



ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

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Agenda Report

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Agenda Item No: 6.

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

SUBJECT:

PUBLIC AFFAIRS UPDATE FOR THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY 2025

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION: Recommend to the Board of Directors to:

Receive and file the Public Affairs Update for the month of February 2025.

BACKGROUND

Included in this report are recent activities of interest, managed by the Public Affairs Office for the month of February 2025.

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 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, reclamation plants, and the quality of water supplied through 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

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

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

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Activities in February 2025:

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 February 24)

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

- Facebook: 21 posts reaching 2.6k people
- X: 22 posts reaching 770 people
- Instagram: 23 posts reaching 5.3k people
- LinkedIn: 6 posts reaching 3.9k people

Presentations and Outreach Events

In February, five presentations were given to various groups, including the California Water Environmental Association P3S Conference, Coalition for Environmental Protection - Restoration and Development, Orange County Water Association, UC Riverside Industry Night, and Unity Middle College Career Day.

Staff conducted eight tours, including Godinez High School, Cal State Long Beach, Bassett Adult School, the Orange County Health Care Agency, the Orange County Transportation Authority, a Chinese Delegation, the California Association of Sanitation Agencies staff, and a public tour. In total, we reached approximately 250 people. Details are included in the Outreach and Media Report.

Internal Communication

Over the course of the month, 35 posts were made 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. Additionally, the employee newsletter, *The Pipeline*, was published at the end of February.

Construction Outreach Update

Outreach efforts continue for OC San construction activities throughout the service area. Projects are ongoing in Orange, Costa Mesa, Seal Beach, and Newport Beach. Website updates, email text alerts, and direct notifications continue to be distributed as projects progress. Details on each project can be found at www.ocsan.gov/construction.

Honor Wall Nominations

The Honor Wall, formerly known as Honor Walk, recognizes former employees and board members who have made meaningful, lasting contributions to OC San's operations and leadership. Previously, honorees were celebrated with a custom-engraved brick located at Plant No. 1. Since the move to Headquarters, honorees will now be commemorated with their names displayed on a dedicated wall outside of Headquarters as a lasting tribute to their impact. Nominations closed on Friday, February 28.

Member Agency Outreach Toolkits

As part of our outreach efforts to our member agencies, two toolkits were distributed this quarter. One focused on the upcoming Wastewater 101 Citizens Academy and a bonus toolkit focused on the heavy rain event experienced this month. The kits included graphics and write ups for use on social media, newsletters, and website.

New Employee Welcome Kit

As part of our welcoming and onboarding process, new hires will receive a welcome kit on their first day at OC San. The kit is both digital and physical, it includes: a welcome note from our General Manager, OC San swag, and a link to an online page with quick access to important information. The distribution of the kit to new hires will begin in March.

Activities in March:

Social Media

OC San continues to share messaging across the various social media platforms.

March Retirement Celebration

On March 19, OC San will host a celebration in the Headquarters courtyard for all employees retiring. This will give staff an opportunity to share stories and send off our dedicated employees with a heartfelt goodbye. Retirees from the past few years are also invited to attend.

Wastewater 101 Citizens Academy

OC San's Wastewater 101 Citizens Academy began its spring session on March 6 with over 80 participants registered. The virtual Academy features four workshops over the course of two months and is hosted and presented by OC San staff. The four workshops focus on: Who We Are and What We Do, Protecting Our Environment: Fundamentals of Environmental Services, OC San: The Nuts

and Bolts, and Building for the Future: OC San's Capital Improvement Program and Our People. Upon completion of all four sessions, participants will graduate at the April 23 Board meeting.

OC San Connection Newsletter - Spring Edition

The spring issue of the *Connection Newsletter*, distributed electronically to over 4,000 subscribers, will include updates on construction projects, details about upcoming community events we are participating in, and so much more. To subscribe to the newsletter or view past issues, please visit www.ocsan.gov/newsletter.

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 February 2025
- Presentation