



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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MWRD Partners with Friends of Chicago River, IDNR to Release 10,000 Catfish into Chicago River

The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) joined the Friends of the Chicago River (FOCR) and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) to release 10,000 channel catfish into the Chicago River system on June 10. This is the first step in a spawning habitat restoration project funded by a \$300,000 grant from the Chi-Cal Rivers Fund, of which the MWRD is a partner.

The project includes the installation of 400 constructed nesting cavities for channel cats at eight locations ranging from the North Shore Channel to the Little Calumet River. The habitats will help this critical species repopulate the system. Ten thousand of the fish were released at the confluence downtown and 20,000 were released into the Little Calumet River. Over the next 18 months another 70,000 fish will be released throughout the system.

“This is an exciting moment in the river’s recovery process,” said Margaret Frisbie, FOCR executive director. “These fish are the vanguard for the many thousands of channel cats and other species that will one day call the river home. The water quality and the rules that govern the river have improved enough so we can do these kinds of projects and know we will see success. Projects like this demonstrate that we do not have to rely on natural habitat solely. We can create habitat and wildlife can thrive.”

“The channel cat is a fish that appeals to fishermen and the public as a whole,” said Marc Miller, IDNR director. “The IDNR is dedicated to protecting and restoring our natural resource heritage across the state and especially in urban areas where so many opportunities lie in places like the Chicago River system. These kinds of investments boost the quality of life for millions of Illinoisans and the wildlife with whom we share the state.” *(continued)*



MWRD President Kathleen Meany addresses the crowd while (L-R) Vice Pres. Barbara McGowan; Margaret Frisbie, Exec. Director of Friends of the Chicago River; Marc Miller, Director of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources; and MWRD Commissioners Kari Steele and Debra Shore released 10,000 channel catfish into the Chicago River on June 10. This is the first step in a spawning habitat restoration project funded by a grant from the Chi-Cal Rivers Fund, of which the MWRD is a partner.

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.

Friends of Chicago River, IDNR Release Catfish into Chicago River (continued)

“The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District is committed to our water environment and improving and protecting these critical resources,” said MWRD President Kathleen Therese Meany. “It is satisfying to see the many years of work culminate in wonderful possibilities in our waterways. We are proud to partner with Friends of the Chicago River who also share our vision.”

In recent years, fish communities have responded to these improvements, and there are more native species in the river. However, in many cases they are still low in numbers or sporadic in occurrence. A lack of habitat has been identified as one of limiting factors to fish reproduction success. This fish habitat project will also benefit largemouth bass and sunfishes such as bluegill and pumpkinseed sunfish and serve as a charismatic invitation for people to think beyond the banks and consider how what they do at home can impact the Chicago River.

Overall there are about 70 species of fish in the river, many species of birds including state endangered black crown night heron as well as a host of other wildlife such as beavers, muskrats, turtles and even the occasional river otter. While there is still work ahead to improve water quality on the Chicago River, conditions have improved markedly and the approval of new aquatic life standards pending at the Illinois Pollution Control Board will continue that work.

About the Chi-Cal Rivers Fund

The Chi-Cal Rivers Fund is a public-private partnership working to restore the health, vitality and accessibility of the waterways in the Chicago and Calumet region by supporting green stormwater infrastructure, habitat enhancement, and public-use improvements. To help restore these values for the people and wildlife of the region, a team of private and public organizations has established the Chi-Cal Rivers Fund. For more information about the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the Chi-Cal Rivers fund please visit: <http://www.nfwf.org/chi-cal/Pages/home.aspx#.U48ndMaKIuc>

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