



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

# Press Release

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For immediate release

November 9, 2017

## IL State Rep. Harper travels great depths to explore the work of MWRD



*Illinois State Rep. Sonya Harper walks through the MWRD's Calumet Tunnel and Reservoir Plan pumping station, which was constructed out of limestone 360 feet below ground to convey water from the deep tunnel for treatment. It's one of the lowest habitable points in Chicago.*

Illinois State Rep. Sonya M. Harper (6th District) recently toured the Calumet Water Reclamation Plant (WRP) to see how the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) is working more than 360 feet below ground to keep up with heavy fall rains to manage the region's urban runoff and provide the region's waterways with clean water.

On an October day when the Calumet WRP was under siege from heavy rains, Rep. Harper saw firsthand how Calumet WRP was pumping nearly 500 million gallons of water to protect area waterways and keep streets and basements dry. The Calumet system is also home to a Tunnel and Reservoir Plan (TARP) pumping station, which pumps water up from the Calumet "deep tunnel" system and the connecting Thornton Reservoir for treatment back at the plant. The tunnels and reservoir store the water before it can be cleaned at the plant, thus protecting the waterways from pollution. In addition to her visit to the pumping station, Rep. Harper toured the Calumet WRP pump building, control room, various tunnels and infrastructure and an empty digester being serviced.

"I am grateful to the Metropolitan Water Reclamation Dis-



*(L-R): MWRD Operating Engineer Jim Bozyk, Engineer of Treatment Plant Operations Reed Dring, Head Assistant Attorney Brendan O'Connor and State Rep. Sonya Harper view control room monitors in the Calumet Water Reclamation Plant pump building.*

trict for providing this educational tour and shedding light on how the District maintains and continues to expand the infrastructure to manage an incredible volume of water each day from across the Chicagoland area," said Rep. Harper. "The Calumet Pumping Station and Thornton Reservoir remind us that we have a daily obligation across the state to take our water environment seriously."

In operation since 1922, the Calumet system serves more than 1 million people in an area of about 300 square miles across the southern portion of Cook County. Calumet provides primary, secondary and a new tertiary treatment that disinfects water through a chlorination/dechlorination process. Clean water that has passed through the Calumet WRP treatment processes is then released into the Little Calumet River. It only takes about eight hours to clean the water.

In addition to treating water, the MWRD is developing a system to generate energy using digester gas at the Calumet WRP, as part of the agency's goal to become energy neutral and fit in its resource recovery model. Biogas, generated from the anaerobic digestion process at the Calumet WRP, has value as a fuel. Currently, the biogas is used to produce steam in boilers for plant heating and cooling. *(continued)*

## IL State Rep. Harper travels great depths *(continued)*

The biogas offsets the need for an equivalent volume of petroleum-based natural gas and can reduce greenhouse gas emissions by an estimated 9,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent per year.

“I’d like to thank Representative Harper and other members of the Illinois General Assembly who take time out of their hectic schedules to visit MWRD facilities,” said MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos. “As a utility of the future, we realize the vital role we play in protecting the health of

our environment and citizens, and Calumet Water Reclamation Plant is a leading example of how we protect our water environment, manage stormwater and pursue our goal of energy neutrality.”

The 6th District covers a diverse range of Chicago communities, including parts of several South Side neighborhoods like Englewood, Fuller Park, Back of the Yards, Canaryville, Bridgeport and Chicago Lawn and stretching as far north as River North and the Loop.

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### Recovering Resources, Transforming Water

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