Metropolitan Water Reclamation District *of* Greater Chicago

Press Release

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Loyola University Chicago Quinlan School of Business undergraduate class to develop compost marketing plans

MWRD Commissioner David J. Walsh explains the history of the agency created in 1889 by an Act of the Illinois General Assembly to protect the source of drinking water, Lake Michigan.

Principal Engineer Matt McGregor and Environmental Soil Scientist Dominic Brose give an overview of MWRD compost to Loyola students.

The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) has embarked on a new partnership that will promote a sustainable practice that can provide a revenue stream to taxpayers and a savings to the environment with the help of a marketing class at Loyola University Chicago.

Undergraduate students from the Quinlan School of Business are working on marketing plans this semester to help the MWRD position its compost in the open market. The students are working in eight teams of six to develop pricing, promotion and distribution alternatives.

On Sept. 13, MWRD Environmental Soil Scientist Dominic Brose, Principal Engineer Matt McGregor, and Commissioner David Walsh gave a detailed presentation to the class about the MWRD and its biosolids and compost product. The class will have until November to develop their plans at which time Professor Katie Hession will select three of the teams to pitch their proposals to MWRD staff on November 15. The audience will rank the student presentations and offer feedback.

"It truly is a unique and exciting opportunity for the students given Loyola's location along Lake Michigan, our strategic focus on sustainability and the importance of the District to our water environment," said Professor Hession.

MWRD's compost is a sustainable and environmentally beneficial product derived from the MWRD's water reclamation process. To create the compost product, the MWRD partners with the City of Chicago and other organizations by collecting woodchips from routine tree trimming programs and blending this with MWRD biosolids in open windrow machines. Woodchips, grass clippings and leaves are used as a bulking agent. The process raises the temperature of the biosolids and bulking agent mixture which destroys pathogens.

"The partnership to develop the compost product has been a win-win for the MWRD and for the city," said Commissioner Walsh. "This product has benefited many community gardens over the past few years, and we are partnering with Loyola to see what fresh *(continued)*

Loyola University Chicago to develop compost marketing plans *(cont.)*

Loyola Marketing Professor Katie Hession introduces the class project to her marketing class.

A heated windrow turns the biosolids and wood chip mixture while raising the temperature to destroy pathogens resulting in the compost product.

ideas the students may have for marketing the product to individual homeowners."

The MWRD's EQ Biosolids meet the USEPA's 40 CFR Part 503 requirements for exceptional quality (EQ), which are based on comprehensive risk assessments that are protective of human health and the environment. The compost improves soil structure and porosity for a better plant root environment, improves water holding capacity of light soils, supplies organic matter, reduces bulk density of heavy soils; improves water infiltration, allows plants to more effectively utilize nutrients while reducing nutrient loss by leaching, and enables soils to retain nutrients longer. As a result, the compost greatly enhances lawns and gardens.

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