

NORTH BRANCH CHICAGO RIVER WATERSHED WORKGROUP GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING MINUTES



Chicago Botanic Garden, Plant Science Center,
1000 Lake Cook Road, Glencoe
Wednesday, February 11, 2026 * 1:00pm – 3:00pm

NBWW GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING MINUTES

1. Introductions

Brandon Janes, President of the North Branch Chicago River Watershed Workgroup (NBWW), called the meeting to order at 1:02 pm and welcomed attendees to the February 11, 2026, NBWW General Membership Meeting. The meeting was held in a hybrid format. Ashley Strelcheck, NBWW Coordinator, performed roll call. A total of 24 voting members (tallying 89 votes) were in attendance, so an NBWW meeting quorum was present (see the voting quorum in the roll call sheet and meeting participants list below).

2. Public Comment – None

3. NBWW Business

a. Approve NBWW August 13, 2025 General Membership Meeting Minutes

Matt Ueltzen, Lake County Forest Preserve District (LCFPD), motioned to approve the August 13, 2025 General Membership Meeting Minutes, seconded by Obaid Khalid, Village of Winnetka. The motion passed with a unanimous consensus vote.

b. Financials

i. NBWW Revenues & Expenditures Review

Strelcheck presented the FY25 expenditures and revenues for review (there are no new FY25 or FY26 revenues and expenditures to present). There were no comments or questions.

ii. NBWW Budget Review

Strelcheck presented the NBWW FY25 and FY26 budget. There were no comments or questions.

iii. Approval of NBWW FY2026 Membership Dues

Strelcheck presented the NBWW Proposed FY2026 Membership Dues for approval. There was one comment to explain the dues methodology and Strelcheck went through the columns for the methodology for the meeting attendees. Janice Aull, Skokie Consolidated Drainage District (SCDD), motioned to approve the presented FY2026 membership dues, seconded by Keely Evans, Village of Northbrook. The motion passed via a 23-0-1 roll call vote (see roll call vote spreadsheet).

4. Old Business

• Executive Board Update – Brandon Janes, NBWW Executive Board President

Brandon Janes gave a NBWW Executive Board update to the meeting attendees. The NBWW submitted the Nutrient Assessment Reduction Plan (NARP) to the Illinois EPA (on its members behalf) on December 22, 2025. The NARP report can be found on NBWW's website. The Executive Board and Monitoring Committee will be reviewing the NBWW NARP implementation table in 2026 to determine next steps and will be discussing how to address remaining NBWW NARP comments to submit to the Illinois EPA.

• Monitoring Committee Update – Rob Flood, NBWW Monitoring & Water Quality Impairment Abatement Committee Chair

Rob Flood gave a NBWW Monitoring Committee update that North Shore Water Reclamation District (NSWRD) will begin the 2026 NBWW water column chemistry sampling from the twenty-five NBWW sites in the watershed this month to satisfy the workgroup member's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination Systems (NPDES) and Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4) permit requirements. The NBWW collaborated with the SCDD on their upcoming streambank stabilization project between Danny Cunniff Park and Old Elm Golf Course in Highland Park. NSWRD was contracted to deploy three datasondes before project implementation (Fall 2025) to collect data (primarily focused on dissolved oxygen (DO)) as a baseline before stream reaeration measures (pool/riffle structures) were implemented. NSWRD will be collecting data at the same locations in 2026 to compare the results and will report back to the General Membership. NBWW also contracted

with Grand Valley State University (GVSU) in 2025 to collect and assess E. coli samples at the 5 highest E. coli monitoring locations (based on 2023-2024 monitoring data) in the watershed. The sites were tested for 3 microbial source markers (human, dog and gull) and the results showed human markers at 3 monitoring sites. The NBWW is considering additional microbial source tracking in 2026 with expanded markers for geese and potentially deer. Coordination with GVSU is currently underway to obtain a 2026 proposal for consideration. Based on the 2025 microbial source tracking results, NBWW will be drafting a factsheet to local entities on leaking sewage infrastructure that may be contributing to the human marker detections. NBWW will also be sending out chloride awareness letters again in 2026 to entities tributary to high levels of chlorides detected from the February 2026 sampling event.

