



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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MWRD tax reduction provides instant savings to property owners

The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) Board of Commissioners unanimously passed a pair of ordinances directing the Cook County Clerk to abate property taxes by more than a combined \$44 million. A portion of these tax reductions will be reflected in the second installment of 2017 real estate tax bills that will be mailed to homeowners this July and will provide additional savings in future tax levies.

The first abatement ordinance of more than \$6 million will reduce the tax for homeowners for the 2017 final tax levy for water treatment and stormwater services. A similar abatement ordinance was passed the last three years and will be requested each year as long as the MWRD's Stormwater bonds are outstanding. Commissioners also approved a second abatement that will provide for several future tax year levies in the MWRD's Bond and Interest Fund in an amount of more than \$38 million, as a result of the early redemption bonds. The interest savings that resulted from this redemption is nearly \$9.6 million.

"We continue to operate as a fiscally sound organization, reducing energy costs to benefit our bottom line and the environment, strengthening our long-term retirement reserves, discovering new revenue streams through our ambitious resource recovery program, while providing the same essential and excellent services that Cook County has come to expect," said MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos.

The first abatement will be returned via a reduction in the 2017 levy. This return is made available through savings on bond transactions. The MWRD taxing authority service area incorporates 83 percent of Cook County and includes 98 percent of the assessed property valuation in the county. After the abatement, the adjusted estimated taxes paid by the owner of a home



Tax abatements from the MWRD highlight the utility's ability to produce clean water at an affordable rate.

with a market value of \$200,000 for 2017 is reduced to an estimated \$229.36.

"This savings will aid property owners in knowing that we are accountable stewards of tax resources to protect our water environment and manage stormwater for the region," said MWRD Chairman of Finance Frank Avila.

Commissioner Martin J. Durkan agreed. "When I took office, I felt it was important to do whatever I could to help put taxpayer dollars back into the hands of the hard-working people of Cook County, and that's exactly what we are doing with these ordinances."

In its daily role, the MWRD treats and cleans an average of 1.3 billion gallons of used water for 5.25 million people, serving Chicago and 128 communities across nearly all of Cook County. The MWRD protects the region's waterways and source of drinking water in Lake Michigan, while also protecting homes and businesses from flooding. Despite this large service area of 883.6 square miles, the MWRD has managed to keep rates low compared to other utilities across the country. *(continued)*

MWRD tax reduction provides instant savings *(continued)*



The MWRD is putting tax dollars to work by investing in major infrastructure projects like the new McCook Reservoir to protect area waterways from pollution and streets and basements from flooding. As a result, local waterways are thriving and local communities are proving more resilient in the face of changing weather patterns.

“When we think about the price we pay for luxuries in our daily lives, the rate of what we pay for clean water is what really matters, and we at the MWRD are proud to deliver this essential service at an affordable price,” said MWRD Commissioner Kari K. Steele. “We hope these abatements provide additional savings to Cook County residents and business owners.”

A single-family residence in the U.S. paid an average of \$479 per year in 2016 for wastewater collection and treatment, also known as the sewer service charge, according to the National Association of Clean Water Agencies 2016 Cost of Clean Water Index. By contrast, the MWRD sewer service charge was \$330.66. That is a savings of more than 30 percent compared to the national average. This average calculation of MWRD sewer service charge is based on the total levy divided by Equalized Assessed Valuation (EAV) of property within the MWRD’s corporate limits as applies to a home with an average value of \$290,802.

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Commissioner Debra Shore said, “Tax abatements like this one can give Cook County property owners confidence that critical stormwater programs are fully funded – this year and for years to come.”

Since 1985, the MWRD has returned more than \$466 million to taxpayers and has maintained its AAA bond rating from Fitch and a AA+ rating from Standard & Poor’s.

Recovering Resources, Transforming Water

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