



ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

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Agenda Report

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Agenda Item No: 12.

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

SUBJECT:

PUBLIC AFFAIRS UPDATE FOR THE MONTH OF JANUARY 2026

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION:

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

BACKGROUND

Included in this report are recent activities of interest, managed by the Public Affairs Office for the month of January 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 distinguished entity in the water/wastewater industry. Despite our industry recognition, there may be 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 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 through 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 our messaging 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 and the 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 in January:

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 - through January 26

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

- Facebook: 13 posts reaching 2.8k people
- X: 12 posts reaching 283 people
- Instagram: 18 posts reaching 8.2k people
- LinkedIn: 7 posts reaching 7k people
- Nextdoor: 1 post reaching 15.8k people

Presentations and Outreach Events

In January staff hosted four tours, welcoming a variety of groups including Santiago High School, Cal State Long Beach, Talbert Middle School, and members of the public. Staff also participated in five

speaking engagements which included the Fullerton Kiwanis, Tijeras Creek Elementary Career Day, the Water Advisory Committee of Orange County, a Water Industry Career Day Presentation at Villa Park High School, and attended the Municipal Water District of Orange County Water Policy Forum. General Manager Rob Thompson also presented at the California Association of Sanitation Agencies Conference on Asset Management, Supercritical Water Oxidation.

Wastewater 101 Citizens' Academy Winter Session Begins

The latest session of OC San's Citizen's Academy began last month. The Academy is designed to inform the community about the essential services OC San provides. The program consists of four workshops held over two months, highlighting the agency's various functions and offering participants a behind-the-scenes look at how we operate. Interest in the program has been especially strong this year, with more than 155 people registered, the highest participation since the Academy began in 2022. For more information, visit www.ocsan.gov/wastewater101.

OC San Connection Newsletter

The winter issue of the community newsletter was published and distributed in January to over 3,000 email recipients. The issue includes a recap of construction project accomplishments from 2025, a reminder on the 3P's, Fats, Oils, and Grease messaging, and upcoming community events. The issue can be found at www.ocsan.gov/newsletter.

Member Agency Outreach Toolkit

The quarterly outreach toolkit prepared for our member agencies was distributed in January, featuring messaging for the respective agencies and cities to share on their communication channels. The winter toolkit featured the current session of Wastewater 101 Citizens' Academy for them to share with their community.

Internal Communication - through January 22

Over the course of the month, there were 20 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.

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, and Newport Beach through our website, email and text alerts, reaching over 1,500 members of the public. OC San also works with the respective cities to share construction updates via city publications. For details on each project, visit www.ocsan.gov/construction.

Awards

National Association of Clean Water Agencies

OC San has been awarded two National Environmental Achievement Awards from the National Association of Clean Water Agencies in the following categories:

- Community Leadership - OC San Headquarters
- Public Information and Education Category - Wastewater 101 Citizens' Academy

Graphic Design USA

OC San was recognized with two awards honoring our outstanding work across all media. From more than 6,000 entries, only the top 10 percent are recognized as winners.

- Take Your Kid to Work Day Event Branding (Branding + Identity + Logos)
- OC San Educational Pipe Displays (P-O-P + Exhibits + Displays)

Santa Ana River Basin Section Recognition

The Santa Ana River Basin Section Recognition of the California Water Environment Association awarded OC San the Gold award for Public Outreach and Education for the Wastewater 101 Citizens' Academy. In addition, Scott Green, Plant No. 2 Operator has been recognized as the Operator of the Year. Both award recognitions now move to the state level to compete.

Career Education to High School Students

OC San participated with various local water agencies on a Water Industry Career Day presentation at Villa Park High School. Over 1,500 students were introduced to the industry and presented with various career paths. The students were also introduced to an upcoming Career Technical Education Program that will feature the water industry this fall.

Activities in February:

Social Media

February will bring more winter focused content to the OC San social media platforms sharing knowledge about Fats, Oils, and Grease and What 2 Flush. There will also be highlights being shared for Valentines Day and the ongoing construction projects. These are just some of the ways that give us the opportunity to share the agencies messaging and highlight OC San staff.

OC San Film Screening

OC San is hosting a film screening on Tuesday, February 24 focused on water sustainability and the essential role wastewater infrastructure plays in protecting public health and the environment. The event will offer an engaging opportunity to learn more about innovative water solutions and connect with OC San staff and the film's director. Tickets are available at www.ocsan.gov/film.

Presentations & Outreach

OC San has three scheduled tours for the month of February including Cal State Long Beach Nursing students and Pacific Academy High School in Irvine. Staff will also participate in a Career Day at Oak Grove School in Aliso Viejo.

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.

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 for January 2026