



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos participates on City Club panel to discuss “Our Great Rivers: What’s Next for the Chicago and Calumet Rivers”

Conversation flows on “Our Great Rivers” and MWRD work to improve area waterways



Chairman of the City Club of Chicago Board of Governors Dr. Edward Mazur (at the lectern) introduces panelists MarySue Barrett, Rebekah Scheinfeld, MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos, and Alderman Patrick Thompson who discussed the future of the Chicago and Calumet Rivers.

A panel of speakers, featuring Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) President Mariyana Spyropoulos, gathered for the City Club of Chicago recently and outlined the gains, goals and potential outcomes for the flourishing Chicago Area Waterway System (CAWS) as it continues to meet the vision laid out in the ambitious “Our Great Rivers” plan.

The panel was introduced by Mayor Rahm Emanuel and included former MWRD Commissioner and current 11th Ward Ald. Patrick Thompson, Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) Commissioner Rebekah Scheinfeld and moderator, Metropolitan Planning Council President MarySue Barrett. The panel provided the audience with an update on the conditions of the waterways, amenities like the Riverwalk, innovation in water treatment technology and rising economic development along the river, while answering questions on meeting the goals of the report and future considerations for the waterways.

“I was honored to be a part of this panel and I am proud



MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos addressing other panelists before a sold-out audience.

of the work contributed by MWRD and our many partners to improve conditions on the waterways,” said MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos. “I thank the City Club for bringing this conversation to the forefront and credit Mayor Rahm Emanuel and our partners for initiating these efforts. With clean water initiatives and continued investment in our second shoreline, we can fully realize the potential of the Chicago area river system.”

“Our Great Rivers”, released in 2016, documents a first-ever unified vision for the Chicago River, Calumet River and Des Plaines River and their various branches, while addressing discrete goals for 2020, 2030 and 2040, allowing planners to monitor progress toward achieving “inviting, productive and living rivers.” The plan also calls for new revenue streams and leadership collaborations for the rivers to ensure that this vision is realized and can endure.

During her talk, President Spyropoulos touched on many of the MWRD’s advancements that have led to improved water quality, a robust and diverse populations of fish species, increased river recreation and tourism, waterfront economic development and soaring real estate values. *(continued)*

MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos participates on City Club panel

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Through the Tunnel and Reservoir Plan (TARP), the MWRD has protected Lake Michigan and the CAWS from raw sewage pollution; improved water quality of area rivers and streams; and provided an outlet for floodwaters to reduce street and basement sewage backup flooding. Today, between two reservoirs and the 109-mile-long “Deep Tunnel,” the MWRD has capacity to hold up to more than 10 billion gallons of stormwater and sewage that formerly was destined for area waterways after heavy storms. The McCook Reservoir is currently under construction and, when completed, the reservoir will have a total capacity of 10 billion gallons, providing more than \$114 million per year in flood damage reduction benefits to 3.1 million people in 37 communities.

In other water quality improvements, the MWRD recently brought two disinfection facilities into service in time for the 2016 recreation season. Using two distinct technologies, the MWRD saturated the CAWS with disinfected water that enters from the south from the Calumet Water Reclamation Plant (WRP) and the north at O’Brien WRP. Further, the MWRD was able to allocate resources to allow disinfection to occur without tax increases, again benefiting the same people who are destined to use the river. These pivotal projects pushed the dialogue of public access to the CAWS and established new boundaries for waterway recreation. The completed projects have led to a new appreciation for the potential for the waterways and the environmental and economic advantages that come with cleaner rivers.

While the Calumet WRP on the far South Side employs a chlorination and dechlorination disinfection process to reduce the amount of pathogenic bacteria in the water, the



(L-R) Rebekah Scheinfeld, President Mariyana Spyropoulos, MarySue Barrett, Dr. Edward Mazur, Alderman Patrick Thompson and City Club President Jay Doherty after the City Club panel.

O’Brien WRP in Skokie implements an ultraviolet (UV) system to disinfect water entering the North Shore Channel. It is the largest wastewater treatment UV installation in the world, having the potential to treat 450 million gallons of water per day.

To view the panel discussion, visit https://www.cityclub-chicago.org/video/1177/our-great-rivers-what-s-next-for-the-chicago-and-calumet?utm_content=bufferb21aa&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer

To view a copy of the “Our Great Rivers” report, visit <http://greatriverschicago.com/uploads/cms/documents/our-great-rivers.pdf>.

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Recovering Resources, Transforming Water

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