



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

# Press Release

**Allison Fore**

Public and Intergovernmental Affairs Officer

312.751.6626

allison.fore@mwrdr.org

100 East Erie Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611

For immediate release

July 26, 2018

## New tunnel to relieve Albany Park from catastrophic flooding



*MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos and (L-R) Commissioners Frank Avila, David Walsh, Debra Shore and Josina Morita are joined by Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel and 39th Ward Alderman Margaret Laurino to unveil the Albany Park Stormwater Diversion Tunnel which will work to mitigate flooding along the banks of the North Branch of the Chicago River.*

Concealed deep below Foster Avenue in the Albany Park neighborhood, a critical piece of infrastructure constructed by the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) and the City of Chicago and is now in place to help keep the surrounding community dry.

The MWRD and the City teamed up to complete the Albany Park Stormwater Diversion Tunnel that will convey water overflowing at the North Branch of the Chicago River and convey it more than a mile east to the North Shore Channel to relieve the North Side community that has experienced major flooding.

The \$70 million tunnel project, for which the MWRD contributed \$26 million, has already proven effective in taking on four rain events since it was completed in

the spring. The tunnel, 18 feet in diameter, is located about 150 feet below Foster Avenue, connecting an inlet shaft off of Pulaski Road to an outlet shaft in River Park on the east side of the North Shore Channel.

The tunnel will kick into operation before the water level reaches flood stage and will divert a flow of 2,300 cubic feet of water per second.

“This project demonstrates effective collaboration between the City of Chicago and the MWRD and precise engineering to construct and install a tunnel 150 feet below ground without altering the face of the community,” said MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos. “We are improving Albany Park’s future by mitigating flood damages.” *(continued)*

## New tunnel to relieve Albany Park from catastrophic flooding *(cont.)*

The project cost was funded through a combination of federal, state and local funds. In addition to the 39th Ward, the project also affects the 33rd and 40th wards. Speaking at the ribbon-cutting ceremony to commemorate the new tunnel, Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel said he could recall the devastation that occurred following floods in 2008 while he served as a local congressman.

“Residents should not have to live with the looming fear of a life-disrupting flood and this tunnel protects them against that threat,” said Mayor Emanuel. “Making these types of investments in our infrastructure are critical to the future of Chicago. It represents an ongoing commitment to improving our neighborhoods and enhancing the quality of life for our residents.”

The diversion tunnel is part of the MWRD’s stormwater management program, leveraging MWRD funds with local dollars to complete major infrastructure projects to mitigate flooding in Cook County communities. Kenny Construction served as the prime contractor while MWH Global performed the design engineering and WSP provided construction management.

Nearly 70,000 cubic yards of rock were removed to make way for the tunnel. This was accomplished through a combination of blasting and a boring machine that was nicknamed “Keri,” built by German-based company, Herrenknecht.



*The inlet structure along the banks of the North Branch of the Chicago River will protect the Albany Park community during 100-year rain events by taking on water that climbs above the banks of the North Branch and is then conveyed east 150 feet below Foster Avenue before being released into the North Shore Channel.*

In addition to the diversion tunnel, the project will also add improvements to Eugene Field Park at the western end of the tunnel, including landscaping, new trees, a new walkway, benches and a water fountain, and improvements to River Park at the eastern end of the project, including landscaping, new trees, a new soccer field and a new regulation-sized baseball field and diamond with a backstop fence and batting cage.

To see the City of Chicago’s press release, visit [https://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/mayor/pressroom/press\\_releases/2018/july/AlbanyParkStormwa-](https://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/mayor/pressroom/press_releases/2018/july/AlbanyParkStormwa-)

###

---

### Recovering Resources, Transforming Water

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