

Protecting Our Water Environment

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MWRD Keeps Waterways Navigable and Clean

Chicago -- Commissioners of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) last week awarded two significant contracts to continue the MWRD's highly successful Small Stream Maintenance Program (SSMP) to ensure that Cook County waterways remain fast-flowing and free of debris. One contract, to Clean Cut Tree Service is for \$2.5 million, and the other is to Thornton Equipment Services, also for \$2.5 million. The contracts are part of the MWRD's ongoing Stormwater Management Program to alleviate overbank flooding of the waterways and provide erosion control by removing fallen trees and other debris in the waters.

There are more than 600 miles of channels, creeks, rivers and streams throughout Cook County. The MWRD is responsible for keeping these waters unobstructed and free of debris, which can impede the flow of the waters and contribute to overbank flooding.

Although the amount of rain that fell in Cook County this year may not be record-breaking, the area has experienced an unusually high number of storms, amounting to more than 17 inches of rain through the end of June.

Severe storms and high winds knocked out power lines and downed trees, many of which fell into local waterways. Crews from the MWRD accelerated their inspections and removed trees or other debris which blocked waterways.

Following the Board meeting MWRD President Terrence J. O'Brien stated that the \$5 million budgeted for these contracts were part of the MWRD's ongoing commitment to protecting the homes and businesses in communities throughout the county.

"When we were given the authority for Stormwater Management by the Illinois legislature in 2004, we knew that it would come with additional financial responsibilities. Even in today's tough economic climate, it is imperative that the MWRD continue its mission to protect the residents of the county from the devastations caused by flooding. The work that is done under these contracts ensure that our waterways are properly maintained; overbank flooding is reduced/eliminated and county residents' property values do not decline due to floodwater damage," O'Brien said.

During the past three and one-half years more than 109,906 cubic yards of debris has been removed by the MWRD throughout Cook County – enough to fill nearly 740 semi trucks.