

## Protecting Our Water Environment

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## Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

100 EAST ERIE STREET

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60611-3154

312-751-5600

### Office of Public Affairs

Jill B. Horist  
Manager  
312-751-6633  
cell: 312-515-9171  
[jill.horist@mwrdd.org](mailto:jill.horist@mwrdd.org)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**December 27, 2008**

### DEEP TUNNEL FULL CONTROLLED WATERWAY LEVELS HOLDING

Chicago - 2:00 P.M. - A highly unusual winter weather event caused an average of one inch of recorded rain fall during a 12 hour period between midnight and noon today across Cook County. Nearly a half a foot of packed snow, and frozen ground caused additional run-off with no capacity for natural ground saturation.

As a result, at 9:55 A.M., the Wilmette Sluice Gate at the North Shore Channel was fully opened then staged down to about half during the next hour as the water level receded where it remains at this time releasing storm water into Lake Michigan to prevent flooding in that vicinity.

The 76 miles of the Chicago Area Waterways (CAWS) managed by the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago are being held well under flood stage.

The District's 554 miles of intercepting sewer mains are linked to approximately 10,000 local connections across the 949 square miles of the service area where they feed the Deep Tunnel. The 109 miles of the Deep Tunnel reached capacity at 6:00 A.M. retaining 2.5 billion gallons of stormwater runoff.

Downstream from Wilmette, 49 miles to the southwest at the Lockport Powerhouse, the District is operating its two 6.9 megawatt generators, and opened all available controlling works and pit gates releasing rain water to the lower DesPlaines River.

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O'Hare Cup Reservoir is at 11% capacity, holding approximately 100 million gallons of water.

Currently, with the reprieve of rainfall, the main stem of the Chicago River downtown is high, but is holding below levels that would necessitate the opening of the controlling works sluice gates near Navy Pier.

The O'Brien Lock and Dam at the Cal-Sag Channel remains closed as levels there are also steady. The Thornton Reservoir (capacity 3.7 billion gallons) in Thornton remains empty.

All 23 pump stations are working efficiently.

In advance of the storm, the District began pumping down the CAWS on Wednesday, Christmas Eve, and yesterday, continued aggressively lowering the waterways to prepare for the additional load.

District crews are surveying the 34 regional detention/retention ponds throughout the County.

Key personnel are on duty managing the District systems.

President Terrence J. O'Brien said, "It has been a record breaking year for the region. Our staff continues to work with great dedication to provide maximum public safety against the wiles of Mother Nature."

The District is the Stormwater Management Authority for Cook County.