



NEWS RELEASE

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Tree removal continues construction phase of North Branch Chicago River Habitat Restoration Project

Tree removal at Legion Park began on Jan 2, 2020, and continues the construction phase of the North Branch Chicago River Habitat Restoration Project. The contract option was awarded to Industria, Inc. of Des Plaines, Illinois, in September 2019 which also includes site restoration and native plantings.

The tree removal work at Legion Park occurred between Foster and Bryn Mawr avenues along the east bank of the Chicago River. Grading work to level out slopes and reduce erosion, as well as native plantings, will follow in the same area in 2020. Construction completion is anticipated in the fall of 2022.

The project area consists of two contiguous parks that straddle the Chicago River - River Park (30 acres), and Legion Park (50 acres). These parks encompass approximately 1.3 miles of contiguous river and are leased to, maintained by, and managed by the Chicago Park District (CPD), and are currently owned by the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD).

This phase of the project began with the removal of the concrete lining of the river and a small dam at River Park. This restoration effort effectively re-connects 20 miles of the river system for the first time since 1910, and restores nearly 11 acres of natural area along the Chicago River system.

“We are happy to be working together with our partners to not only restore land in and around the North Branch of the Chicago River but reestablish important riverine habitat,” Col. Aaron Reisinger, commander, USACE Chicago District said. “This work is a critical component of the restoration efforts to improve the quality of the Chicago River.”

“This work is part of a larger regional effort to restore and connect habitats and people along the Chicago River that will benefit plants, animals, and humans,” Cathy Breitenbach, director of Cultural and Natural Resources, CPD, said. “The project improves recreational and educational opportunities along the Chicago River and expands upon recent enhancements at River and Ronan Parks, and complements other river restoration work nearby at Gompers Park, Eugene Field Park and, most recently, Horner Park.”

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Further, as the banks at Legion Park are graded to create a more gradual and stable slope, excess soil will be used to support remediation and restoration at Big Marsh Park, another riverine natural area undergoing ecosystem restoration on Chicago's Southeast Side.

“Our work in the North Shore Channel does not rest with improving water quality,” said MWRD President Kari K. Steele. “We are also prioritizing access to these same waters to galvanize a sense of community pride and ownership for our water environment. Just as the North Branch dam removal has produced a more natural stream environment that encourages aquatic movement, these next steps will encourage more human interaction with the water by stabilizing the banks at Legion Park where recreational opportunities await.”

Work in and along the waterways is being done throughout the project area over a five-year period. A five-year construction contract was initially awarded in September 2017 to Industria, Inc. and that initial work included removing the concrete lined channel and small dam near River Park on the North Branch of the Chicago River. Construction began on the dam in July 2018, and it was removed and replaced with natural riverine substrates of boulder, cobble, gravel, and sand.

For more information about the project, visit <https://www.lrc.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works-Projects/River-Riparian/>

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