



NEWS RELEASE



**Metropolitan Water
Reclamation District
of Greater Chicago**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 20, 2021

CONTACT:

Kim Biggs, Illinois EPA – 217-558-1536

kim.biggs@illinois.gov

Allison Fore, MWRD – 312-751-6626

allison.fore@mwrld.org

Illinois EPA Awards \$1 Million Grant to Metropolitan Water Reclamation District

Grant to complete Robbins rain garden and riparian restoration project at Midlothian Creek

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (Illinois EPA) recently awarded a \$1 million Section 319 Clean Water Act grant to the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) and the Village of Robbins to help mitigate local flooding, improve local water quality in the region, and restore Midlothian Creek in the Little Calumet River Watershed.



The banks of Midlothian Creek are eroded and overgrown by invasive plants and runoff, causing flooding and pollution reaching the Cal-Sag Channel and even Lake Michigan during heavy rains. A grant from the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency and matching funds from the MWRD will improve conditions.

Section 319 Grant MWRD Midlothian Creek/3

“This project will focus on addressing the impacts of stormwater runoff and flooding in the region,” **said Illinois EPA Director John J. Kim.** “The Best Management Practices (BMPs) that will be developed and implemented as part of the Little Calumet River Watershed Based Plan, will lead to lasting improvements to Midlothian Creek and the watershed as a whole.”

The \$1-million grant from the Illinois EPA will be matched by the MWRD to help complete the Robbins Rain Garden and Riparian Restoration Project at Midlothian Creek in the southwest suburb. The work will protect and restore the watershed by detaining more than 5.7 million gallons of stormwater runoff per rain event prior to discharge into Midlothian Creek and the Cal-Sag Channel.

“By matching and securing generous funds from the IEPA we can improve our water quality and rebuild a more resilient Robbins with new drainage, reduced pollution and improved habitats in Midlothian Creek,” **said MWRD President Kari K. Steele.** “We thank the IEPA for their contributions to this tremendous project that will make a positive impact for Robbins and improve water quality for our region.”

Midlothian Creek is a tributary within the Little Calumet River watershed. A large part of Robbins is within the floodplain of Midlothian Creek on top of historical wetlands. The flat terrain compounded by a lack of stormwater infrastructure leads to frequent overbank and overland flooding and related nonpoint source pollution into the waterways. The creek, meanwhile, has been channelized, and the banks eroded with invasive vegetation that diminishes diversity and native pollinator habitats.

As part of the Robbins Rain Garden and Riparian Restoration Project, bioswales will be planted along Spaulding and Sawyer Avenues from 137th to 139th streets, capturing stormwater runoff. A rain garden will be installed in the 138th Street right-of-way between Sawyer and Kedzie avenues to absorb more runoff from the bioswales and surrounding area before it can discharge into Midlothian Creek. In total, the rain garden area will create more than two acres of bioretention, collecting runoff and other contaminants before it can reach the creek.

Directly east of the rain garden and bioswales, the MWRD will stabilize 2,200 linear feet of streambank along Midlothian Creek, controlling erosion by cutting back both banks and providing a stable slope that features native plants appropriate to the moisture and soil conditions. Rock vanes will be installed in the low-flow channel to add instream covers and habitats. Native grasses, forbs and deciduous trees will also be planted within the riparian zone, which has a width of 80 feet that includes the creek channel.

Following the project, the MWRD will work with the Village of Robbins and project partners from OAI (Opportunity Advancement Innovation) workforce development to establish a plan for maintenance of the bioswales, rain garden and channel improvement areas. The MWRD will also establish a monitoring program to track water quality, and aquatic and riparian habitats in the project area.

Section 319 Grant MWRD Midlothian Creek/3

The restored riparian corridor complements ongoing channel improvements along Midlothian Creek, where the MWRD is planning to create a naturalized wetland detention area to resemble a park setting and diversion channel north of 137th Street. As a result, the MWRD can reduce flood damages for more than 92 structures.

“These two key pieces of the overall Robbins Flood Control Project are based on improvements identified in the MWRD’s Little Calumet River Detailed Watershed Plan and are part of a larger long-term planning effort by the MWRD to strengthen and revitalize Robbins,” **said MWRD Commissioner Kim Du Buclet**. “What began as a stormwater project to curb flooding in Robbins has spawned a series of partnerships between the Village, the MWRD and others to improve aspects of life that have environmental, economic, and social impacts.”



Parts of Midlothian Creek running parallel to Kedzie Avenue west of the creek will be restored through a new project funded by the MWRD and IEPA, designed to complement a wide range of flood-control measures that will improve the quality of life for Robbins residents and protect area water quality.

###