



ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

Agenda Report

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Agenda Item No: 10.

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

SUBJECT:

PUBLIC AFFAIRS UPDATE FOR THE MONTH OF MARCH 2025

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION:

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

BACKGROUND

Included in this report are recent activities of interest, managed by the Public Affairs Office for the month of March 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 understand the vital services we provide. Many customers may not realize that improper waste disposal into the wastewater 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.

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 March 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 March 24)

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

- Facebook: 18 posts reaching 2k people
- X: 16 posts reaching 483 people
- Instagram: 20 posts reaching 6.7k people
- LinkedIn: 8 posts reaching 4k people

Presentations and Outreach Events

In March, three presentations were given on behalf of OC San to Jack F. Macy Middle School in Monterey Park, Cerro Villa Middle School in Villa Park, and a Construction Network Wastewater Panel. Staff also participated in two community events: the Youth Leadership Expo in Anaheim and as judges of the Orange County Science and Engineering Fair. Director of Communications, Jennifer Cabral, attended the State of the City for Irvine and Fountain Valley along with Director of Engineering, Mike Dorman. Chairman Gallagher and staff also attended the Mesa Water District Education Center Ribbon Cutting event.

Staff conducted twelve tours which included, the Cal State Long Beach Nursing Program, Cypress College, Huntington Beach High School, Towill, Inc., Cal Poly Pomona, Board Members of the Operations and Administration committees, Fullerton Observer, Spirit Christian Academy, Santiago Canyon College, and a public tour. In total we reached approximately 500 people. Details are included in the Outreach and Media Report.

Internal Communication

Over the course of the month, 26 posts (as of March 24) were made on the employee intranet - *The San Box*, and five emails were distributed to staff on relevant weekly topics through our 'Three Things to Know' email.

External Communications

Over the course of the month, we saw an increase in subscribers to our email distribution list, which is managed by the GovDelivery platform. In February, we sent out 13 emails reaching 10,384 recipients and saw a 51.2 percent engagement rate.

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 employee nominations for Honor Wall recognition were submitted at the end of February with review by an employee led committee taking place in March. Recommendations for recognition will be presented to the Steering Committee in April. The Honor Wall celebration will be held on Wednesday, June 25 at 4 p.m.

New Employee Welcome Kit

Starting in March, a welcome kit was provided to new employees on their first day at OC San. The kit is both digital and physical and includes a welcome note from our General Manager accompanied by OC San swag and directions to an online webpage with quick links of important information to be aware of.

March Retirement Celebration

On March 19, OC San hosted a celebration in the Headquarters courtyard for all employees retiring. Retirees from the last couple of years were also invited to attend.

Wastewater 101 Citizens Academy

OC San's Wastewater 101 Citizens Academy held two sessions during the month of March and had over 70 attendees in each session. The next two sessions will take place in April concluding with a tour and a graduation at the April 23 Board meeting.

OC San Connections Newsletter

The spring issue of the Connection Newsletter was distributed to over 4,000 subscribers. The issue includes articles on upcoming construction projects, the journey of OC San's water, a Fats, Oil, and Grease story, and so much more. All issues are available at www.ocsan.gov/newsletter.

Awards

OC San was awarded first and third place in the Community Engagement & Outreach: Photography category by the California Water Environment Association. Plant No. 1 was also awarded the Safety Plant of the Year recognition. Physical awards will be received in April.

OC San was also awarded the 2025 WaterReuse Award for Excellence in Outreach and Education for our partnership with the Heritage Museum of Orange County. This award recognizes significant success in advancing public acceptance of recycled water. The award was presented during the WaterReuse Water Symposium.

Activities in April:

Social Media

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

Community Outreach

Children's Water Festival

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

Earth Day

OC San will participate in the Costa Mesa Earth Day event on April 26. Staff will host a booth and share messaging with residents about What2Flush and upcoming construction activities.

Upcoming Outreach Opportunities

- April 3 - OC San will host the American Society of Civil Engineers at Headquarters. A presentation will be given along with a tour of Plant No. 1.
- April 2 and 9 - the Operations and Administration Committees will tour Plant No. 2.
- April 17 - General Manager Rob Thompson will give a presentation to WaterReuse on branding potable water reuse projects.
- April 22 - General Manager Rob Thompson will participate in a panel workshop at the California Water Environmental Association Conference on PFAS and technology.
- April 29 - OC San will attend the State of the City for Anaheim.

Wastewater 101 Citizens Academy Tour and Graduation

The attendees who successfully complete all four sessions of the Wastewater 101 Citizens Academy will graduate at the April Board meeting and be invited to a facility tour of Headquarters, Reclamation Plants Nos. 1 and 2, and a pump station.

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 - March 2025