



ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

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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 MONTHS OF DECEMBER 2024 AND JANUARY 2025

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION: Recommend to the Board of Directors to:

Receive and file the Public Affairs Update for the months of December 2024 and January 2025.

BACKGROUND

Included in this report are recent activities of interest, managed by the Public Affairs Office. With the transition of these items from the Steering Committee to the Administration Committee, this report covers December 2024 and January 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 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. 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 Year 2024-2026.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Activities in December 2024 and January 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 (December 1 through January 23)

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

- Facebook: 45 posts reaching 9.6k people
- X: 34 posts reaching 2k people
- Instagram: 49 posts reaching 13.6k people
- LinkedIn: 9 posts and reaching 8.9k people

Presentations and Outreach Events

Over the last two months, three presentations were given to various groups, including one to the Santa Ana City Council, the Association of California Cities - Orange County's New Council Member Orientation, and a Career Day.

Staff conducted 10 tours, which included Cal State Long Beach, Edison High School, Canyon High School, Orange County Vector Control, as well as a general public tour and a new employee tour. In total, we reached approximately 160 people. Details are available in the Outreach and Media Report.

Internal Communication

Over the course of two months, 88 posts were made on the employee intranet - *The San Box*, and 9 emails were distributed to staff on relevant weekly topics through our 'Three Things to Know' email

distribution. Additionally, the employee newsletter, *The Pipeline*, was published at the end of December.

Construction Outreach Update

Outreach efforts continue for OC San construction activities throughout the service area. Projects are ongoing in Fountain Valley, Orange, Costa Mesa, Seal Beach, Newport Beach, and within both of our reclamation plants. 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.

OC San Holiday Luncheons

To celebrate the holiday season, a luncheon was held for employees at Headquarters where over 400 employees gathered. The executive management team served meals to our night shift employees as well.

Spark of Love Toy Drive

OC San employees continued with the annual participation in the Spark of Love Toy Drive to help children in need. OC San staff donated over 180 toys and nearly \$350.

OC San Connection Newsletter

The winter issue of the community newsletter was published and distributed in January. The issue includes information on upcoming construction projects, an update on various programs, and 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 topic featured the upcoming session of Wastewater 101 Citizens Academy.

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:

- Public Information & Education - "Connection Newsletter"
- Workforce Development - "Employee Development Program"

- **U.S. Green Building Council California**

OC San's Headquarters won the Project of the Year award by the U.S. Green Building Council California at the 14th Annual California Green Building Awards. This esteemed recognition celebrates premier green building practices that embody sustainability and resiliency.

- **Graphic Design USA**

OC San has been recognized by Graphic Design USA (GDUSA) with two awards as part of the 2024 American Graphic Design Awards. OC San received awards for its *Open House Count Down* social media posts and *70th Anniversary Campaign*, in the Social Media and Integrated Marketing Campaign categories. The 2024 Graphic Design Awards are GDUSA's

annual end-of-year best-of-year competition, encompassing over two dozen submission categories.

- **Digital Assurance Certification Bond**

OC San received the Certificate of Excellence from the Digital Assurance Certification Bond for achieving twenty years of disclosure reporting for municipal bonds.

- **Santa Ana River Basin Section of the California Water Environment Association**

- Gold in the 'Community Engagement and Outreach: Photography' category.
- Silver in the 'Community Engagement and Outreach: Project of the Year (Large)' category for the Los Alamitos Trunk Sewer Outreach Project.
- 2023 Safety Plant of the Year award for Plant No. 1 based on outstanding safety performance. Staff recently submitted Part 2 of the application to compete at the state level.

Activities in February:

Social Media

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

Wastewater 101 Citizens Academy

OC San's Citizen Academy is aimed to inform the community of the essential service OC San provides. Four workshops will be held over two months highlighting the various functions of OC San and allowing its participants a behind the scenes view of what we do. The next session begins in March and registration is now open. Details can be found at www.ocsan.gov/wastewater101.

Construction Outreach

As OC San's Capital Improvement Program projects ramp up, so does the Construction Outreach Program. Efforts are starting in preparation for construction of the Cypress Trunk Sewer Project, Bay Bridge Pump Station and Force Main, and the Plant No. 2 Perimeter Wall project.

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 - December 2024 and January 2025