://mwrld.org).