



ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

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Agenda Report

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Agenda Item No: 15.

FROM: Robert Thompson, General Manager
Originator: Jennifer Cabral, Director of Communications

SUBJECT:

PUBLIC AFFAIRS UPDATE FOR THE MONTH OF APRIL 2026

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive and file the Public Affairs Update for the month of April 2026.

BACKGROUND

Included in this report are recent activities of interest, managed by the Public Affairs Office for the month of April 2026.

RELEVANT STANDARDS

- Maintain influential legislative advocacy and a public outreach program
- Maintain collaborative and cooperative relationships with regulators, stakeholders, and neighboring communities
- Listen to and seriously consider community input on environmental concerns

PROBLEM

The Orange County Sanitation District (OC San) is a recognized leader in the water/wastewater industry. Despite our industry recognition, awareness among our customers may be limited regarding the pivotal role we play in protecting public health and the environment. The absence of direct communication through a billing method may contribute to this gap in knowledge.

It is our responsibility to ensure that our ratepayers understand the vital services we provide. Many customers may not realize that improper waste disposal into the sanitation system can adversely impact our sewer lines, reclamation plants, and the quality of water supplied by the Groundwater Replenishment System (GWRS). By enhancing communication channels and fostering understanding, we aim to bridge this gap and empower our ratepayers with the knowledge needed to support and appreciate the essential work we undertake for the well-being of our community and the environment.

PROPOSED SOLUTION

By providing tours, community outreach, education, and general communication via OC San's website, social media, and direct mailings, we can share information with the community, local agencies, and businesses on key programs such as the What2Flush program, energy production, water recycling, biosolids, and our source control program. This, in turn, helps improve the quality of wastewater that is recycled or released to the ocean, as well as public knowledge and understanding of wastewater treatment.

RAMIFICATIONS OF NOT TAKING ACTION

Failing to inform the community, local agencies, and businesses about OC San may result in insufficient support for our mission and hinder our effectiveness.

PRIOR COMMITTEE/BOARD ACTIONS

December 2025 - Received and filed the Public Affairs Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024-2026 Mid-Year Update.

July 2025 - Received and filed the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Year-End Update to the Public Affairs Strategic Plan (FY 2024-2026).

December 2024 - Received and filed the Public Affairs Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024-2026 Mid-Year Update.

June 2024 - Received and filed the Public Affairs Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024-2026.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Activities for this Reporting Period (March 21 - April 20):

Outreach Report

An outreach report that includes tours, website updates, social media posts, construction notifications, speaking engagements, and more is attached to this Agenda Report.

Social Media

OC San messaging, announcements, and program updates are posted across OC San's social media platforms. Our social media handle is @OCSanDistrict.

- Facebook: 21 posts reaching 6.1k people
- X: 17 posts reaching 402 people
- Instagram: 19 posts reaching 11.3k people
- LinkedIn: 7 posts reaching 5.7k people

Presentations & Outreach

OC San hosted 16 tours during the reporting period. We welcomed a variety of groups including Cal State Fullerton Nursing, Fullerton College, Rosary Academy, Cypress College, Cal State Long Beach

Nursing, Estancia High School, Discovery Prep School, a new employee tour, the OC District Attorney's Office, an operator class, and more.

Wastewater 101 Tour and Graduation Ceremony

The winter session of the Wastewater 101 Citizens' Academy concluded at the end of March with a special in-person tour of Plant Nos. 1 and 2, and a pump station, attended by 27 participants. The session concluded with a graduation ceremony at the March 25 Board meeting, where participants were recognized for completing all four sessions and becoming OC San ambassadors. This year marked the program's largest graduating cohort, with 52 participants completing the academy.

Children's Water Festival

OC San participated in the Orange County Water District's Children's Water Festival, engaging with 3rd - 5th grade students from schools across the county. Over the course of two days, more than 300 students took part in the What 2 Flush game-an interactive educational activity designed to teach children what belongs in the toilet and what does not, through a relay race.

Internal Communication

Over the reporting period, there were 34 posts on the employee intranet -*The San Box*, and four emails were distributed to staff on relevant weekly topics through the *Three Things to Know* email. The March/April issue of the internal newsletter, *Pipeline*, was published to OC San staff and shared with our retirees.

Member Agency Outreach Toolkit

Each quarter, OC San shares an outreach toolkit with public information officers across our service area. The toolkit highlights summer focused content, such as protecting our beaches, and the importance of disposing of summer BBQ FOG in the trash. Cities and partner agencies are encouraged to help spread the word by sharing the toolkit through their social media channels, newsletters, bill stuffers, and websites.

Awards

OC San received the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Government Finance Officers Association. The Certificate of Achievement is the highest form of recognition in governmental accounting and financial reporting, and its attainment represents a significant accomplishment by a government and its management. OC San has received this recognition for 32 consecutive years.

OC San was recognized with two American Academy of Environmental Engineers and Scientists awards: the Environmental Communications Award for our Wastewater 101 Citizens' Academy and an award for OC Headquarters in the Environmental Sustainability category.

Construction Outreach Update

Outreach efforts for OC San construction activities are ongoing throughout the service area. Over 6,000 notices were distributed for projects taking place in the cities of Orange, La Palma, Garden Grove, Santa Ana, and Costa Mesa. Additional updates were shared for projects taking place in the cities of Cypress, Los Alamitos, Newport Beach, and Huntington Beach, through our website, email alerts, and text alerts. OC San also worked with the respective cities to share construction updates via city publications and social media. For details on each project, visit www.ocsan.gov/construction.

Miller-Holder Rhone Lane Sewer Easement Cleanup Project

OC San began construction on the Miller-Holder Rhone Lane Sewer Easement Cleanup Project in Huntington Beach, with completion targeted for the end of 2026. This project will clear the easement area over the Miller-Holder Rhone Lane Sewer to ensure our infrastructure remains accessible and can continue to operate reliably.

The project has drawn media attention, with radio coverage from KFI AM, KNX, and KABC AM; television coverage from CBS/KCAL News, Spectrum News, and ABC7; print coverage from the Los Angeles Times; and coverage across social media platforms.

Details can be found in the attached outreach report.

Activities for the next Reporting Period:

Social Media

OC San continues to share messaging across various social media platforms featuring timely and relevant content such as current job openings, Earth Day, What 2 Flush, among others.

Presentations & Outreach

OC San has 16 scheduled tours for the next reporting period. We hope to welcome a variety of groups including Cal State Fullerton Nursing, Costa Mesa High School, Golden View Elementary, City of Irvine, OC Department of Education, Santiago Canyon College, Los Alamitos City Council, University of California, Riverside Engineering class, a water utility CEO, and many more. Staff will also be participating in the La Palma Festival of Nations to discuss upcoming construction in their city.

Construction Outreach

OC San will continue to share construction project updates through a variety of communication channels to keep the community informed. Community Liaisons for the Cypress Trunk Sewer Project will also attend the La Palma Festival of Nations to provide information regarding work taking place in the City of La Palma. Details on all active construction projects are available at www.ocsan.gov/construction

CEQA

N/A

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

All items mentioned are included in OC San's FY 2024-25 and FY 2025-26 Budget.

ATTACHMENTS

The following attachment(s) may be viewed on-line at the OC San website (www.ocsan.gov) with the complete agenda package:

- Outreach and Media Report for April 2026