



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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Surpassing 10,000 milestone in tree distribution, MWRD working to restore canopy

In only two months, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) has distributed more than 10,000 oak tree saplings as part of the agency's new initiative called "Restore the Canopy, Plant a Tree." Visitors to the MWRD's website (www.mwrdd.org) can view an interactive map depicting where the trees have been distributed. This map identifies the areas of Cook County that will see a future growth in canopy protection, shielding property owners from stormwater and assisting the MWRD in its efforts to eliminate flooding.

Launched in April, the program helps restore the urban canopy through the free distribution of 18-inch oak tree saplings to municipalities, community groups and schools in Cook County.

"The instant success of our tree program speaks to the many tangible benefits trees provide and the enthusiasm residents across Cook County share for improving our environment and managing today's water," said MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos. "While these saplings have a long way to grow to truly restore the canopy, we know we are planting a legacy in stormwater management for a better tomorrow and many years to come."

By the end of June, the MWRD distributed 10,850 saplings to 22 municipalities, 26 schools, 14 community groups, as well as MWRD open houses, ribbon cuttings and community events.

A single inch of rainfall across the MWRD's service area, covering nearly all of Cook County, will yield approximately 16 billion gallons. By employing oak trees to consume this inundation of stormwater, the MWRD has a new tool in its arsenal to protect the region from flooding. A medium-sized oak tree can help prevent flooding by absorbing 2,800 gallons of rainfall per year. If 10,000 trees are planted, the MWRD has the potential to provide more than 28 million gallons of storm water storage, and these numbers are expected to grow.

Not only does a tree serve as an effective form of green infrastructure to reduce flooding, but trees also reduce city heat island effects, absorb carbon gases, produce oxygen, improve the habitat for wildlife and remain an important part of the ecosystem. The tree population of the Chicago region, however, has been decimated in recent years by emerald ash borer infestations and extreme weather, spurring the MWRD into action.



The MWRD oak tree saplings are available in bulk bags of 100 bare root saplings or distributed in one-gallon pots that include a biosolids compost blend, a sustainable alternative to chemical fertilizers that is recovered from the water treatment process.

The MWRD trees saplings are available in individual pots or in bulk bags of 100 bare root saplings. Planting and care instructions, along with additional information regarding the benefits of trees, will be provided with each delivery. With advanced notice, the saplings can be picked up at MWRD facilities or delivered.

To learn how to receive an oak tree sapling or participate in the program, visit www.mwrdd.org, or contact MWRD Public Affairs at (312) 751-6633 or public.affairs@mwrdd.org. The MWRD also distributes free trees every Wednesday from 9 a.m. to noon, at the following water reclamation plants:

- Calumet (400 E. 130th St., Chicago)
- Egan (550 S. Meacham Rd., Schaumburg)
- Hanover Park (1220 Sycamore Ave., Hanover Park)
- Kirie (701 West Oakton St., Des Plaines)
- O'Brien (3500 Howard St., Skokie)
- Stickney (6001 W. Pershing Rd., Cicero)

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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.