



# STEERING COMMITTEE

## Agenda Report

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**File #:** 2023-3227

**Agenda Date:** 9/27/2023

**Agenda Item No:** 22.

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**FROM:** Robert Thompson, General Manager

**SUBJECT:**

**PUBLIC AFFAIRS UPDATE FOR THE MONTH OF AUGUST 2023**

**GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION**

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive and file the Public Affairs Update for the month of August 2023.

**BACKGROUND**

Included in this report are recent activities of interest managed by the Public Affairs Office for the month of August 2023.

**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 well-recognized within the water/wastewater industry; however, within our service area, as we do not have direct communications through a billing method, there may be limited knowledge by our customers of the important work we do to protect public health and the environment. In general, the customers we serve may not realize that when they improperly dispose of waste into the sanitation system, it can negatively affect our sewer lines, our treatment plants, and the quality of water we supply for the GWRS.

**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**

If OC San does not inform the community, local agencies, and area businesses about OC San, we may not have the support necessary to deliver our mission.

## **PRIOR COMMITTEE/BOARD ACTIONS**

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

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

### **Activities for the month of August 2023:**

#### **Outreach Report**

An outreach report that includes tours, website and 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: 17 posts reaching 4.1k people
- Twitter: 18 posts reaching 1.6k people
- Instagram: 21 posts reaching 5.3k people
- LinkedIn: 4 posts and reaching 2.8k people

#### **Media Coverage**

During the month of August, OC San was highlighted in an article from the Digital Journal on 374Water moving forward on deploying the first commercial AirSCWO™ unit, in Spectrum News 1 on California seeking to introduce purified wastewater to drinking supplies, and a link on the Black and Veatch website regarding the GWRS Final expansion. All the articles can be found in the Outreach Report.

#### **Presentations and Industry Coverage**

In August, employees participated in eight tours and two speaking engagements reaching approximately 200 people. Staff presented at the PWX Stormwater Harvesting Forum in San Diego and our General Manager presented to the Water Advisory Committee of Orange County on the Supercritical Water Oxidation (SCWO) project. Mr. Thompson also attended the CASA annual conference and the California Special Districts Association (CSDA) annual conference. Details can be found in the Outreach Report.

#### **OC Polling**

OC San conducted a branding poll to ascertain the brand recognition among the Orange County service area community. This poll was a follow up from two polls done in 2020. The three polls asked the same questions, the only difference was that the first two polls were done prior to the OC San name change, when the agency was known as OCSD. There has been an 11.11% increase in recognition and properly identifying our main purpose. The full report is available as an attachment.

### **Joint GWRS Staff Appreciation luncheon**

OC San and the OCWD hosted a joint luncheon for staff to recognize their efforts in successfully completing the GWRS. Over 500 employees attend the luncheon.

### **Construction Outreach Update**

Outreach efforts continue for OC San construction activities throughout the service area. Projects are ongoing in Fountain Valley, Seal Beach, Buena Park, Anaheim, and within both of our treatment plants. Website updates, email text alerts, and direct notifications continue to be distributed as the projects progress. In August, updates were provided to the Fountain Valley, Buena Park, Anaheim, Seal Beach, Los Alamitos, and Rossmoor communities.

### **Internal Communication**

In August, there were 47 posts on the employee intranet -*The San Box*, and four weekly emails distributed on relevant topics for the week.

### **Awards**

- OC San and the OCWD were awarded the 2023 CSDA Innovative Program/Project of the Year (Large District Category) for the Recycling 100 Percent Local Reclaimable Wastewater Flows into High-quality Drinking Water.
- OC San received an honorable mention from the Beacon Leadership and Innovation Award from the Institute for Local Government.

### **Upcoming Activities:**

#### **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. This quarters' toolkit focuses on our Capital Improvement Program.

#### **Volunteer Incentive Program Luncheon**

OC San is resuming the VIP Luncheon to celebrate and recognize the volunteers who share their time to give tours, participate in community events, and serve as ambassadors of OC San. This will be the first time in three years that we will hold the event in person.

#### **Save the Date - State of OC San**

The State of OC San will be held in person on Friday, October 27 from 11am - 1pm. Please mark your calendars and save the date. Additional details will be provided as we near the date.

#### **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](http://www.ocsan.gov)) with the complete agenda package:*

- Outreach & Media Report - August 2023
- OC San Branding Poll Report 2023