- **Illinois Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy: Point Source Update - Chuck Bodden, North Shore Water Reclamation District (NSWRD) & NBWW Executive Board**

Chuck Bodden, Director of Laboratory & Environmental Compliance, North Shore Water Reclamation District (NSWRD), gave an update to the NBWW on the 2025 Illinois Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy (IL NLRs) Annual Partnership Conference (held November 5, 2025). This strategy is a statewide effort consisting of three primary sources of nutrients – agriculture, point sources and urban runoff. Bodden highlighted two phosphorus related goals of the IL NLRs which are 25% reduction in phosphorus by 2025 and 45% reduction in phosphorus in the long-term by 2035. Bodden presented data on point source phosphorus reductions based on discharges from point sources throughout Illinois; data from 2011-current and projections to 2030 (Rick Manner, Executive Director at Urbana & Champaign Sanitary District). Based on this chart, the 2025 goal was achieved in 2020 and the 2035 goal was achieved in 2024.

Looking at (local) Deerfield and NSWRD phosphorus discharge data; since 2015 both WWTPs have met the 2025 and 2035 IL NLRs goals since 2021. Bodden presented the input of Phosphorus into the WWTPs versus what is being removed (reduced) from the watershed system; which is a 74% reduction of effluent phosphorus between both watershed WWTPs. Bodden presented the IL NLRs data portal resource (<https://illinois-nlrs.ncsa.illinois.edu/>) and the Point Source Interactive Maps where Illinois WWTP data is housed for the NBWW members to explore.

Q/A:

- It was mentioned that NSWRD took out 130,000lbs of Phosphorus in 2025, what do they do with that? NSWRD is beneficially reusing it with biosolids; the solids go to a drying facility and are applied on agriculture land used as a fertilizer (reused).

5. New Business - None

6. Guest Speakers

a. Teaching Old Dogs New Tricks: Reusable Sponges for Resource Recovery and Water Remediation

Vinayak P. Dravid, Abraham Harris Chaired Professor of Materials Science & Engineering at Northwestern University & Founding Director of NUANCE Center

Professor Vinayak Dravid gave a presentation to introduce a reusable, sponge-based material platform built on the principle of *recover, rinse, and repeat*. Its three-dimensional, flexible form factor enables intimate contact with water while accommodating diverse surface chemistries tailored to specific targets. Driven by molecular-scale interactions at soft-hard interfaces, this approach translates nanoscale selectivity into macroscale functionality, offering a more circular and scalable pathway for environmental remediation.

Q/A:

- What is the process to clean the media (sponge)?
There is a special device that electrical means to change the pH so no chemicals are used (this is a future idea in progress now). This would not destroy the polymer or the integrity of the sponge.

b. Less Salt Please! Salt Smart for Communities

Hanna Miller, Watershed Project Manager, The Conservation Foundation

Hanna presented a salt smart approach to winter best practices to the NBWW meeting attendees aimed at decision-makers

and local communities. Hanna gave an overview of the Salt Smart Collaborative agency and the vast resources they offer the region (NBWW is a sponsor of these local workshops and events). The presentation was an abbreviated version of the Regional Winter Best Practices Workshops hosted annually in the Fall; emphasizing the importance of winter best practices, saving money through responsible salt use and how communities can move towards efficient winter operations. The impacts of chlorides goes beyond salt use, with consequences to our environment, local infrastructure and landscaping, and community costs and annual budgets. The Salt Smart Collaborative works with local counties, entities and workgroups to support communications (education and outreach) for winter operations, workshops, trainings, events and a wealth of technical resources.

Q/A:

- Are there resources for permeable pavers and winter maintenance?
Although currently the Salt Smart Collaborative website does not have permeable paver winter maintenance resources, Hanna would be happy to chat after the meeting about some options and resources. It's a tough challenge to maintenance permeable pavers for the salt impacts.
- Is there anything happening at a legislation level to minimize liability for "slip n' fall" incidents?
There are a couple contractors were able to use a lot less salt because they were able to demonstrate that they followed "industry best practices" in those "slip n fall" situations. Documentation was crucial for showing that industry best practices were being implemented and followed. From a legislation perspective, Hanna was unaware that Illinois has gotten to that point yet. Several states have tried the "limited liability" in legislation but have been unsuccessful due to that concern on liability issue. When going for this "limited liability" it is important to approach it correctly to avoid that same issue.
- Comment: Rob has offered up the NBWW monitoring site chloride results into the Winter Chloride watcher's database. Hanna will coordinate with Ashley about those results, but the Winter Chloride Watchers is also aimed at smaller tributary streams data as well as education of the public and their involvement.

