



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

# Media Advisory

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## MWRD awards long awaited disinfection contracts

During its regular Board of Commissioners meeting held on Aug. 8, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) unanimously approved contracts to construct disinfection facilities at the Calumet and O'Brien Water Reclamation Plants (WRPs).

These projects have received significant support from state and regional leadership as the US Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA), Illinois Governor Pat Quinn, Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel and the MWRD have been working together to reduce untreated stormwater overflows into the waterways. In 2012, Governor Quinn, Mayor Emanuel and then U.S. EPA Director Lisa Jackson awarded the MWRD \$10 million through the Illinois Jobs Now! capital program. That funding supplemented the \$21 million in engineering and design costs needed to move the MWRD's disinfection facilities forward.

The Governor also directed the Illinois EPA (IEPA) and Illinois Finance Authority to expand the State Revolving Fund program as part of the Illinois Clean Water Initiative (ICWI), which makes low-interest loans to local governments for water infrastructure projects. Last spring, the Governor awarded a \$250 million low-interest loan to the MWRD to move forward with projects crucial for improving the water environment and protecting public health. Financed through the ICWI, the projects will create 2,000 construction-related jobs and support an additional 8,000 jobs in local communities. The ICWI funds gave the MWRD a tremendous boost and offered economical, low-interest rates for taxpayers.

In addition to directly benefitting the water environment, the two disinfection projects will put 750 tradespeople to work: 125 new jobs will be created at the Calumet WRP, 175 will be added at the O'Brien plant, and 450 ancillary positions will also be filled.

"We are happy to move forward on the disinfection projects," said MWRD President Kathleen Meany. "The Chicago Area Waterways are treasures that should be clean and safe. Implementing disinfection at the O'Brien and Calumet plants will not only improve the waterways but will have a positive impact on aquatic life."

"I am committed to establishing the Chicago River as the city's next recreational frontier and confident in its potential to foster economic opportunity throughout our city and neighborhoods," said Mayor Emanuel. "I am fully supportive of the MWRD's efforts to improve their processes and the water quality of the river which moves us toward our goals for this wonderful resource."

"The Chicago River is one of the most important waterways in Illinois and it should be protected," Governor Quinn said. "This project will not only create hundreds of jobs now, it will improve the quality of life of everyone who enjoys the river and help attract tourism that will boost Illinois' economy."

Construction is on track to begin in September at both plants, and the work should be completed by December 2015, ahead of the 2016 recreational season. A groundbreaking ceremony will be held at the O'Brien WRP in September.

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**Our Water Environment: Take it personally**

*Established in 1889, the MWRD ([www.mwr.org](http://www.mwr.org)) is an award-winning, special purpose government agency responsible for wastewater treatment and stormwater management in Cook County, Illinois. **Our water environment, Take it personally.***