



STEERING COMMITTEE

Agenda Report

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File #: 2024-3630

Agenda Date: 5/22/2024

Agenda Item No: 18.

FROM: Robert Thompson, General Manager

SUBJECT:

PUBLIC AFFAIRS UPDATE FOR THE MONTH OF APRIL 2024

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive and file the Public Affairs Update for the month of April 2024.

BACKGROUND

Included in this report are recent activities of interest managed by the Public Affairs Office for the month of April 2024.

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 are aware of the vital services we provide. Many customers may not realize that improper waste disposal into the sanitation system can adversely impact our sewer lines, treatment 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

July 2022 - Public Affairs Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2022-2024 approved.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Activities in April:

Outreach Report

An outreach report that includes but is not limited to tours, website, social media posts, construction notifications, and speaking engagements is attached to this Agenda Report.

Local Public Affairs Outreach Report

April was the first month of support from Whittingham Public Affairs Advisors (WPAA). A monthly report is attached to this Agenda Report. Activities to note include monitoring various City Council agendas of each of OC San's member agencies and highlighting issues and items of relevance to OC San. WPAA also reached out to the City of Newport Beach regarding the Bay Bridge project and met with OC San regarding key initiatives for 2024-2025, such as the Orange County Waste Recycling initiative.

Social Media

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

- Facebook: 12 posts reaching 2.4k people
- X: posts 9 reaching 691 people
- Instagram: 31 posts reaching 5.9k people
- LinkedIn: 6 posts and reaching 3.7k people

Presentations and Outreach Events

This month, staff participated in 10 tours including Hope University, Fullerton College, Golden West College, Cal State Long Beach Nursing program, Servite High School, Orange Coast College, Midway City, new employees, and the Wastewater 101 Citizens Academy graduates. Staff also held two Wastewater 101 Citizens Academy classes and participated in a career day at Belle Monte

Montessori Academy. OC San participated in the La Palma Community Conversation night to discuss various OC San initiatives with residents and at the Earth Day event in Costa Mesa. In total, we reached approximately 600 people for the month. Details can be found in the Outreach Report.

Internal Communication

In April, there were 54 posts on the employee intranet -*The San Box*, five weekly emails distributed on relevant topics for the week, and our bi-monthly Pipeline newsletter was published.

Construction Outreach Update

Outreach efforts continue for OC San construction activities throughout the service area. Projects are ongoing in Fountain Valley, Costa Mesa, Buena Park, Anaheim, Newport Beach, and within both of our treatment plants. A new project will soon begin in Seal Beach with construction of the Seal Beach Pump Station. Website updates, email text alerts, and direct notifications continue to be distributed as the projects progress. Details on each project can be found at www.ocsan.gov/construction.

Wastewater 101 Citizens Academy

The 2024 cohort of the Wastewater 101 Citizens Academy completed the program and was celebrated during a graduation ceremony at the April Board of Directors Meeting. A total of 18 people completed all four sessions and had the opportunity to tour both plants and an offsite pump station.

OC San Participates at CWEA Conference

OC San staff from various divisions attended the CWEA Conference from April 9-12, where they presented on various disciplines, research, applied technologies, and areas of expertise. This included presentations on automated data tools to improve lab efficiency, Thickening and Dewatering Plant Water Study, how treatment plant improvements maximize reuse efficiency, and OC San's education and communication programs.

Take a Kit to Your Kid Day

For the first time ever, OC San put a twist on Take Your Kid to Work Day with Take a Kit to Your Kid Day. This initiative involved creating an OC San badge for the children as well as providing OC San themed content and activities centered around their parents' careers. OC San experienced an overwhelming response, with over 140 kits requested. The event garnered positive feedback from parents following the distribution of the kits, indicating its success.

Activities in May:

OC San All Hands Meeting

The April All Hands Meeting was rescheduled for May 8. During the meeting, General Manager Rob Thompson highlighted organizational achievements, the budget, various strategic initiatives, upcoming efforts, and recognized Plant No. 1's Cal/OSHA Voluntary Protection Program STAR certification.

OC San Connection Newsletter

The spring issue of the OC San Connection newsletter was distributed in May. The issue included highlights of our history, information about the 70th Anniversary Open House, construction improvements throughout our service area, and much more. The newsletter was distributed electronically to approximately 4,000 people.

Public Works Week

The third week of May is Public Works Week. OC San will take this opportunity to acknowledge the various departments throughout the agency and the hard work done to provide an essential service.

Waste Stream Management and Circularity Event

Mr. Thompson participated in the Waste Stream Management and Circularity Event. The event is in partnership with OC Waste & Recycling where Sustain SoCal facilitated conversations related to our region's current and potential solutions for waste sorting, landfill management, public education, composting, organics infrastructure, extended producer responsibility, and PFAS/PFOA. Mr. Thompson took the opportunity to share the idea and concept of a partnership with digester owners, OC Waste & Recycling, and OC San on a regional food waste facility that can provide regional benefits related to food waste, biosolids, and the creation of additional energy.

OC San Headquarters Ribbon Cutting

On May 22, OC San will hold a Ribbon Cutting for the new Headquarters Building in Fountain Valley. The event will be attended by dignitaries from across the county, those involved in making the project happen, as well as our neighbors. Following the ribbon cutting a short tour of the building will be provided to highlight the features of the building.

70th Anniversary Open House

OC San's Community Open House is set for Saturday, June 8 from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. The event is intended for the community to learn about the essential service provided and how they too can become environmental stewards. OC San will continue to coordinate and plan for the logistics of this community event in anticipation of more than 1,000 visitors. OC San is also being joined by agencies across the county to showcase their contributions to the community. The event will include interactive activities, tours, entertainment, and fun for the entire family.

CEQA

N/A

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

All items mentioned are included in OC San's FY 2022-2024 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 - April 2024
- Local Public Affairs Consultant Report - April 2024