

## Protecting Our Water Environment

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### District Carries Burnham Vision Through Water

Chicago . Humans can make no plans let alone no small plans as Daniel Burnham envisioned in 1909 without fresh water. In conjunction with the region's Burnham Centennial Anniversary celebration, The Field Museum debuts its summer blockbuster exhibit, *Water*, tonight. The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (District) is a proud and active sponsor in this 7,500 square foot event. More than three years in the planning, the District has participated in the initial development of the worldwide traveling exhibit. Here in Chicago, the District developed a number of interactive activities including a sewer science model, participated in cooperative seminars such as the Botanic Gardens Fairchild Challenge, docent training, video development, and offering water reclamation plant tours.

The Chicago Area Waterways System's (CAWS) 76 navigable miles are controlled by the District which maintains water quality and levels to protect homes and businesses from flooding, public health and safety and Lake Michigan from pollution. The highly engineered system connects two of the largest fresh watersheds in the world, the Great Lakes Basin and the Mississippi Valley.

Public education of environmental stewardship is critical to the work of the District, said President of the Board of Commissioners, Terrence J. O'Brien.

What the public uses in their daily routines, personal care products,

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pharmaceuticals, does come through to our treatment plants. How the public designs their homes and gardens affects the waterways. What they dispose of and how they do that affects the waterways. Living in this region, we have even a greater responsibility for the care of these waterways as there are no alternatives to fresh water,+he added.

We reside next to 25% of all the fresh water on the planet. Seventy percent of the CAWS are treated effluent from our plants. When the effluent leaves our facilities, it is clean, exceeding all regulatory requirements. We do an excellent job in care and quality. However, the public and industry must also do their part everyday. Through this fabulous exhibit, the museum and all the sponsors offer the public a great opportunity to learn about the little things they can do and their important role in advancing no small plans,+Mr. O'Brien concluded.

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The District is the 120 year old autonomous government agency responsible for storm water and wastewater management, across a 954 square mile area, including Chicago and 125 suburban municipalities. It monitors and sustains 76 miles of the Chicago Area Waterways System and 1,300 small streams. Per day, its seven facilities clean an average flow of 1.4 billion gallons of wastewater. Its service population is the combined equivalent of ten million residents and industrial users. For additional information: [www.mwrdd.org](http://www.mwrdd.org).

*Water* is organized by the American Museum of Natural History, New York and the Science Museum of Minnesota, St. Paul, in collaboration with The Field Museum, Chicago; Great Lakes Science Center, Cleveland; Instituto Sangari, São Paulo, Brazil; National Museum of Australia, Canberra; Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada; San Diego Natural History Museum; and Science Center Singapore with PUB Singapore.