



ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

Agenda Report

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Agenda Item No: 3.

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

SUBJECT:

PUBLIC AFFAIRS UPDATE FOR THE MONTH OF MARCH 2026

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION: Recommend to the Board of Directors to:

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

BACKGROUND

Included in this report are recent activities of interest, managed by the Public Affairs Office for the month of March 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 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 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 might 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 (February 20 - March 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: 14 posts reaching 3.6k people
- X: 11 posts reaching 313 people
- Instagram: 11 posts reaching 6.3k people
- LinkedIn: 4 posts reaching 4.7k people
- Nextdoor: 1 post reaching 2.8k people

March Retirement Celebration

Each March OC San bids farewell to retiring staff with a small celebration. The celebration was hosted in the Headquarters courtyard where staff had an opportunity to share stories and send off our dedicated employees with a heartfelt goodbye. Former retirees also joined the celebration.

Presentations & Outreach

OC San had nine (9) tours during the reporting period, welcoming groups from Cal State Fullerton, Estancia High School, Canyon High School, Huntington Beach High School, Best Academy Charter School, a general public tour, and Cal State Long Beach Nursing. Staff also participated in a Career Day at Cerro Villa Middle School, participated in a Construction Networking panel, held a film screening, and were judges for the Orange County Science and Engineering Fair.

Wastewater 101 Citizens Academy Tour and Graduation

OC San concluded the 7th session of Wastewater 101 Citizens Academy with an average attendance of over 50 participants per class. Participants were invited to a special facility tour of Headquarters, Reclamation Plants Nos. 1 and 2, and a pump station. Attendees who successfully completed all four sessions of the Wastewater 101 Citizens Academy were recognized at the March 25 Board Meeting. This cohort consisted of 46 graduates. The next academy will take place in winter 2027. An interest list is already available at ocsan.gov/wastewater101.

Show Your Love OC San Art Contest

OC San's first employee art contest, Show Your Love for OC San, had a total of six entries, each featuring a unique view of OC San through the eyes of the people who make it come to life. The three submissions with the most votes were awarded certificates of recognition and an OC San swag bag. The art pieces were displayed in the Headquarters lobby from March 18 through March 31.

Internal Communication

Over the reporting period, there were 33 posts on the employee intranet -*The San Box*, and four emails were distributed to staff on relevant weekly topics through our *Three Things to Know* email.

Awards

California Water Environment Association

OC San was awarded third place in the Community Engagement & Outreach Large category for Wastewater 101 Citizens' Academy. The award recognizes significant achievements in promoting awareness and understanding of water quality issues and follows OC San's first place at the regional level.

WateReuse

OC San was awarded the 2026 WateReuse Award for Excellence in Outreach and Education for our Wastewater 101 Citizens' Academy. This award recognizes significant success in advancing public acceptance of recycled water.

Construction Outreach Update

Outreach efforts for OC San construction activities are ongoing throughout the service area. Updates were shared for projects taking place in the cities of Orange, Cypress, La Palma, Los Alamitos, Costa Mesa, Newport Beach, Huntington Beach, and Santa Ana through our website, printed content, and

email and text alerts. A new project in Garden Grove, bordering Santa Ana, also started construction to replace a manhole. OC San also works with the respective cities to share construction updates via city publications and social media. For details on each project, visit www.ocsan.gov/construction.

Activities for the Next Reporting Period:

Social Media

OC San continues to share messaging across the various social media platforms. This messaging aligns with OC San's overall communications and includes timely, relevant content, such as rain-focused messaging during the wet weather season.

Presentations & Outreach

OC San has ten (10) scheduled tours for April. We hope to welcome a variety of groups including Cal State Fullerton Nursing, Fullerton College, Cypress College, Cal State Long Beach Nursing, OC Department of Education, Rosary Academy, Santa Ana Valley High School, new employees, and more. Staff will be giving a presentation to engineering students at Golden West College and attending the California Water Environment Association conference.

Children's Water Festival

OC San is participating in the Orange County Water District's Children's Water Festival April 15 and 16. Over the two-day period, OC San will engage with 4th and 5th grade students from various Orange County schools.

Construction Outreach

OC San will continue sharing construction project updates using our various communication methods to keep the community informed. Project details 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 March 2026