



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

# Press Release

Allison Fore

Public and Intergovernmental Affairs Officer

312.751.6626

allison.fore@mwrdd.org

100 East Erie Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611

For immediate release

March 29, 2016

## Mayor Emanuel and Regional Partners Launch Joint Effort to Address International Water Challenges

Mayor Rahm Emanuel today announced the launch of “Current,” a joint effort that brings together public and private partners from across the Chicago area, to solve the toughest water challenges facing the nation and the globe. The effort will be led by an unprecedented partnership between the City of Chicago, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) and World Business Chicago (WBC) and is designed to leverage the strength of the Chicago region’s water industry to drive critical research forward and generate greater economic impact.

Additional Current partners include the University of Chicago, Northwestern University, the University of Illinois, the U.S. Department of Energy’s Argonne National Laboratory, public utilities, private industries and entrepreneurs.

“Chicago’s strong water economy puts our region in a prime position to become the global leader in developing technology for the next generation of water infrastructure,” said Mayor Emanuel. “As global demand for water technology increases, Current will ensure we are all working together to put Chicago at the forefront of the water economy and create jobs and drive innovation.”

Current will work to advance the efficiency and resiliency of water systems, develop and deploy innovative water technology solutions to safeguard clean water and improve wastewater treatment, and drive increased investment and employment in the water industry.

The effort will launch with three marquee programs: a research consortium including industry, public utilities and universities that will facilitate applied research; a technology demonstration network that assembles regional assets to demonstrate, prove and advance innovative water technologies; and a circular economy/business-model innovation program to encourage public and private entities to reuse resources from wastewater and water streams.

*“Current” will bring together government, university and business partners from across Chicago to drive water innovation and economic development forward.*

These programs are expected to support more than 400 businesses and create more than \$250 million in economic value over 10 years.

Current will be a separate non-profit corporation governed by a board of directors chaired by Steve Kloos, Ph.D., partner at True North Venture Partners. Serving as ex-officio representatives of Current are David St. Pierre, Executive Director, of MWRD and Thomas Powers, Commissioner, of the Chicago Department of Water Management. Board representation from the following organizations includes:

- Argonne National Laboratory
- City Digital at UI LABS
- City of Chicago 11th Ward
- Greeley and Hansen
- McKinsey & Company
- Northwestern University
- University of Chicago
- University of Illinois
- World Business Chicago

Additional partners include the Illinois Institute of Technology; GlidePath Power; ChicagoNEXT; Mayer Brown; Shedd Aquarium; Blue Tech Alliance; and PositivEnergy.

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**Allison Fore**

Public and Intergovernmental Affairs Officer

312.751.6632

[allison.fore@mwrld.org](mailto:allison.fore@mwrld.org)

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## Current *(continued)*

“Chicago has been a world leader for over a century in water technology,” said MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos. “There is no better place for a water center to thrive than the Chicago region. Entrepreneurs and water technology companies looking for the road to success, take notice: Chicago is where you want to grow. Current will provide the international showcase for innovative technology solutions.”

“By strengthening our water ecosystem and promoting collaboration, we can better leverage the Chicago region’s tremendous base,” said World Business Chicago President & CEO Jeff Malehorn. “Current will help us to advance innovation, investment, productivity and business attraction within water intensive industries including energy, food and beverage, agriculture, and tech/data centers.”

With resources including Lake Michigan, the world’s largest water treatment plant (Jardine Water Filtration Plant), and the world’s largest wastewater plant (Stickney Water Reclamation Plant), Chicago’s robust water economy is the 4th largest in the nation and is uniquely positioned to serve as a springboard for innovation. In the Chicago region, water infrastructure and technology account for \$14 billion GRP. The Chicago region has produced an average 83 patents per year for water innovations and regional water companies currently employ more than 99,589 people.

Because of the Current initiative, the Chicago region was chosen from hundreds to participate in The White House Water Summit in conjunction with United Nations World Water Day. The summit’s aim was to catalyze ideas and actions to help build a sustainable and secure water future through innovative science and technology.

For more information on Current, visit [CurrentWater.org](http://CurrentWater.org) or read more at <http://www.chicagotribune.com/bluesky/originals/ct-world-business-chicago-launches-current-bis-20160328-story.html>

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**Recovering Resources, Transforming Water**

*Established in 1889, the MWRD ([www.mwrld.org](http://www.mwrld.org)) is an award-winning, special purpose government agency responsible for wastewater treatment and stormwater management in Cook County, Illinois.*