



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago



Main Stem of the Chicago River

Mission

The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) protects the health and safety of the public, protects the quality of the water supply source (Lake Michigan), improves the quality of local waterways, reduces flooding, and manages water as a vital resource for the region.

Responsibilities

The MWRD was established in 1889 to reverse the flow of the Chicago and Calumet rivers to protect the supply of the region’s drinking water, Lake Michigan, from pollution. The MWRD constructed 61 miles of canals to reverse the flow of water and now controls more than 76 miles of navigable waterways by managing elevations and water flow, while also protecting the quality of the water in the Chicago Area Waterway System (CAWS).

a variety of sustainable resources, such as soil amendments, nutrient fertilizers and energy.



Calumet Water Reclamation Plant



Wilmette Pumping Station

On the average day, the MWRD treats and cleans over 1 billion gallons of wastewater and more than 2 billion gallons during heavy rains. It cleans this water in a matter of hours, then releases it to flow downstream to the Des Plaines River and eventually to the Illinois River, Mississippi River and Gulf of Mexico. In addition to recovering water, the MWRD recovers

The MWRD owns and operates seven water reclamation plants (WRPs) and 23 pumping stations throughout Cook County to serve 5.19 million residents of Chicago and 128 suburban municipalities.

Governance

The MWRD is led by a nine-member Board of Commissioners who govern, adopt policy and provide financial oversight for an annual budget, which is \$1.8 billion in 2026. Thanks to supportive taxpayers and strong fiscal health, the MWRD maintains AAA credit rating from Fitch Ratings.



Serves 5.19 million residents of Chicago and 128 suburban municipalities



Controls 76 miles of navigable waterways



Employs 560 miles of intercepting sewers



Operates seven water reclamation plants (WRPs) and 23 pumping stations throughout Cook County



Treats over 1 billion gallons of wastewater on an average day and over 2 billion gallons during heavy rains



O'Brien Water Reclamation Plant

Infrastructure

The MWRD employs 560 miles of intercepting sewers and force mains that are as large as 27 feet in diameter and fed by approximately 10,000 local sewer system connections. These sewer connections convey water from local sewers to WRPs, including the Stickney Water Reclamation Plant, considered one of the largest wastewater treatment plants in the world.



McCook TARP Reservoir

The MWRD's Tunnels and Reservoir Plan (TARP), known famously as the "Deep Tunnel," is one of the world's largest public

works projects for pollution and flood control, mitigating flooding and protecting Lake Michigan and area waterways in the Chicago area's 360 square miles of combined sewer systems.

Stormwater Management

Since 2004, the MWRD has served as the regional stormwater management authority for Cook County to defy the effects of climate change and promote resiliency throughout the region through proper watershed regulations, watershed planning and both local and regional projects.



Robbins Heritage Park and Midlothian Creek Restoration Project

Since receiving state authority to administer local stormwater management projects in 2014, the MWRD has supported approximately 300 projects that together protect more than 23,000 homes, businesses and other buildings in Cook County.

The MWRD's wide range of strategies to address flooding has included the construction of giant reservoirs and rain gardens, fortified streambanks and the purchase of repeated flood-prone properties, the installation of permeable green alleys, parking lots and schoolyards, and the distribution of hundreds of thousands of rain barrels, tree saplings and milkweed seeds all to collect more rainwater. Through a combination of gray and green infrastructure, the MWRD is developing solutions to mitigate both urban flooding and riverine flooding.