



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

August 24, 2016

Inaugural Cal-Sag Plunge to showcase water quality improvement and promote new trail



WHO: Friends of the Cal-Sag Trail

WHAT: Inaugural Cal-Sag Plunge

WHEN: Sat., August 27, 2016; 1 p.m.–2 p.m.

WHERE: Staging takes place at the corner of Fulton St. and Chatham St. in Blue Island. The jump will take place in the Cal-Sag Channel, between Chatham Street and Western Avenue, Blue Island, Illinois

Friends of the Cal-Sag Trail (FOCST) will join local officials, leaders and other stakeholders to celebrate a new day of cleaner water, a healthier ecology and changing image of the Cal-Sag Channel by plunging in for a rare swim.

FOCST is working to promote the trail and water quality improvements while raising funds for constructing the remaining 13 miles of the 26-mile Cal-Sag Trail. Funds will also accommodate improvements to the existing trail, such as water fountains and benches. In addition to watching participants plunge into the Cal-Sag, spectators will also enjoy food provided by Blue Island's Restaurant Tenochtitlan and a beer garden courtesy of Blue Island Brewery.

FOCST also hopes the event changes long-held misperceptions and attitudes about the waterway.

"This isn't your father's channel," said FOCST president Debbie Stoffregen of Oak Lawn. "The Cal-Sag Trail is bringing people to the waterway, who are looking at this with a fresh perspective. They're discovering fishing, and cranes, and even bald eagles along the channel. They're seeing a river, and they're seeing riverfront communities."

Stoffregen, Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago Executive Director David St. Pierre, City of Blue Island's Jason Berry and other officials and stakeholders are jumping in to show that the water is ready for people as well as boats.

"For far too long, jumping into the Cal-Sag Channel and other local waterways was considered unimaginable," said MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos. "Now thanks to the work of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago, the Friends of the Cal-Sag Trail and our various partners, we have restored, improved, promoted and taken back ownership of this important natural resource and surrounding landscape."

FOCST began promoting the idea of building a 26-mile bike path along the channel in 2004. The first 13 miles of the trail, between Illinois Route 171 near Lemont and Cicero Avenue in Alsip, opened in June 2015. Much of the trail is on MWRD land that is leased to communities and agencies for the trail. Remaining construction will connect the trail from Alsip to the Burnham Greenway in Burnham near the Indiana border by 2018.

MWRD Commissioner Timothy Bradford said, "The work and investments made into preserving these precious waterways has culminated with events like the first-ever Cal-Sag Plunge and points to a closer relationship with our waterways for many years to come."

Supporters can sponsor plunge participants and find more information online at <https://calsagplunge.causevox.com/>.

About Friends of the Cal-Sag Trail

Friends of the Cal-Sag Trail (calsagtrail.org) is a volunteer, non-profit corporation whose mission is to build the Cal-Sag Trail and promote and expand the Triple Bottom Line impact for all Cal-Sag communities.

###

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.