



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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MWRD's work to keep clean water flowing for resilient, sustainable and livable communities earns national award

The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) has once again been named a "Utility of the Future Today," a prestigious honor received for its forward-thinking, innovative model to protect local watersheds, engage with Cook County communities and recover valuable resources in the MWRD's quest to protect the regional water environment.

The Utility of the Future Today recognition program promotes the emerging transformation of traditional wastewater treatment systems and water utilities into community-based resource recovery centers that serve as leaders in the overall sustainability and resilience of the communities they serve. The MWRD is one of 65 water utilities being recognized.

"Through our work protecting water resources, we are striving to establish resilient, sustainable, and livable communities that align with the goals of the Utility of the Future Today program," said MWRD President Kari K. Steele. "This coveted title complements the MWRD's commitment to recover resources beyond water, to engage as a leader, and to address the broader social, economic and environmental sustainability of our Chicago region."

The Utility of the Future Today recognition is a joint initiative led by the Water Environment Federation (WEF), the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA), the Water Research Foundation (WRF) and the WaterReuse Association, and is supported by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Office of Wastewater Management, and the Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy. The MWRD's detailed application was reviewed by a selection com-



MWRD President Kari K. Steele displays the new Utility of the Future Today flag.

mittee consisting of peer utility general managers and executives. The committee determined that the MWRD meets the criteria by taking into consideration organizational culture and watershed stewardship. The program also recognizes utilities like the MWRD for beneficial biosolids use, partnering and engagement, energy efficiency, energy generation and recovery, nutrient reduction and materials recovery and water reuse.

Utilities are facing multiple challenges, such as aging infrastructure, water pollution, workforce shortages, and impacts of climate change, including drought, floods, storms, and sea level rise. WEF President Jackie Jarrell said that to persevere despite these competing factors is a true accomplishment.

"The transformational approach to utility management each of the Utility of Future Today honorees have shown benefits communities in several significant ways," said Jarrell. "We are delighted (*continued*)

MWRD's work to keep clean water flowing earns national award, *cont.*

to celebrate the impact of these utilities and proud to recognize their leadership in water sector innovation.”

Created in 1889 as the Sanitary District of Chicago, the MWRD today is an award-winning, special purpose district responsible for treating wastewater and providing stormwater management for residents and businesses in its service area across 882 square miles of Cook County. The MWRD works to protect the Chicago Area Waterway System (CAWS), Lake Michigan and the health and safety of 10.35 million people each day. In 2019, the MWRD's seven water reclamation plants treated 536 billion gallons of wastewater,

transforming it into clean water to protect the region's waterways, including 76 miles of navigable waterways the MWRD controls, connecting the Great Lakes with the Gulf of Mexico.

Since 2016, 118 utilities have received recognition under this innovative program. The MWRD was last recognized in 2016. After three years, utilities must reapply to renew their recognition. Utilities were honored during a pre-recorded awards ceremony held during the Utility Leaders Morning at the Water Environment Federation's Technical Exhibition and Conference (WEFTEC) Connect on Oct. 9.

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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 mwrdd.org.