



ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

Agenda Report

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Agenda Item No: 20.

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

SUBJECT:

PUBLIC AFFAIRS UPDATE FOR THE MONTHS OF JULY AND AUGUST 2025

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive and file the Public Affairs Update for the months of July and August 2025.

BACKGROUND

Included in this report are recent activities of interest, managed by the Public Affairs Office for the months of July and August 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

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

July 2025 - Received and filed the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Year End Update to the Public Affairs Strategic Plan (FY 2024-2026).

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

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Activities in July and August:

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 (numbers through August 25)

OC San messaging, announcements, and program updates are posted across OC San's social media platforms. In August, OC San's Instagram account hit a milestone by reaching 2,000 followers. Our social media handle is @OCSanDistrict.

- Facebook: 32 posts reaching 7.8k people
- X: 29 posts reaching 1.2k people
- Instagram: 41 posts reaching 31k people
- LinkedIn: 3 posts and reaching 8.1k people
- Nextdoor: 3 posts and 17.9k impressions

Presentations and Outreach Events

During the months of July and August, OC San participated in outreach events including National Night Out in the City of Cypress and the City of Irvine's Summer Camp. The General Manager presented at a webinar for the American Academy of Environmental Engineers and Scientists on Driving Innovation and Sustainability through Asset Management.

Staff hosted 17 tours, welcoming a variety of groups including Villa Park High School, Beijing Middle School, Santiago Canyon College, Cal State Long Beach Nursing, Cal State Fullerton Nursing,

Sustain So Cal, Costa Mesa Sanitary District, the Laguna Beach Mayor, Association of California Cities - Orange County, Windsong, a meet and greet and tour with OC Coastkeeper's leadership, the OC Grand Jury and a general public tour. Overall, we reached approximately 180 people.

Take Your Kid to Work Day

On Wednesday, July 30 OC San held a *Take Your Kid to Work Day* event welcoming over 200 kids to our Headquarters. The event allowed kids to learn about the important work their loved ones do on a daily basis. Activities included story time, arts and crafts station, facility tours, and a career quest activity. More than 120 OC San staff members registered to bring a child to the event. Post-event surveys revealed an average rating of 4.65 out of 5, reflecting an overall excellent experience.

Internal Communication

Over the span of two months, 77 posts were made on the employee intranet, *The San Box*. Additionally, eight emails were sent to staff covering relevant weekly topics through the Three Things to Know email series. In August, the bi-monthly issue of the employee newsletter, *The Pipeline*, was published, featuring staff activities, various program updates, and information on construction projects within the OC San service area.

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, Costa Mesa, Cypress, Los Alamitos, La Palma, Seal Beach, Huntington Beach, and Newport Beach through our website, email alerts, text alerts, and direct notifications reaching over 10,000 members of the public. Over 2,900 of those recipients were reached via our email distribution system. 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

- **California Association of Sanitation Agencies**

The 2025 Organizational Excellence Award from the California Association of Sanitation Agencies recognizing OC San's Employee Development Program. The program is designed to give our team opportunities to grow and thrive professionally.

- **National Procurement Institute**

The Achievement of Excellence in Procurement Award from the National Procurement Institute. OC San is one of only three special districts and the only sanitation district in the United States to have earned this honor for over 24 years in a row.

- **Graphic Design USA**

Three awards from the Graphic Design USA - In-House Awards. Of the 5,000 entries, OC San was among the top 10 percent being recognized. The awards include:

- RISE Program (Logo & Icons)
- State of OC San 2024 (Video)
- 2025 Honor Wall (Branding)

Activities in September:**Social Media**

OC San continues to share messaging across the various social media platforms. Collaborations are also being developed with the Orange County Water District and the Orange County Watershed Management team.

Wastewater 101 Citizens Academy

OC San's Citizen Academy is back this fall, starting September 2. This four-session program, held over two months, gives community members an inside look at OC San's essential services through workshops, a behind-the-scenes tour, and interactive presentations. To learn more about the academy please visit www.ocsan.gov/wastewater101.

Recognizing Our VIP's

On September 16, OC San will celebrate and recognize our staff through the Volunteer Incentive Program (VIP); a program designed to give our employees and retirees an opportunity to engage with the communities we serve while sharing OC San messaging. Our VIPs are recognized with an appreciation lunch celebrating their volunteerism which resulted in 110 tours, 11 community events, and 31 speaking engagements to support OC San's Educational Outreach Program. Through these efforts, it is estimated that OC San reached over 5,500 people in fiscal year 2024-2025.

Presentations & Outreach

In September, OC San has six scheduled tours, welcoming a variety of groups including County of Orange, Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board, Operators in training, and members of the Huntington Beach Fishing Community. Staff will also attend the Orange County Water District's Water Summit and the Coastal Clean Up Day, joining efforts with the Santa Ana River Basin Section of the California Water Environment Association.

Construction Outreach

Outreach efforts continue for various construction projects including: the Bay Bridge Pump Station and Force Main project in Newport Beach, the Taft Avenue Sewer Improvement Project in Orange, the Cypress Trunk Sewer project in the cities of Cypress, Los Alamitos, and La Palma, and along the 405 and the Airway Airport Loop Projects in Costa Mesa.

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 July and August 2025
- Presentation