

**POLICY RESTRICTING THE USE OF TOXIC AND PERSISTENT HERBICIDES ON
LANDSCAPED AREAS AND AROUND FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE
AT THE METROPOLITAN WATER RECLAMATION DISTRICT OF
GREATER CHICAGO**

The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (District) recognizes the need to manage weeds and unwanted vegetation in the landscaped areas and around the infrastructure at the District's facilities to ensure the safety of all employees, workers, the public, and the aesthetics of the landscaping. The District also recognizes that some commonly used herbicides may contain toxic and environmentally persistent ingredients and that indiscriminate use of these herbicides could pose a threat to the safety of human health and the environment. The District strives to maintain all grounds and outlying areas in an aesthetically pleasing, efficient, cost-effective, and environmentally responsible manner. Thus, the District adopts a policy to ban all unnecessary use, on landscaped areas and around facilities and infrastructure at the District, of synthetic chemical herbicides that contain toxic and environmentally persistent ingredients to safeguard the soil and water environment and the public.

Upon adoption of this policy, the District will stop using any synthetic herbicide to control weeds in turf landscape, shrub beds, and paved areas. The District will use natural herbicides or mechanical methods, such as mowing, to control weeds in turf landscape, shrub beds, and paved areas. Adoption of this policy will reduce the herbicide use by at least 92 percent.

Small quantities of synthetic chemical herbicides may be used through spot applications to control invasive weeds, such as thistle, teasel, and reed canary grass, and other unwanted vegetation as needed in the following cases because mechanical methods are impractical and natural herbicides have been shown to be ineffective in controlling these noxious and invasive weeds:

- (a) Restricted access areas, including, but not limited to, electrical substations, waste gas burners, clarifiers and digestion tanks, and fence lines around quarries and reservoirs. These areas have to be maintained free of vegetation to ensure the security and safety of employees and workers, to ensure that District wastewater treatment operations are not interrupted, and to limit property damage and vandalism. Due to limited or constrained access and unsafe conditions, these areas often cannot be maintained manually, and spot herbiciding is needed. However, in the future, additional steps could be considered to make these areas either more accessible to allow manual weed control or to make these area less conducive to growth and establishment of weeds by installing barriers and choosing other desirable landscaping/hardscaping alternatives as new construction occurs or fences are replaced.
- (b) Natural prairie landscaping, including, but not limited to, established restoration sites at the seven water reclamation plants and two pumping stations. Spot applications of synthetic herbicides are required to protect the considerable investment to establish these landscapes, to control invasive weeds to maintain the

integrity of these parcels, ensure successful establishment of the native landscape and its associated ecological function, and to prevent propagation of invasive species. These parcels are isolated, and the amount of herbicides needed for spot weed control is very small. Any environmental impact will be offset by the environmental benefit of establishing the native landscape's ecological function. However, the District will continue to seek environmentally safer and natural alternatives deemed as or more effective to synthetic herbicides as such products become available in the future.