



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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MWRD Executive Director offers glimpse of the future at environmental meeting

During a monthly meeting co-sponsored by the Lake Michigan States Section of the Air and Waste Management Association and the Union League Club's Environment and Public Affairs Committees, Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) Executive Director David St. Pierre offered a glimpse into the future of the wastewater treatment agency.

"I recently returned from nationwide conferences in Washington, DC and New Orleans, LA, where I had the opportunity to share our work with hundreds of local, state, federal and private organizations," said St. Pierre. "Everywhere I went, reactions have been extremely positive. Whether the MWRD is addressing municipal stormwater management needs and growing our use of green infrastructure or improving our wastewater treatment processes to minimize our environmental impact, the work we are doing is cutting edge."

Already in progress is the engineering design of the disinfection technologies selected for implementation next year at the Calumet and North Side treatment facilities. Continuing to find additional uses for fertile biosolids, the end-product of wastewater treatment, is also underway.

There are other emerging opportunities for environmental protection and cost savings on the horizon as well. A new frontier pertains to the wastewater treatment digestion process in which methane and carbon dioxide, called biogas, is produced. Biogas has numerous sustainable uses such as producing electricity or vehicle fuel. The MWRD is exploring the possibility of adding food wastes and restaurant grease into its digesters to increase its production of biogas. This gas will be converted to energy as a clean energy alternative.

The recovery of phosphorus and nitrogen from the wastewater treatment process is another planned state of the art process. In excessive amounts, these nutrients negatively impact water quality, but if they are removed from the water stream, they can be returned to the soil as fertilizers for agriculture production.

"The processes and practices that the MWRD is currently investigating are exciting advances in the realm of wastewater utilities," said St. Pierre. "The MWRD has always been working to improve the quality of life for Cook County residents, but we are bringing those efforts into the forefront and sharing our vision and our success so that we may continue to lead the utility sector into the future."

"We were particularly pleased to hear the innovative solutions the MWRD is exploring to our many environmental challenges," said meeting chairman James Harrington. "Many of those in the audience are looking forward to working with the District on developing and implementing these approaches."

The Lake Michigan States Section of the Air and Waste Management Association (A&WMA-LMSS) covers Illinois, Northwest Indiana, Wisconsin, and Western Michigan with chapters of the association represented throughout the region. The purpose of the A&WMA-LMSS is to promote a better understanding and awareness of the challenges that exist in air pollution control, waste management, processing and control, and environmental management programs among representatives of industry, government agencies, research personnel, educators, attorneys and consultants within the geographic area of the Section.

Additional information about the MWRD can be found at www.mwr.org.

Our water environment, Take it personally

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