

Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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Imagine a day without water: MWRD joins national effort to raise awareness for challenges facing water infrastructure and resources



Imagine a Day Without Water October 6–8, 2015

It is easy to take water for granted as it exits faucets and enters drains with ease. Behind the scenes there are costs to manage, protect, deliver and treat this valuable natural resource. At a time when the Chicago area and East coast are facing intense rainstorms, other areas of the world are managing water scarcities and draught. Factor in aging sewer systems and water mains and the manpower to deliver these intrinsic services becomes a critical challenge for the next generation.

That is why the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) supports the Value of Water Coalition's "Imagine a Day Without Water" from Oct. 6 to Oct. 8. The national advocacy campaign intends to educate and inspire people to value the precious resource.

"To us at the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago, protecting, managing and improving our area's water quality is a daily responsibility we relish," said MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos. "But while we pledge to continue our commitment to clean, safe, reliable and affordable water from our precious front yard in Lake Michigan, we acknowledge that this luxury is no guarantee throughout the world and even here locally without continued investment. Please join us in considering the value of water by imagining what it would be like to have a day without water."

The MWRD is responsible for treating 1.2 billion gallons of water per day, servicing more than 10 million people from an area stretching over 883 square miles of Cook County. The MWRD's operations and capital plan investments contribute significantly to the local economy, in terms of both economic output and job creation, according to Water Environment Research Foundation (WERF). The MWRD's estimated economic contribution to the region totals \$12.6 billion over the next decade, supporting 7,350 jobs per year, according to WERF.

Treating water for more than 10 million people while managing the Chicago Area Waterway System (CAWS) and protecting the Great Lakes requires massive infrastructure. To eliminate pollution, prevent flooding and protect this valued water resource, the MWRD operates the world's largest water treatment facility. We are in the process of building the world's two largest reservoirs and bringing two new disinfection facilities on line to improve water quality in the CAWS. Aging sewer infrastructure has prompted the MWRD to incorporate this new technology and infrastructure to prevent combined sewer overflows from impacting the waterways. Just the same, the Value of Water Coalition reports that a water main breaks somewhere in the United States every two minutes. Most pipes have an average life expectancy of 50 years, but in many major cities, water pipes are more than 100 years old and communities cannot afford to go a day without water if those systems reach their breaking points, according to the Coalition.

"We are thrilled that the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago is joining 'Imagine a Day (continued)

Imagine a day without water: MWRD joins national effort to raise awareness for challenges facing water infrastructure and resources (continued)

Without Water.' The truth is, of course, we can't go a day without water. For homes, that would mean no water to take a shower, make coffee, clean, do laundry or flush the toilet. For businesses from restaurants to manufacturing plants, water is essential to daily operations," said Radhika Fox, Director of the Value of Water Coalition. "During 'Imagine a Day Without Water,' we're speaking with one voice across the nation about how water is essential, invaluable, and needs investment."

For more information about the MWRD, visit www.mwrd. org. For more information about "Imagine a Day Without Water," visit: www.imagineaday.withoutwater.org.



A cleaner and more inviting Chicago River has sparked major interest in river recreation, from walks and meals on the Chicago Riverwalk to kayak trips and architectural tours to new homes, hotels and businesses. But it's no small task in maintaining the Chicago Area Waterway System. It's that responsibility the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago values as it imagines a day without water.

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