Q) Do you support installing disinfection technology at Stickney, the world’s largest wastewater treatment plant?

A) Yes, I support installing disinfection technology at all of our treatment plants.

Q) How would you improve the current phosphorus-removal plans underway at the MWRD? Do you think this important? If so, why?

A) After the phosphorous removal recovery system goes on line I believe that after a twelve-month period an analysis should be completed to study how successful the system in place is and where improvements can be made. MWRD will have the largest phosphorus recovery facility at Stickney. This is an important issue because phosphorus is a fundamental element of all living things and vital to food production and is expected to run out over the next 100 years. The United States Environmental Protection Agency recognizes the MWRD as a leader on this issue. The recovery facility at Stickney will come on-line this year. Ostara the company MWRD has partnered with to produce the phosphorus-based fertilizer will produce between 9,000 to 10,000 tons annually. This facility will greatly reduce the MWRD’s nutrient load to the receiving waterways.

Q) Do you support any alternatives to maximize the capacity of the Tunnel and Reservoir Plan? Which ones do you support?

A) TARP has provided the gray infrastructure needed in the region. Flooding incidents have reduced due to the existence of TARP. However, due to climate change, intense rain events are increasing. The only way to help the community reduce the likelihood of flooding is to 1) invest in upgrading our aging infrastructure 2) expand our use of green infrastructure 3) increase our assistance in localized projects. MWRD currently has $300 million in regional projects underway which will yield $400 million in benefits. Projects cover everything from overbank flooding and streambank erosion to lack of localized detention and insufficient conveyance capacity for stormwater drainage. MWRD also has a program to acquire flood-prone homes which once acquired are demolished allowing the land to be green space which absorbs rain reducing runoff. A multi-pronged approach is the most effective one to maximize the effectiveness of TARP.

Q) What do you think the MWRD’s role should be in reducing chloride usage?

A) MWRD should take a leadership role in efforts to reduce chloride. The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency approached the MWRD to take this leadership role along with other agencies such as Chicago Department of Transportation and Illinois Department of Transportation to address and coordinate with the 125 municipalities in Cook County on what best management practices would be most effective to reduce chloride.

Q) What should the MWRD’s role be in reducing combined sewer overflows? What is the MWRD’s role in informing the public about CSO’s? How would rate the MWRD’s performance in informing the public about CSO’s, and why?

A) MWRD has and should continue to take a leadership role in reducing combined sewer overflows. Chicago had the first long term control plan in the country for combined sewer overflows. TARP has reduced the number of CSOs. The latest reservoir to come on-line, Thornton has reduced CSO’s in the Calumet system. McCook Reservoir Stage I, which will come on-line in 2017, will bring MWRD closer to fewer CSOs. In addition to TARP, MWRD continues to look for opportunities to improve how we do our job. MWRD informs municipalities and media of combined sewer overflows as they occur. Residents can also sign up to be alerted by MWRD directly of CSO incidents via the MWRD website.

Q) How do you the see role of wastewater treatment agencies changing over the next 10 years?

A) We see those changes taking place right now. The transformation is from wastewater treatment to resource recovery. We are looking for partners where our effluent can be used for manufacturing and construction. We also want to market our biosolids as fertilizer. This approach is not only sustainable but creates a revenue stream in order for us to reduce our tax burden. Further, our agency continues to look for partnerships with the private sector to stretch our investment and bring new technology to the wastewater treatment sector.

Q) Should the MWRD set a goal of making Chicago area waterways clean enough for swimming?

A) Yes. The State of Illinois has set the goal for swimmable waterways and we take that seriously. Our mission is to protect our water environment. We have a very good working relationship with the Illinois and Federal Environmental Protection Agencies and consider this a goal we can achieve together.

Q) What should the MWRD’s role be in addressing Asian carp and other invasive species in Chicago area waterways?

A) MWRD does and should take a leadership role in addressing Asian carp in the waterways. Upon release of the Great Lakes and Mississippi River Inter-basin Study (GLMRIS), it was determined that the most effective way to protect these two waters from the environmental and economic damage from aquatic invasive species is to physically separate the Great Lake and Mississippi River basins. The report called for construction of an engineered channel at Brandon Road with additional electric barriers and carbon dioxide screens, aimed to keep Asian carp from moving closer to Lake Michigan. MWRD supports these efforts. MWRD Board of Commissioners asked the Executive Director to work in collaboration with the Army Corps. of Engineers towards a solution.

Q) The MWRD is Cook County’s second largest landowner. Does the District have a responsibility to ensure companies to which it leases land are good environmental stewards?

A) MWRD real estate needs to serve the community at large. MWRD has a responsibility to make sure lessees are good environmental stewards. MWRD has always worked with and will continue to work with Illinois EPA to make sure that tenants are in compliance with any and all environmental regulations. The majority of our land is used for open access to public agencies at a low cost. But we also need to lease land for economic stimulus due to our broad spectrum of responsibility.

Q) How would you rate the current performance of the District?

A) I would rate our overall performance as very good with room for improvement. MWRD has been the leading wastewater agency in the country and complacency has allowed us to slip. TARP was so innovative that the agency has sat on its laurels for decades and stopped looking at innovation. Since having been elected I have made efforts to revitalize the agency to seek new innovations in waste water treatment. We are now working very hard to re-secure our place as a leading agency in wastewater treatment and stormwater management. Our history is rich, but our future will be transformative.

Q) What should the District’s role be in coordinating efforts with other government agencies in the Chicago area watersheds to manage those watersheds?

A) We do and should have a leadership role in working with other government agencies. A large part of our plan is cooperative. We encourage partnerships in our endeavors. Our strategic plan incorporates an approach that fosters cooperation amongst MWRD, other agencies and the 125 municipalities within the MWRD service area. Approaching it as a team with all interested parties is a better approach than each party going it alone. If you want to go fast, go alone, if you want to go far, go together. That’s our approach.