



Planning for a Resilient Future – From Strategy to Impact

The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRDGC) launched a first-of-its-kind, nine-month collaborative planning process that led to the approval of its landmark 2021-2025 Strategic Plan on June 3, 2021. Developed through public input, and engagement with local agencies and consultants, the plan outlines MWRD's vision, strategic goals, and measurable initiatives to protect the region's water environment and improve quality of life.

Guided by a strong focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion, the plan ensures all communities across MWRD's 882-square-mile (2,284 km²) service area are represented. Building on this foundation, MWRDGC has now begun work on its 2026-2030 Strategic Plan to further advance regional sustainability, innovation, and resilience.

- ✓ **REDUCE**
- ✓ **RECOVER**
- ✓ **REGENERATE**

- 📍 **CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, USA**
- 💧 **WASTEWATER**
- ⚡ **STORMWATER**



CHALLENGES FACED

Climate change threatens precipitation patterns, water resources, and the systems MWRD relies on to protect water quality, public health, and safety. As the regional authority for wastewater and stormwater management, they are committed to climate solutions that safeguard communities and environment. Tackling this challenge requires partnerships, collaboration, and a shift in how MWRD manages water at every scale.

TECHNOLOGIES & SOLUTIONS USED

To support its 2021-2025 Strategic Plan, MWRD developed an interactive dashboard to track progress across five key goals: resource management, stormwater management, workforce excellence, community engagement, and enterprise resilience. This tool features updated data and visuals, allowing the public to explore how MWRD treats and returns water to the environment, addresses county-wide flooding, engages diverse communities, and maintains strong financial stewardship.

IMPACT & INSIGHTS



MWRD developed a strategic plan that clarifies its mission, vision, and goals, identifies key initiatives, and establishes a framework for tracking and annually updating progress. MWRD created a public dashboard that reports on resource management (e.g., water quality, permits, biogas reuse, energy use, phosphorus recovery, and research projects), stormwater management (projects, investments, and combined sewer volume capture through the Tunnel and Reservoir Plan), workforce development (employee statistics), community engagement (outreach metrics), and greenhouse gas emissions.

LESSONS LEARNED



The MWRD learned that unexpected challenges—such as rising costs, limited revenue, environmental impacts, and regulatory burdens—require staying adaptive and agile. Despite these hurdles, it completed more than 90% of its targeted outcomes in under five years through an ambitious Strategic Plan with over 140 action plans. The effort also revealed the need for better metrics, clearer goal context, and more transparent progress tracking via a public dashboard. These lessons are shaping the next five-year cycle of strategic initiatives.

“The Strategic Plan presents the MWRD with a blueprint to follow as it addresses water management and resource recovery through innovative, equitable and sustainable measures. It incorporates community engagement as we continue to fulfill our mission of ensuring that people’s health and safety are guarded.”