



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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MWRD's 5th Annual Sustainability Summit honors compost users, sustainable landscaping best management practices



(L-R): MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos, Franklin Park Mayor Barrett Pedersen, Franklin Park Deputy Commissioner Andrew Smolen, Commissioner Kari K. Steele and Commissioner Frank Avila.

The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago's (MWRD's) Stickney Water Reclamation Plant in Cicero, IL was the site of the MWRD's 5th annual Sustainability Summit on Oct. 23.

The Summit is an opportunity to empower and equip partnering municipalities and environmental advocates with the latest trends in resource recovery and stormwater management. The event is also an opportunity to spotlight some of the best management practices taking place across the county that promote a sustainable environment and speak to the MWRD's mission in renewable resources, flood control and water quality improvements.

"We thank all of the participants for coming to this annual event and congratulate our award winners for their dedication to protecting our environment and investing in these sustainable resources and projects that make their fields and facilities destinations to enjoy for many years to come," said President Mariyana Spyropoulos.

MWRD Executive Director David St. Pierre and Senior Civil Engineer Joe Kratzer gave updates on the MWRD's resource recovery and stormwater management initiatives. Supervising Environmental Soil Scientist Guanglong Tian and Environmental Monitoring and Research Manager Albert Cox gave an overview of the composting operations. Arborist Val Kehoe, Horticulture



(L-R): MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos, Riverdale Park District Executive Director Kendall Parrott, Commissioner Kari K. Steele and Commissioner Frank Avila.

Program Coordinator with the University of Illinois Extension gave an update on the Conservation@Home Program.

MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos, Chairman of Finance Frank Avila and Commissioner Kari K. Steele presented awards to individuals and organizations dedicated to the concept of resource recovery and the use of MWRD compost that can improve turf quality and reduce carbon footprints. MWRD biosolids are a high-quality product of the water treatment process that is turned into a valuable compost for plants. The compost can be used as a soil amendment or conditioner for establishing turf grass, for mixing into custom topsoil blends, and in planter beds and pots for establishing flowers and trees in nurseries. The MWRD produces biosolids as part of the water treatment process.

The first winner of the prestigious Biosolids User award was Andrew Smolen, Deputy Commissioner for the Village of Franklin Park. Smolen, who is a certified arborist, took initiative in establishing the demonstration of the benefits of compost in Franklin Park. His work showed that MWRD compost boosted the growth and production of crops. He also organized an event to showcase the results to the public.

The second Biosolids User award went to the Riverdale Park District for their use of biosolids in their turf maintenance program since 2013. Since that time, the Park District has used biosolids in their parks and playgrounds located throughout (*continued*)

MWRD's 5th Annual Sustainability Summit honors *(continued)*



(L-R): MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos, Senior Manager for Space to Grow at Healthy Schools Campaign Meg Kelly, Commissioner Kari K. Steele and Commissioner Frank Avila.



(L-R): MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos, Sat Nagar, Stefanie Levine, Lara Biggs, Commissioner Kari K. Steele and Commissioner Frank Avila.

the village, including Riverdale, Cooper, Franson, Pacesetter, Mohawk, Pekny, Prairie, and School Street Parks. The implementation of biosolids helped develop a high quality of turf that eliminated invasive weeds and created thick, green, strong grass on playing fields. The use of biosolids aided in reducing field maintenance care costs. Mr. Kendall Parrott, Executive Director, accepted the award on behalf of the Riverdale Park District.

The first Sustainable Landscaping award was presented to the city of Evanston which reconstructed its Civic Center parking lot using permeable pavement, a rain garden, and a bioswale. The parking lot now absorbs more water and reduces runoff and flooding in the neighborhood. Sat Nagar, Senior Project Manager, Capital Planning & Engineering, accepted the award on behalf of the city.

The second Sustainable Landscaping award was presented to Meg Kelly, Senior Manager for Space to Grow at Healthy Schools Campaign. Meg has played a key role in managing the Space to Grow partnership, an initiative that is transforming Chicago's schoolyards into vibrant outdoor community spaces incorporating ground surfaces and landscape features that absorb large amounts of water. This results in less neighborhood flooding and reduced flow to the sewer system, while providing beautiful and functional spaces for kids, teachers and neighbors to be active and healthy. Nine elementary school playgrounds have already been transformed through Space to Grow.

"Working with this wonderful partnership is a true honor," said Kelly. "Space to Grow is one of the most cohesive and comprehensive green infrastructure programs in the country. I am so proud to be a part of this program that is connecting green stormwater management with so many benefits – Space to Grow schoolyards are places for play and learning as well as connecting with nature, while working hard to protect our city's water resources."

"It takes many partners like these municipalities and organiza-

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Val Kehoe, Horticulture Program Coordinator with the University of Illinois Extension explains the Conservation@Home Program.

tions to manage stormwater and utilize recovered resources," said MWRD Chairman of Finance Frank Avila. "Their best management practices in sustainability should be commended, as they show us the long-term value of protecting our planet and embrace the goals of our agency that make our communities a better place to live."

Participants at the Summit toured the MWRD's Lawndale Avenue Solids Management Area where they saw compost preparations in action.

"We are happy to partner with municipalities across Cook County to effectively utilize our resource recovery projects; it is encouraging and will hopefully serve as an incentive to others when MWRD showcases the best work that has come as a result of these partnerships," said Commissioner Kari K. Steele.

Recovering Resources, Transforming Water

Established in 1889, the MWRD (www.mwr.org) is an award winning, special purpose government agency responsible for used water treatment and stormwater management in Cook County, Illinois.