



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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MWRD Board of Commissioners passes resolution that affirms water is a basic human right

In response to a water futures market launched in California, the Board of Commissioners for the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) has unanimously passed a resolution recognizing water and sanitation as human rights that will remain in the public trust.

In December 2020, the country's first water futures market was launched. It allows traders, banks, hedge funds, and others to bet on future water prices and availability.

“We are blessed to live, work, and play in one of the most water-rich regions on the entire planet,” said Commissioner Cam Davis. “Water belongs to us all because all life depends on it. This strong statement by my colleagues puts us on record against privatizing water for private gain.”

According to the MWRD resolution, only 0.5 percent of the earth's water is fresh, and this water can be compromised by pollution and excessive withdrawal from lakes, rivers, aquifers, and other water bodies that put those watersheds at risk. The United Nations estimates that by 2025, 1.8 billion people will be living in countries or regions with water scarcity, and two-thirds of the world's population could be living under water-stressed conditions.



In addition to treating the region's wastewater, managing stormwater and protecting waterways, in its daily mission the MWRD strives to defend the quality of Lake Michigan, the source of the region's drinking water required for all living things. The MWRD Board of Commissioners joined the United Nations in condemning a new futures market commodifying the value of water.

“Water is a necessary component of human life and all living beings,” said President Kari K. Steele. “Clean drinking water and sanitation are human rights essential for life and economic prosperity.”

(continued)

MWRD Board of Commissioners passes resolution, *cont.*

METROPOLITAN WATER RECLAMATION DISTRICT of GREATER CHICAGO RESOLUTION

SPONSORED *by the* BOARD of COMMISSIONERS RECOGNIZING

WATER and SANITATION as BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS and that WATER SHALL REMAIN in the PUBLIC TRUST

WHEREAS, water is a necessary component of human life and all known living beings; and

WHEREAS, clean drinking water and sanitation is a human right essential for the full enjoyment of life and economic prosperity; and

WHEREAS, approximately 0.5% of the Earth's water is available freshwater, which is often compromised by pollution and excessive withdrawal from lakes, rivers, aquifers, and other water bodies that put those watersheds at risk; and

WHEREAS, the United Nations estimates that by 2025, 1.8 billion people will be living in countries or regions with absolute water scarcity, and two-thirds of the world's population could be living under water-stressed conditions; and

WHEREAS, on December 7, 2020, a water futures market was launched for California water, creating the world's first water futures market that allows traders, banks, hedge funds, and others to bet on future water prices and availability; and

WHEREAS, treating water as another tradable commodity, like gold and oil, benefits some but excludes other segments of society such as disproportionately impacted communities, small-scale farmers, and others without the financial ability to access such markets; and

WHEREAS, water futures markets represent the financialization of life itself and fail to distinguish the value of water beyond finances, such as between usage for non-essential swimming pools and essential sanitation; and

WHEREAS, privately-owned water utilities are not necessarily more cost-effective, nor are they saving residents money compared with publicly-owned utilities, as privately-owned water utility customers pay an average of 59% more for drinking water services and 63% more for sewer services, according to Food & Water Watch; and

WHEREAS, people deserve a voice and the opportunity to determine their water and sewage treatment services; and

WHEREAS, additionally, according to the United Nations, access to a robust and hygienic water supply can save approximately 360,000 infants worldwide from death each year. Currently, it is estimated that one out of every three people, approximately 2.2 billion people, live with contaminated drinking water, often containing feces and other harmful pollutants; and

WHEREAS, equal access to clean water is affected by many factors including climate, financial stability, and proximity to a water source; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that we, the Board of Commissioners of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago, do hereby oppose the commodification of water because the value of water is immeasurable, as water shapes every component of our lives. Commodifying water improperly leads to neglect of this valuable resource, which ultimately contributes to the degradation of the environment and is a dominant element in global illness and famine; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we, the Board of Commissioners of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago, do hereby recognize water and sanitation as basic human rights; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we, the Board of Commissioners of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago, do hereby affirm that the water of the Great Lakes, including the source of our drinking water in the Chicago metropolitan area, shall remain in the public trust for the people of the Great Lakes region; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this Resolution be spread upon the permanent Record of Proceedings of the Board of Commissioners of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago.



DATED THIS 3rd DAY of JUNE, 2021.

BOARD of COMMISSIONERS

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PRESIDENT

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Recovering Resources, Transforming Water

Established in 1889, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) is an award-winning, special purpose government agency responsible for wastewater treatment and stormwater management in Cook County, Illinois. Learn more at mwrld.org.