7. Watershed Project Updates & Announcements

a. Open Discussion & Watershed Updates

- Open Discussion: Anyone using a specific software for MS4 reporting and management (platform options)?
"Field Maps": GIS-based platform (in conjunction with "Survey 123" for forms)
"City Works" Software: Several entities in Lake County use this software
 - SMC will be updating some Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4) resources:
SMC is in the process of revising their Storm Water Management Program (SWMP) template to comply with Illinois EPA's General NPDES Permit No. ILR40 and the Notice of Intent (NOI) template. These templates will become available to the public this Spring.
- Lake County Stormwater Management Commission (SMC) received the Friends of the Chicago River (FOCR) Green Ribbon Award (2025) for the Talbot Avenue Drainage Improvement Project in the Knollwood Community (Shields Township). This project was completed in October 2024, with funding provided in part by the Watershed Management Board (WMB), Stormwater Infrastructure Repair Fund (SIRF), Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) grant and Lake County SMC Fund Sources. The project as completed with assistance from Gewalt Hamilton.

b. Next NBWW General Membership Meeting: August 12, 2026, at the Kent Fuller Air Station Prairie & Tyner Interpretive Center, Glenview

8. Adjournment – 2:52 pm

Chuck Boddan, NSWRD, motioned to adjourn, seconded by Matt Ueltzen, LCFPD. The motion passed with unanimous consensus vote.

North Branch Chicago River Watershed Workgroup Meeting Attendees

NAME	ORGANIZATION
Alyssa Palazzolo	Vernon Township; Village of Lake Zurich
Anna Messina	Chicago Botanic Garden

NAME	ORGANIZATION
Anna Niedzinski	Lake County Stormwater Management Commission
Ashley Strelcheck	Lake County Stormwater Management Commission; NBWW Coordinator
Ashley Warren	City of Evanston
Brandon Janes	Village of Deerfield
Brian Valleskey	Baxter & Woodman
Bryan Wagner	Illinois Tollway
Cecylia Wszolek	Village of Lincolnshire
Chuck Bodden	North Shore Water Reclamation District
David Koldoff	Gewalt Hamilton; representing the Village of Bannockburn, Village of Northfield, Village of Riverwoods
Dudley Onderdonk	Village of Glencoe
Hanna Miller	The Conservation Foundation; Salt Smart Collaborative
Higino Jasso	City of Waukegan
Isaac Morales	North Shore Water Reclamation District
James Fitzgerald	Lake County Health Department
Janice Aull	Skokie Consolidated Drainage District
Jim Jabcon	Chicago Botanic Garden
Joey Kallal	Clark Dietz representing the Village of Green Oaks
Jonathan Happ	Libertyville Township
Justin Vick	Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago
Kate McDonnell	Village of Wilmette
Keeley Evans	Village of Northbrook
Mac McKavanagh	Union One West Fork Drainage District
Mark Olszewski	Village of Deerfield
Matt Ueltzen	Lake County Forest Preserve District
Michael Warner	Gewalt Hamilton
Obaid Khalid	Village of Winnetka
Peter Nagle	Chicago Botanic Garden
Rob Flood	North Shore Water Reclamation District
Robyn Flakne	Village of Glenview
Sam Barghi	Village of Bannockburn
Zach Hess	North Shore Water Reclamation District

PDHs are self-reporting. If attendees want to apply NBWW meetings towards their professional license, keep the certificate, agenda, and minutes with sign-in sheets. Acceptance of these materials for credit is at the discretion of the licensing authority.

MS4 Program BMP fulfillment. If attendees want to apply NBWW meetings and education towards their MS4 Program BMP Measurable Goals, keep the certificate, agenda and minutes with sign-in sheets. Acceptance of these materials for MS4 program credit is at the discretion of the Illinois EPA.