

River Ecology and Governance Task Force

03/14/23 | 3 pm to 4:30 pm

MEETING SUMMARY

Welcome and Introductions

The meeting began at 3 pm with participants introducing themselves in the chat. Approximately 40 members of the Task Force attended the meeting.

Task Force Goals

The group began with a refresher on the Task Force objectives and short-term goals from 2021 and 2022. The Task Force is focused on transforming the waterway system into a thriving and ecologically integrated natural asset through coordinated planning, investment and management. Ultimately, the goal is to have an inviting, productive, and living waterway system that contributes to the city's resiliency.

Progress on 2021 – 2022 short-term goals was presented and a link was provided to a survey with questions regarding how well goals have been met. Participant responses will be used to frame conversations in upcoming Task Force meetings to revise and/or create new short-term goals. The presentation contains both the goals and the progress milestones that were achieved.

Natural Solutions Tool Demo

Friends of the Chicago River and Trust for Public Lands recently launched a Natural Solutions Tool, a multi-benefit project prioritization tool that helps identify where nature-based green infrastructure projects are needed. Friends of The Chicago River presented a brief demonstration to show how the tool can be used for planning projects along Chicago's rivers. The Natural Solutions Tool is [available online](#) with a free account, and a data dictionary was also reviewed with the Task Force and is [publicly available](#).

Small Group Workshop: What are you working on this year?

The Task Force members were divided into small groups to complete an activity where each person or organization added 2023 projects to a Google Jam Board with maps of different stretches of the river system. Participants were asked to include the approximate location of their project(s), a name, and a brief description. Task Force member organizations are currently working on dozens of projects region wide across all three branches of the Chicago River, the Des Plaines River, and the Calumet and Little Calumet Rivers. Afterwards, facilitated discussions were held to share additional information, milestones, and partners within the small groups.

Progress Update: Combined Sewer Overflows and Water Quality

MWRD provided the Task Force with a brief update and review of progress made on reducing combined sewer overflows (CSOs). The data shows that as infrastructure has been completed over the last decade the volume of CSOs system-wide has been reduced significantly.

2023 Upcoming Meeting Dates and Adjourn

Upcoming dates for 2023 Task Force and working group meetings were provided to members:

- Development Review Working Group: April 4, 6 pm – 7:30 pm
- System Plans Working Group: April 19, 12 pm to 1 pm
- Task Force Meeting: June 6, 3 pm – 4:30pm

The meeting concluded at 4:30pm.