



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

Allison Fore

Public and Intergovernmental Affairs Officer

312.751.6626

allison.fore@mwrdd.org

100 East Erie Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611

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MWRD joins the world in “Valuing Water” for World Water Day

World Water Day (WWD) was created by the United Nations (UN) to focus world attention on the importance of fresh water. Since 1993, the UN has observed WWD on March 22 to raise awareness of the 2.2 billion people living without access to clean, safe water.

This year’s theme is “Valuing water.” The Chicago region values Lake Michigan, the source of drinking water for so many, for its life-sustaining qualities. The MWRD plays a vital role in protecting the lake, pioneering a major shift at its water reclamation plants from treatment and disposal to resource recovery and reuse.



The MWRD’s work to protect water quality, increase resiliency, and reduce water scarcity is featured in a documentary “Brave Blue World,” featuring actors Matt Damon, Jaden Smith and Liam Neeson. The documentary showcases MWRD’s phosphorus recovery facility at the Stickney Water Reclamation Plant (WRP) and the algae nutrient recovery research facility at the O’Brien WRP as work underway by leading researchers, engineers and organizations. The nutrient recovery process at Stickney provides significant benefits by recovering phosphorus that had negatively impacted waterways as far from Chicago as the Mississippi River and Gulf of Mexico and returns it to farmers and other agricultural producers because there is a finite amount of phosphorus on the planet.

At times, excess water in the Chicago region comes at a cost. For the past three years Chicago has recorded the wettest May on record for rainfall. In May 2020, 9.51 inches of rainfall was recorded, which broke the record of 8.25 inches set in May 2019. In May 2018, 8.21 inches fell. Heavy rains can threaten our water supply when combined sewer overflows result. Therefore, it is important that tools designed to manage the excess water are universally integrated.

“The planning starts from lessons learned in the past and incorporating effective stormwater management tools year-round,” said MWRD President Kari K. Steele. “Everyone plays a part of the larger ecosystem in maintaining our most valued resource, water. Together we can achieve a more sustainable community that values water with our everyday decisions that help preserve and protect our water environment and communities, not only today but for future generations. World Water Day is the ideal time to challenge our own household to conserve water. Water World Day is every day and each day we should regard water as our most valued community resource.”

Learn more at www.worldwaterday.org, <https://www.braveblue.world/> and https://www.weather.gov/lot/May_Precip_Rankings_Chicago

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.