



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 14, 2016

MEDIA CONTACT: Deb Leonard at (513) 557-7095 (office), (513) 316-7510 (mobile), or Deb.Leonard@cincinnati-oh.gov

MSD Director Gérald Checco Wins 2016 Earth Day Environmental Award *Checco Advocates for the Environment at Work and at Home*

CINCINNATI – Gérald Checco, director of the Metropolitan Sewer District of Greater Cincinnati (MSD) and well known for his environmental advocacy, is the recipient of Cincinnati's 2016 Earth Day Environmental Award in the Government category.

Checco promotes the environment in both his professional and personal life and most recently has advocated for an environmentally friendly method of treating sludge from MSD's Little Miami treatment plant.

The award will be presented to Checco at 1 p.m. Saturday, April 16 on the main stage at the Cincinnati Earth Day Celebration at Sawyer Point Park. The annual Earth Day awards are sponsored by The Nature Conservancy and awarded to individuals and entities whose environmental efforts make Greater Cincinnati a better place to live.

Since Checco became MSD's director in September 2015, he has pushed to replace the sludge incinerator at Little Miami treatment plant with an anaerobic digester (biodigester), which converts the sludge to a Class A biosolid that can be applied to farmland as a fertilizer.

"The biodigester is the least expensive option for handling sludge, and comes with major environmental benefits," said Checco. "Hamilton County wants the sludge hauled to Mill Creek for incineration, but the plant isn't equipped to handle the volume and the resulting odors. Anaerobic digestion is a win-win for Greater Cincinnati."

While at MSD, Checco has also encouraged a host of innovative technologies to improve water quality in local streams and rivers, ranging from real-time control of wet weather flows to using algae from the South Pole to remove excess nutrients from wastewater.

"MSD is the biggest environmental organization in the Greater Cincinnati area," said Checco. "Our mission is to protect public health and the environment."

Prior to joining MSD, Checco worked at the Cincinnati Park Board and the City's Department of Public Services. During his 23 years at Parks, Checco helped it become the greenest park

system in Ohio, with more than a dozen solar installations, wind energy, geothermal systems, fleet greening and other initiatives in energy and maintenance management.

He became director of the Department of Public Services (DPS) in 2014. During his tenure, he helped re-engineer trash routes to allow for a full day of neighborhood cleanups each week and oversaw the construction of a LEED Platinum headquarters building for Cincinnati Police District 3.

Gérald and his wife, Jan Brown Checco, live in a historic home in Clifton that has been retrofitted with solar panels and a geothermal heating/cooling system. The house, built in 1905, was featured in Green Cincinnati Magazine. Gerald and Jan also recycle wash water for their vegetable garden.

Gérald was inducted into Xavier University's Sustainability Hero Hall of Fame earlier this year. He also teaches Environmental Ethics at North Carolina State University.

###