

with the city of Chicago to create a 38,000 m³/d (10 mgd) water recycling project at a water resource recovery facility.

Manage water for the future

Too much or too little water causes concerns for the water sector and can affect local economies.

The Metropolitan Sewer District (MSD) of Greater Cincinnati embraced innovation to achieve sustainability – both hydraulic and economic, Parrott said. MSD solved a wet weather problem by creating an urban

river corridor using green infrastructure. The corridor will help revitalize the local community, which suffered enormous blight and foreclosures. The project will go into construction sometime next year.

On the other side, Marcus said, SWRCB found new sources of water during persistent drought. SWRCB streamlined the use of recycled water for outdoor implementation. While problematic, the drought has created one benefit, Marcus said: It has put a spotlight on water and more importantly, water reuse.

“Modern youth are not technology-phobes” when it comes to indirect and direct potable reuse, she said. “They grew up knowing that astronauts drink their pee. The younger generation gets it.”

Utilities must focus on future generations and customers, Parrott said.

“As utilities of the future, you have to sow the seeds, Parrott said. “You don’t see the fruit until 10 to 15 years down the road.”

– LaShell Stratton-Childers, WE&T

From public to private

Utility Executive Forum speakers share why the water sector should pursue private–public partnerships

At the Utility Executive Forum at WEFTEC® 2015, speakers from outside of the water sector shared their “tricks of the trade.” These tidbits and anecdotes provided insight into how other respective industries operate and what the water sector can do to improve.

This year the forum, *Building Good Relationships Through Partnerships*, focused on cultivating private–public partnerships (P3s).

Jeff Malehorn, president and CEO of World Business Chicago, and Maggie Brooks, county executive of Monroe County, N.Y., shared their points of view on P3s from both the private and public sector perspectives, respectively.

The best of both worlds

There are many reasons to pursue P3s, Malehorn said. Several of them have to do with limited federal and municipal funding available for capital improvement projects.

“The government has a budget and certain things it can fund,” Malehorn said. “There are certain things that the private sector can do that the government can’t.”

Malehorn said public and private sectors can build partnerships that can be beneficial to both parties. “When you find common values, you can find reasonable ways to bring them together,” he said.

Brooks echoed this sentiment. “Aging infrastructure is a challenge for governments,” she said. “The days of federal construction grants are over.”



During the 2015 Utility Executive Forum, Jeff Malehorn, president and CEO of World Business Chicago, shared the private sector’s point of view of public–private partnerships. Oscar & Associates

The public sector could learn from the private sector’s willingness to take risks, Brooks said. “In the private sector, innovation is celebrated, but in the public sector, innovation is investigated.” She said innovation is met with incredulity in the public sector and that must change.

It’s survival of the government and we need the private sector’s transformative quality to take risks to survive, Brooks said.

Real world examples

Malehorn cited Chicago’s scenic Riverwalk as an example of P3s in action. Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel wanted a pathway that would connect Lake Michigan with the canals of downtown Chicago. Malehorn said World Business Chicago represented the private sector’s voice in the P3 to make sure the Riverwalk was viable commercially.



Maggie Brooks, county executive of Monroe County, N.Y., said her county has pursued several P3s to replace declining federal funding. Oscar & Associates

According to the city of Chicago’s website, the design plans include conceptual ideas for each of the six blocks from State Street west to Lake Street with distinctive identities and purposes for each section. The sections are named thematically: The Marina, The Cove, The River Theater, The Swimming Hole, The Jetty, and The Boardwalk. According to the website, Phase 3 of the Riverwalk is slated to be complete by the end of 2016.

Malehorn said that so far the project has proven to be quite lucrative for the private industry. Commercial activity at the Riverwalk has been eight times higher than forecast, he said.

– LaShell Stratton-Childers, WE&T