

LWVCC Annual Meeting Report – 2026

Metropolitan Water Reclamation District

Overview

The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District is a special purpose district created by the Illinois General Assembly that has been in existence since 1889 and serves 5.2 million residents in 129 communities including Chicago.

- Its primary responsibilities are the treatment of waste water within its legislated boundary and, increasingly, the management of stormwater (flood control) for all of Cook County.
- It is governed by a racially diverse board of 9 commissioners elected district-wide with 6-year staggered terms. An Executive Director, chosen by the board, manages the day-to-day operations.
- The 2026 operating budget is \$1.87 billion with 1,956 full-time equivalent employees.

Highlights 2025-26

- On average, the MWRD's 7 plants treated more than 1.2 billion gallons of waste water per day
- Of the almost \$13 million allocated in 2026 for new projects that support the Strategic Plan, stormwater management was given \$8.3 million including upgraded gray and green infrastructure in underserved, but flood-prong, communities.
- Approved raising the penalty fees for industrial water users discharging illegal amounts of pollutants into the Chicago River and local waterways. The next step is Springfield's approval.
- As a reminder to each of us, makeup and personal care products add more PFAS chemicals to our local waterways that does industrial discharge.
- Approved expanding the green school yard program to Cook County suburbs and are now looking for funding to make it happen.
- The four commissioners up for re-election won in the March 2026 primary, and the board confirmed John Murray as the permanent executive director .

Challenges 2026-27

- On-going water treatment challenges include stopping PFAS effluents at their source as well as Potassium reduction which kills aquatic life downstream and into the Mississippi River.
- Other major challenges are the actual ability to execute its contingency plan for energy neutrality by 2030, keeping the aging infrastructure in top efficiency, and concern about Federal grants and the Federal EPA under the current administration.

- What to do about Biosolids. Can it be treated to remove PFAS so that the product can again be used as a fertilizer? We are talking about thousands of tons of Biosolids that must be disposed of each year.
- Due to climate change, increased flood control measures is a very high priority both as a Utility and thru agreements with municipalities.
- Approving and instituting recommended changes to the District's procurement policies and practices that are both legal, practical, and can be met by small minority and women-owned businesses.

LWVCC – Observe, Education, Advocate

- We added two leaguers to our 6 mainly off-board observers to cover 22 bi-weekly board meetings, 1 budget hearing, and occasional study sessions and submit reports for the LWVCC website and board members.
- Quarterly Inspector General reports are monitored with feedback to the CC Government Interest Group, better known as Budget and Structure.
- We maintain regular contact with individual commissioners on good governance, ordinance, policies, and issues such as the reuse of treated water which we encourage this body to adopt later this morning under our 2026-27 Recommended Program.
- For public education purposes, we also continue to advocate for all commissioners to ask important questions during rather than before the board meetings----and I regular send emails thanking them when they do so.
- Conducted in-person interviews with Commissioners Brady-Davis, Brown, Garcia, and Waller and will set up meetings with Executive Director Murray and Commissioners Davis, Kirkwood, and Sepulveda during the summer months.
- Write MWRD “*happening*” articles for the LWVCC monthly newsletter.

Diane Edmundson, Chair MWRD Observer Corp

Georgia Gebhardt, Peggy Kell, Amy Little, Priscilla Mims, Laurie Morse, Deborah Stone, Victoria Cerinich

May 5, 2026