

## Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

# Press Release

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# TV meteorologist earns praise from MWRD Commissioners

In planning for rain events to combat flooding and operate the Chicago Area Waterways System (CAWS), the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) relies heavily on forecasts and weather projections. Few provide that outlook better to the public than iconic Chicago meteorologist Tom Skilling.

In honor of Skilling's 38 years of educating the public on weather activity in the Chicago region, the MWRD Board of Commissioners presented Skilling with a resolution during their meeting on Aug. 4.

"Anyone who has grown up or worked in the Chicago region and tuned into WGN or the *Chicago Tribune* for a weather

forecast appreciates the value Tom Skilling provides to our daily lives," said MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos.

Commissioner Cynthia Santos agreed. "Because of his intelligent, well-researched and endearing forecasts, many of us Chicagoans have turned to him and benefited from his knowledge. It's that wisdom we at the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago try to impart each day when preparing to provide around-the-clock flood control and protection of Cook County's waterways."

At only 14, Skilling was hired by WKKD in Aurora, while he was a student at West Aurora High School. Three years later, he joined WLXT-TV while attending school during

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(L to R) Commissioner Cynthia Santos, Executive Director David St. Pierre, Commissioner Kari Steele, Tom Skilling, Vice President Barbara McGowan, Commissioner Debra Shore, Commissioner David Walsh (back right) and Commissioner Tim Bradford (front right) present a resolution to Skilling for his decades of meteorological services in Chicago.

### TV meteorologist earns praise from MWRD Commissioners (continued)

the day. In 1970, Skilling moved on to study meteorology and journalism at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, while continuing to work in radio and television. Following a three-year stint at WITI-TV in Milwaukee, Skilling joined WGN-TV in 1978. He has since established himself as a respected meteorologist both locally and nationally, known for his in-depth reports, enthusiasm and use of state-of-the-art technology, delivering reports for the WGN Midday News, WGN Evening News, WGN News at Nine, the WGN News at Ten and WGN Radio 720. Since 1997, he has written a popular column, "Ask Tom Why," for the Chicago Tribune's weather page, in which he takes and answers viewers' questions. Since 2004, he has coordinated the Tribune Weather Center, which combines the meteorology resources and expertise of WGN-TV, CLTV and the Chicago Tribune in one location and includes the installation of a state-of-the-art computer graphics system that enables him and his team to track details of weather across the Chicago area.

In accepting the resolution before the MWRD Board of Commissioners, Skilling talked about the importance of communicating to the public the serious nature of changing weather patterns and said he was humbled to receive the honor and grateful for the work of the MWRD.

"The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District is on the forefront of many climate change issues in managing our water resources," Skilling said. "Given the increasing frequency of extreme rain events and this being a challenging region in terms of flooding, they understand the changing climate and I am happy to provide forecasts to help them and others at home prepare for their daily weather outlook. I look forward to continuing this reporting and thank the MWRD for this recognition."

Over the course of his career, Skilling has received several accolades and awards, while educating a generation of Chicago area residents on severe weather and the effects of climate change. He has sparked interest in the intricacies of changing weather patterns and helped viewers plan for the next day while pleasantly ending the current one.

No stranger to inclement Chicago weather, the MWRD has worked tirelessly to prepare for severe summer rain events.

To provide as much capacity for stormwater when it rains, the MWRD manages control structures and maximizes the flow of water to its seven water treatment plants to ensure the maximum amount of water moves through the system. The seven plants clean a combined flow of over three billion gallons a day.

In addition, the MWRD manages the Tunnel and Reservoir Plan or "Deep Tunnel," which can hold up to 2.3 billion gallons of water in the tunnels and over 8 billion gallons of water in the Majewski and Thornton reservoirs. Once completed, the McCook Reservoir will hold an additional 10 billion gallons of storage. Storms during the week of July 24 proved to be the biggest test to date for the Thornton Composite Reservoir since it first began taking water in November 2015. The reservoir benefits 556,000 people in 14 communities throughout the South Side of Chicago and south suburbs. It protects 182,000 homes, businesses and other facilities from flooding and improves water quality in the Calumet Rivers and Cal-Sag Channel by collecting combined sewer overflows before entering waterways. The reservoir's capacity holds these overflows before pumping the water back to the Calumet Water Reclamation Plant to be treated.



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago Commissioner Cynthia Santos presents a resolution to Tom Skilling of WGN and the Chicago Tribune. His weather insights have communicated the changing weather patterns and frequency of intense rain events that the MWRD closely watches and prepares for to manage local waterways.