



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

# Press Release

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For immediate release

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## Biosolids nutrient management workshop begins work to develop best management practices, confront phosphorus loss from agricultural land

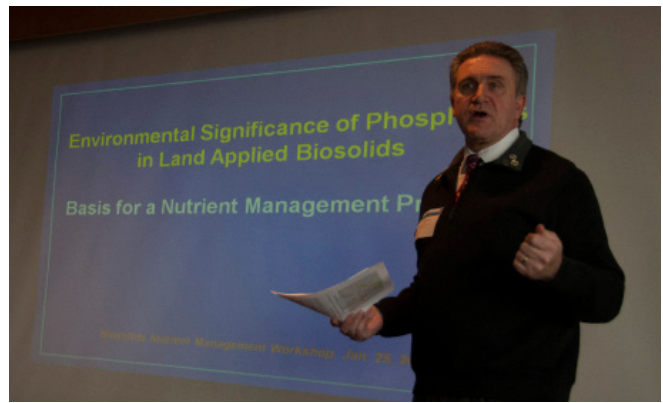


*Randy Stein, executive director of the Bloomington-Normal Water Reclamation District, leads a discussion on potential best management practices for a biosolids nutrient management program. Much of the conversation focused on what land applicators have experienced in farm fields and the potential of reducing biosolids application rates and establishing vegetative buffers.*

Representatives of wastewater treatment agencies, biosolids land applicators and consultants from across the state joined the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) to lay the groundwork for developing a biosolids nutrient management program for agricultural land. Biosolids are a nutrient-rich product of the water treatment process and are used by farmers, golf course managers, landscapers, municipalities and park districts.

During a one-day workshop held at the MWRD's Lawndale Avenue Solids Management Area Visitors Center in Willow Springs, IL, participants discussed best management practices (BMPs) that could be implemented to reduce the potential for nutrient loss, especially phosphorus, from biosolids applied to agricultural land.

This effort is driven by the Illinois Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy developed by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency to reduce the discharge of nutrients in the Mississippi River Watershed which impact the Gulf of Mexico. Implicated as a contributor to Gulf hypoxia, an overabundance of nutrients can result in reduced water clarity, de-



*Dr. Thomas Granato, director of the Monitoring and Research Department at the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD), welcomed 50 participants to MWRD to address how to implement best management practices to reduce loss of phosphorus from land applied biosolids.*

pleted oxygen, changes in fish populations and growth of toxic algae. Illinois is one of 31 states contributing to the Mississippi River Watershed which reaches 41 percent of the United States, includes 250 tributaries and covers more than 1.25 million square miles and two Canadian provinces.

“We commend our staff and sister agencies for taking the proactive measures to develop a plan that is environmentally responsible and yet fruitful for farmers and agricultural production,” said MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos.

“Utilities are expending considerable effort and expense to enhance nutrient removal at their treatment plants to recover a valuable resource and reduce the nutrient loading to surface water,” said Dr. Thomas Granato, director of the Monitoring and Research Department at the MWRD. “These efforts will be short-circuited if biosolids are then loaded on land in a manner such that nutrient losses to surface water occur. Therefore, biosolids nutrient management is completing the resource recovery and environmental stewardship loop.”

*(continued)*



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## **Biosolids nutrient workshop *(continued)***

Among the nearly 50 participants in attendance were soil scientists, researchers, farming experts, engineers and contractors and consultants involved in land application of biosolids. Wastewater treatment districts from Peoria, Joliet, Bloomington-Normal, Wheaton and other Illinois communities shared information on how implementation of BMPs will work in their biosolids land application programs. The group discussed a list of core BMPs and identified a team to devise a biosolids nutrient management guidance document, define the key components and activities for the nutrient management program, and explore how to gain statewide participation in the program.

Essential for life, phosphorus is a non-renewable resource that has less than 100 years of reserves remaining worldwide. To reduce the amount of phosphorus entering the waterway system after treatment, the MWRD is building the world's largest phosphorus recovery system to return a usable phosphorus product for use as an environmentally-friendly fertilizer. The MWRD partnered with Ostara Nutrient Recovery Technologies and Black & Veatch to design and construct the nutrient recovery system at the Stickney Water Reclamation Plant that will produce between 9,000 and 10,000 tons of Crystal Green fertilizer annually and reduce the MWRD's nutrient load to the receiving waterways.

To learn more about the MWRD's work in reducing and collecting phosphorus and the MWRD's biosolids program, visit [www.mwr.org](http://www.mwr.org).

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**Recovering Resources, Transforming Water**

*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.*