



Purpose

The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) is developing a Phosphorus Assessment and Reduction Plan (PARP) to identify unnatural plant or algae growth that could be caused by phosphorus in the Chicago Area Waterways System (CAWS).

While phosphorus is a nutrient necessary for plant and animal life, an abundance of phosphorus can be harmful. Under certain conditions, excessive phosphorus can spur algal blooms and unnatural plant growth. These large growths decrease the amount of oxygen in the waterway, which can negatively impact aquatic life. In urban waterways such as the CAWS, there are point sources of phosphorus, such as discharge from wastewater treatment plants, and non-point sources such as urban stormwater runoff. Lack of riparian shading, slow-moving water, and other factors can also affect the impact that excessive phosphorus levels have on waterways.

Project

The overall goal of this project is to identify where there may be unnatural plant or algae growth in the CAWS and develop a feasible plan to reduce phosphorus levels or implement other measures to resolve those conditions. The project involves three key tasks:

TASK 1

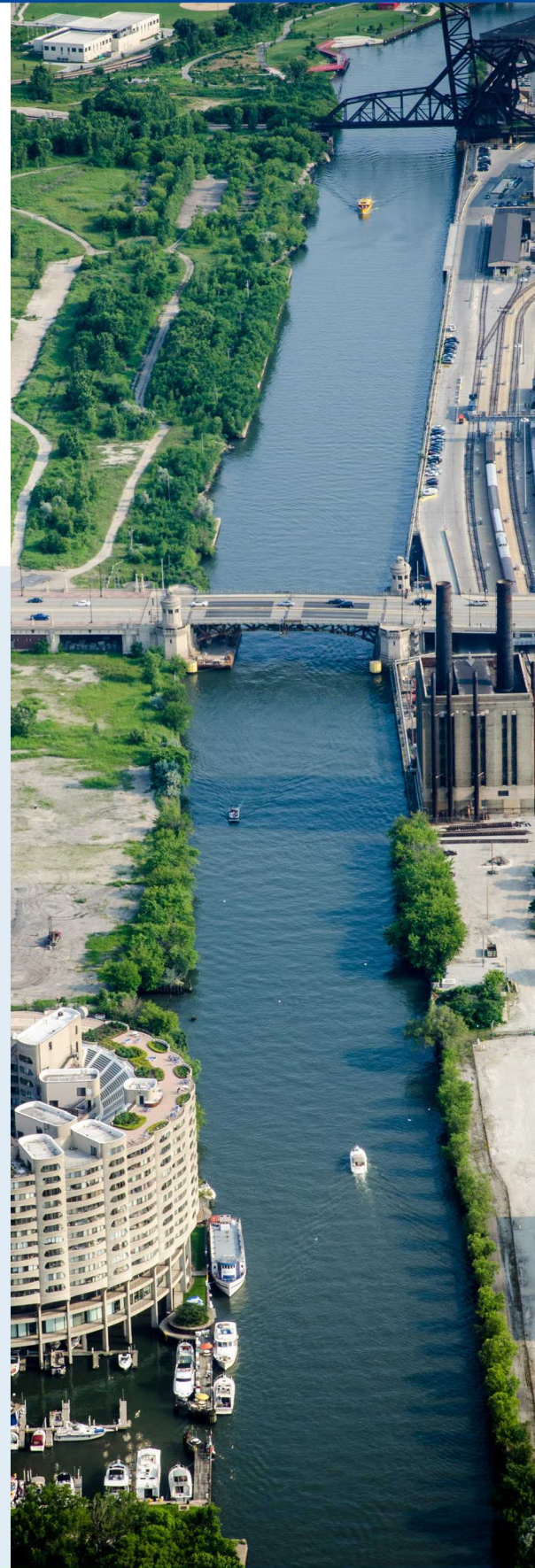
Review and analyze water quality data to identify CAWS reaches with unnatural plant or algae growth.

TASK 2

Assess potential sources causing unnatural plant or algae growth and identify phosphorus load reductions and other measures to mitigate unnatural growth.

TASK 3

Prepare a plan and schedule to implement identified measures.





Project Team

The project team is led by Geosyntec Consultants and includes several subcontractors. The project team also includes the Nutrient Oversight Committee (NOC), an advisory group that will review findings and provide feedback throughout the project. The NOC includes a representative from the MWRD, the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency and environmental groups.*

Project Schedule

TASK 1

JAN 2020 - MAR 2021

TASK 2

APR 2021 - OCT 2022

TASK 3

NOV 2022 - OCT 2023

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*Environmental groups include Environmental Law & Policy Center, Friends of the Chicago River, Gulf Restoration Network, Natural Resources Defense Council, Prairie Rivers Network and Sierra Club

