

SHARON A. WALLER, Ph.D., P.E.

Environmental Engineer & WBE-certified small business owner

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Candidate for 2022 Commissioner of the Metropolitan Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD)

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Waller 4 Water

- Licensed engineer & scientist
- 25+ years on water issues
- Small business owner

About me

I am a licensed professional engineer and scientist working in the water industry, educator, mother, K-Grade 8 enrichment advocate, and a long-time activist in my community on issues of public health and conservation.

Why I'm seeking the office of MWRD Commissioner

If elected, I'll be the only engineer on the Board and first-ever water engineer on the Board. I will promote practical and innovative solutions to manage flooding such green and traditional infrastructure. I will advocate for improved river water quality to protect public health and increase recreational river access. The Great Lake states are the OPEC-equivalent for water, but Illinois has no water policy¹. I am committed to work with state legislators, my professional organizations, environmental groups, and other stakeholders to develop state-wide water policy so we may intentionally manage our most precious resource, water, and provide a resilient, drought-proof, and cost-stable water source for industry to build our blue economy for an equitable future.

Environmental justice and sustainability

- I have dedicated my professional career to environmental protection and sustainability by supporting both industrial and municipal clients on management and infrastructure projects.
- I am a member of the Water Efficiency Committee of the Illinois Section of American Water Works Association (AWWA) where I am working with water utilities throughout the state to promote water efficiency and update data for energy efficiency rebates².
- As River Park Advisory Council President and a volunteer for Friends of the Chicago River, I advocate for river recreational use via access to affordable boating programs provided by the Chicago Park District at the River Park boathouse.
- I have worked with the Sierra Club IL Chapter to develop a simple template for a Nutrient Assessment Reduction Plan to assist small utilities that may not be able to afford a consultant.
- I use social media to address environmental issues including flooding, river access, lead service lines, and solar energy rebates and incentives.

Social justice

- In coordination with League of Women Voters, I organized a voter registration drive at Budlong School back-to-school registration day (Ward 40) to expand voting access in under-resourced communities.
- I worked with Lawrence Hall and my Ward 40 Alderman to change traffic signage to increase safety for neighborhood children and Lawrence Hall (Ward 40) staff and residents (2019).

¹ Thirty-four states including Great Lake states MN, OH, PA and NY have enacted water policy and/or regulations regarding water reuse. WI, IL, IN, MI have not yet developed water policy. <https://watereuse.org/advocacy/state-policy-and-regulations/>

² <https://tinyurl.com/ISAWWAWEN>

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- I am currently working with my alderman (Ward 40) to include domestic violence resources in the ward newsletter and add a mural under the Argyle bridge which may start a river art gallery.

Community building, public safety and anti-violence

- I led the formation of River Park Advisory Council (RPAC) in January 2021 to bring pro-social activities to Ronan, River and Legion Parks. RPAC provided three outdoor live music events, eight outdoor wellness classes, monthly park cleanups, supported the opening of the River Park boathouse (built in 2015), and planted a community garden to provide pandemic solace.
- I have been active in anti-violence efforts in neighborhood (Ward 40). In 2016, I organized neighbors to attend CAPS meetings and meet with Ward 40 Alderman in response to a 2pm shooting by the River Park playlot just before kids arrived for the after school (25 Mar 2019). This led to a “positive loitering” event (02 Apr 2019) with neighbors, Chicago Police 20th Precinct, River Park staff, and Ward 40 staff at River Park.
- As co-treasurer of the Welles Park Youth Swim Team (Ward 47), I co-led a multi-year fundraising effort for swim starting blocks that were installed in 2015.
- I have been active in Lake View Presbyterian Church (Ward 44) as an Elder, Sunday School teacher, coffee hour volunteer coordinator, and member of a committee that completed a \$1.5M exterior restoration of our architecturally significant church building (2006).

Supporting K-8 enrichment

- I volunteer in my children’s schools including emergency substitute teacher³ during pandemic teacher shortage (2020-2021).
- I have led free after-school programs including geography club, geography bee, astronomy club at Budlong School (Ward 40), St. Matthias School (Ward 40), Edgebrook School (Ward 41).
- I am a Girl Scout robotics coach and Girl Scout troop co-leader at Queen of Angels Catholic School (Ward 47, current) and formerly at Budlong School (Ward 40, 2018).

Professional achievements and select publications

Licensed Professional Engineer⁴ with 25+ years in water, author, small woman-owned business enterprise (WBE)⁵, Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design Accredited Professional (LEED AP BD+C), member of AWWA, Water Environment Federation, and WaterReuse Association, and teacher⁶.

Waller, Packman, Hausner. 2018. Comparison of biofilm cell quantification methods for drinking water distribution systems. J Microbiol Methods, v 144:8-21⁷. www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/m/pubmed/29111400/

Waller, Craddock, and Khan. 2018. Resilience Guidelines for Direct Potable Reuse. Resilience guidelines for direct potable reuse (Water Environment & Reuse Foundation, WE&RF 14-13, 2015-2017) <https://watereuse.org/watereuse-research/14-13-from-sewershed-to-tap-resiliency-of-treatment-processes-for-direct-potable-reuse/>

Waller, 2014. Real-Time Monitoring of Microbial Contamination in Reclaimed Water (WE&RF 11-06, 2012-13). <https://watereuse.org/watereuse-research/11-06-real-time-monitoring-tools-to-characterize-microbial-contaminants-in-reclaimed-water-state-of-the-science-assessment/>

³ Emergency teaching license <https://apps.isbe.net/ELISAPP/Pages/Vue/Inquiry/educator/credentials>

⁴ Professional engineer license <https://online-dfpr.micropact.com/Lookup/LicenseLookup.aspx>

⁵ Owner & Principal of Sustainable Systems LLC – Consulting, <http://sustainable-systems-llc-consulting.weebly.com>

⁶ Instructor in Northwestern University Dept of Civil and Environmental Engineering 2008-2011. Post-secondary teaching certificate issues by Northwestern University Searle Center for Teaching Excellence

⁷ Based on work by Hausner, Packman and Waller. 2011. Assessing and managing biofilm in distribution systems. Water Research Foundation Report 4087. <http://www.waterrf.org/Pages/Projects.aspx?PID=4087>. Based on Waller. 2010. Assessing biofilm in distribution systems. Northwestern University, Dept of Civil & Environmental Engineering, Evanston, IL. A PhD dissertation.