



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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For immediate release

February 11, 2016

MWRD tax reduction saves Cook County property owners money



The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago Board of Commissioners. Seated (L-R): Vice President Barbara McGowan, President Mariyana Spyropoulos and Chairman of Finance Frank Avila. Standing (L-R): David J. Walsh, Cynthia M. Santos, Debra Shore, Kari K. Steele, Timothy Bradford and Michael A. Alvarez.

The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) Board of Commissioners unanimously passed an ordinance directing the Cook County Clerk to reduce taxes by \$3,391,347. This tax reduction will be reflected in the second installment of 2015 real estate tax bills that will be mailed to homeowners this July.

The abatement of nearly \$3.4 million will reduce the tax for homeowners for the final tax levy for wastewater and stormwater services. After the abatement, the adjusted estimated taxes paid by the owner of a home with a market value of \$200,000 for 2015 is reduced to an estimated \$232.80. The MWRD has the third lowest rates among the 50 largest cities in the U.S. The MWRD provides wastewater and stormwater services for a service area covering 883.6 square miles of Cook County.

“The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago must maintain accountability in serving our taxpayers and protecting our region’s water supply. That’s why we strive to provide excellent and essential services at an economical cost to our rate payers,” said MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos.



The MWRD owns and operates the world’s largest water treatment facility in the world at the Stickney Water Reclamation Plant in Cicero. The MWRD puts Cook County tax dollars to work every day by offering vital services to 10.35 million people, operating seven water reclamation plants, 560 miles of intercepting sewers and force mains, 22 pumping stations and 35 stormwater detention reservoirs.

MWRD Chairman of Finance Frank Avila agreed and said, “As our work in managing stormwater and protecting homes and businesses from flooding expands, we want to assure Cook County property owners that their tax dollars are going toward critical services that promote our quality of life.”

The abatement will be returned via a reduction in the 2015 levy. This return is made available through savings on bond transactions. The MWRD taxing authority service area incorporates 83 percent of Cook County and includes 98 percent of the assessed property valuation in the county.

The MWRD has taken aggressive steps to promote sound fiscal stewardship in recent years restoring stability in its retirement plans now reflected in Cook County property tax bills. The MWRD was one of the first government agencies to bring pension reform legislation to Springfield in 2012. The legislation required more funding from the District and its employees. It remains the only pension reform legislation in Illinois that is unchallenged and in place. The MWRD is also one of only a few government agencies in the nation that adopted an Other Post Employee Benefit (OPEB) Trust, bolstering its retiree medical plan.

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MWRD tax reduction *(continued)*

The MWRD's pension plan funding ratio reversed its funding ratio low of 50 percent in 2012, increasing to a funding ratio of 55 percent in 2014. The OPEB funding percentage increased from 9.1 percent in 2010 to 46.4 percent in 2014, the last date of the actuarial reports. The MWRD Board of Commissioners adopted two new policies in 2014 ensuring a commitment to reduce these liabilities as soon as possible. The pension policy ensures funding at the maximum multiplier level, until a 90 percent funding level is reached. The OPEB policy ensures funding to 100 percent over the next eight years. Both of these policies are recognized by the rating agencies as sound financial policies securing strong financial health going forward.

The MWRD was created in 1889 to protect the source of the county's drinking water, Lake Michigan. A government agency, the MWRD is funded primarily through property taxes, which are restricted under a tax cap imposed by the Illinois General Assembly. The MWRD also recovers costs of treating wastewater through a user charge imposed on certain non-residential users of the MWRD's system. Since 1985, the MWRD has returned nearly \$416 million to taxpayers and has maintained its AAA bond rating from Fitch and Standard & Poor's since 2006.

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

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Recovering Resources, Transforming Water

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