



STEERING COMMITTEE

Agenda Report

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File #: 2024-3485

Agenda Date: 2/28/2024

Agenda Item No: 2.

FROM: Robert Thompson, General Manager

SUBJECT:

PUBLIC AFFAIRS UPDATE FOR THE MONTH OF JANUARY 2024

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION: Recommend to the Board of Directors to:

Receive and file the Public Affairs Update for the month of January 2024.

BACKGROUND

Included in this report are recent activities of interest managed by the Public Affairs Office for the month of January 2024.

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 distinguished entity in the water/wastewater industry. Despite our industry recognition, there is limited awareness among our customers 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 comprehend the vital services we provide. Many customers may not realize that improper waste disposal into the sanitation system can adversely impact our sewer lines, treatment plants, and the quality of water supplied through the GWRS. By enhancing communication channels and fostering understanding, we aim to bridge the 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 our messaging, such as the What2Flush program, energy production, water recycling, biosolids, and OC San's source control program. This, in turn, helps improve the quality of wastewater that is recycled or released to the ocean and the knowledge and understanding of wastewater treatment.

RAMIFICATIONS OF NOT TAKING ACTION

Neglecting to inform the community, local agencies, and area businesses about OC San could lead to insufficient support for our mission, hindering our ability to fulfill our responsibilities effectively.

PRIOR COMMITTEE/BOARD ACTIONS

July 2022 - Public Affairs Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2022-2024 approved.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Activities for the month of January 2024:

Outreach Report

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

Social Media

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

- Facebook: 18 posts reaching 4k people
- Twitter: 12 posts reaching 669 people
- Instagram: 23 posts reaching 5k people
- LinkedIn: 5 posts and reaching 5.6k people

Presentations and Industry Coverage

In January, employees participated in eight tours which included Dana Hills High School, Circulos High School, OCWD staff, a resident tour, Board Members, and staff from the NWRI. Staff also gave presentations to the University of California, Irvine for an engineering career day, and our General Manager presented at the CASA Conference and at the Fountain Valley Mayor's Breakfast. Staff also presented at the City of Huntington Beach Southeast Area Council Meeting. In total, we reached nearly 750 people. Details can be found in the Outreach Report.

Construction Outreach Update

Outreach efforts continue for OC San construction activities throughout the service area. Projects are ongoing in Fountain Valley, Costa Mesa, Buena Park, Anaheim, Newport Beach, and within both of our treatment plants. Website updates, email, text alerts, and direct notifications continue to be

distributed as the projects progress. In January, construction began on the MacArthur Sewer Project in the City of Newport Beach.

Internal Communication

In January, there were 142 posts on the employee intranet -*The San Box*, and four weekly emails distributed on relevant topics for the week.

OC San Celebrates 70 Years of Environmental Excellence

2024 marks OC San's 70th anniversary. To commemorate this milestone, OC San will celebrate throughout the year by sharing historical information and achievements through online posts, videos, and social media. We will also host a Community Open House on Saturday, June 8 to celebrate the big day. A new anniversary branding concept was launched in January and will be carried throughout the year.

Neighborhood Connection Newsletter

The quarterly newsletter is intended to keep our service area informed of the services and various initiatives led by OC San. The winter issue includes messaging on OC San's 70th anniversary, the anticipated grand opening of the Headquarters Building, a review of our capital improvement projects, our upcoming Wastewater 101 Citizens Academy, and the video contest. The newsletter was distributed electronically to our service area.

OC San Launched Video Contest

OC San has launched the 2024 Video Contest for high school and college students in OC San's service area. The theme is "Find Yourself at OC San" which is intended to promote careers within the wastewater field. There will be five prizes awarded from those who submit a short social media video. The videos will be featured on our social media platforms and website. Full contest details can be found at <https://www.ocsan.gov/education/psa>.

Wastewater 101 Citizens Academy

OC San's Citizen Academy is aimed at informing the community of the essential services OC San provides. Four workshops are held over two months, highlighting the various functions of OC San and allowing its participants a behind the scenes view of what we do. The next session begins in March and registration is now open. Details can be found at <https://www.ocsan.gov/education/wastewater-101-citizens-academy>.

Upcoming Activities for February:

Westminster TET Parade

Staff participated in the Westminster TET Parade to spread awareness about OC San's essential services.

OC San Wins Award

OC San and the OCWD were awarded the National Environmental Achievement Community Leadership award for the Final Expansion of GWRS. The award recognizes individuals and NACWA member agencies that have made outstanding contributions to environmental protection and the clean water community. OC San's General Manager attended the Winter Conference held in Austin, Texas in mid-February where he received the award on behalf of both agencies.

Inside the Outdoors

In February, OC San will be working with Inside the Outdoors and the Anaheim School District to create a video that will be played for middle and high school students. The video will be aimed to showcase the services OC San provides and provide information on the different career paths available.

Member Agency Outreach Toolkits

On a quarterly basis, toolkits are distributed to our member agencies with messages of importance for the local community. The toolkits include articles and graphics to be used in newsletters, websites, and social media. A winter toolkit promoting our video contest and the next session of Wastewater 101 Citizens Academy is planned for distribution in February.

CEQA

N/A

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

All items mentioned are included in OC San's FY 2022-2024 Budget.

ATTACHMENT

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 - January 2024