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New Report: Clean Water Projects Employed 19,443 In 2014

Chicago Federation of Labor, Sierra Club Present Findings at MWRD Board Meeting

"A Flowing Economy" Details Clean Water Benefits to Workers & Regional Economy

Chicago, IL– The Chicago Federation of Labor and the Sierra Club today made a unique joint appearance before the Board of Commissioners of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) to release a new report on the benefits that investments in clean water generate for the economy and the environment both locally and statewide, and to highlight upcoming opportunities for clean water projects.

"We are fortunate to have one-fifth of the world's fresh surface water right outside our front door, in Lake Michigan and all our Great Lakes," said Jorge Ramirez, President of the Chicago Federation of Labor. "Thanks to an initial investment by the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago and the City of Chicago Department of Water Management in 2014, we have already begun to see the economic and environmental benefits of investing in clean water projects in the Chicago area, namely job creation and increased worker productivity thanks to improved regional health. We need to build on this success and focus on upgrading and repairing the state's clean water infrastructure."

"Protecting Lake Michigan and restoring our rivers are not only essential for public health but also significantly contributes to a healthy economy," said Jack Darin, Director of the Sierra Club, Illinois Chapter.

The report, titled "*A Flowing Economy: How Clean Water Infrastructure Investments Support Good Jobs in Chicago and in Illinois*" finds that for every \$1 billion invested in clean water infrastructure, approximately 6,200 direct jobs are created in construction or water and sewage facilities, and 11,200 total jobs are created throughout the economy. Additionally, every \$1 billion investment brings an 8 percent one-year GDP return on investment. The report was prepared by Illinois Economic Policy Institute (ILEPI) and the School of Labor and Employment Relations at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

“Investments in clean water benefit the whole economy by making businesses and households run more smoothly, with less frequent disruptions from leaks, contamination and other water infrastructure failures,” said Frank Manzo, Policy Director at ILEPI and an author of the report.

Leading the region in clean water investments are the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) of Greater Chicago and the City of Chicago’s Department of Water Management. In 2014 alone, these two entities created or saved a total of 19,400 jobs and reduced the regional unemployment rate by 0.73 percent.

“America’s economy runs on water,” said MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos. “Between the City of Chicago and the MWRD, hundreds of thousands of annual jobs will be supported and billions in economic output will be produced over the next decade. When we invest in water, we put people to work, support economic growth and build a stronger foundation for our nation.”

While investments in clean water have led to major improvements in water quality and efficient water management, there are outstanding needs for additional investments that will continue to bolster the economy and enrich our communities. The report offers a snapshot of the challenges facing the Chicago Waterway System and waterways throughout Illinois and the opportunities to address these challenges through future investments.

“We need our local leaders and agencies to continue investing in two things every city needs: clean water and good jobs. Fortunately, there are opportunities to achieve both through smart investments in the right projects,” said Dr. Cynthia Skrukud, Clean Water Program Director for the Illinois Chapter of the Sierra Club. “We need to address serious threats to our water resources, such as invasive species, combined sewer overflows and nutrient pollution, which will require new water infrastructure to be built by hardworking men and women. We stand ready to help local, state and federal agencies prioritize investments to achieve clean water and a thriving economy.”

The report and its key findings were presented at the MWRD Board Meeting earlier today.

To read the report visit: <http://illinoisepi.org/policy-briefs-countryside/>.

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