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Agenda Item No: 19.

FROM: Robert Thompson, General Manager

SUBJECT:

PUBLIC AFFAIRS UPDATE FOR THE MONTHS OF JANUARY AND FEBRUARY 2023

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive and file the Public Affairs Update for the months of January and February 2023.

BACKGROUND

Included in this report are the recent activities of interest managed by the Public Affairs Office for the months of January and February 2023.

RELEVANT STANDARDS

- Maintain influential legislative advocacy and a public outreach program
- Build brand, trust, and support with policy makers and community leaders
- 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 well-recognized within the water/wastewater industry; however, within OC San's service area, as OC San does not have direct communications through a billing method, there may be limited knowledge by customers of the important work OC San does to protect public health and the environment. In general, the customers OC Sans serves may not realize that when they improperly dispose of waste into the sanitation system, it can negatively affect OC San's sewer lines, treatment plants, and the quality of water supplied for the Groundwater Replenishment System.

PROPOSED SOLUTION

By providing tours, community outreach, education, and general communication via OC San's website, social media, and direct mailings, OC San shares information with the community, local agencies, and businesses on messaging such as the What2Flush program, energy production, water recycling, biosolids, and OC San's 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

If OC San does not inform the community, local agencies, and area businesses about OC San, we may not have the support necessary to deliver our mission.

PRIOR COMMITTEE/BOARD ACTIONS

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

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Current activities for the months of January and February 2023:

Outreach Report

An outreach report that includes tours, website and social media posts, construction notifications, speaker engagements, and more is included as an attachment to this Agenda Report.

Social Media

OC San messaging, announcements, program updates, and more continue to be posted across OC San's social media platforms.

- Facebook: 23 posts reaching 7.5 k people
- Twitter: 20 posts reaching 2.5 k people
- Instagram: 34 posts reaching 6.8 k people
- LinkedIn: 16 posts and reaching 14.5 k people

Media Coverage

OC San has had some media coverage recently with articles published in the *LA Times* and *Waste360*. Both articles highlighted the Supercritical Water Oxidation Demonstration project that OC San is currently preparing for. Links to the articles can be found in the Outreach Report.

Presentations

Over the last two months, employees participated in two tours and three speaking engagements and participated in the City of Westminster Tet Parade. Details about the tours and speaking engagements can be found in the Outreach Report. Overall, OC San was able to reach over 1,300 people with these events.

Community Newsletter

The winter issue of *The Neighborhood Connection* newsletter was distributed in February. This publication is distributed electronically to readers across OC San's service area and shared with member agencies to be distributed to their constituents. This issue includes articles about the Groundwater Replenishment System, the new General Manager, and the new proposed rate structure, among other topics.

Member Agency Outreach Toolkit

On a quarterly basis, OC San prepares and distributes outreach toolkits to member agencies with messaging to be shared with the community. This quarter's toolkit focused on Fats, Oil, and Grease (FOG) messaging and included materials for member agencies to use on websites, newsletters, and social media.

Construction Outreach

OC San continues to keep the communities informed of construction activities throughout the service area. There are currently active projects in Fountain Valley, Los Alamitos, Seal Beach, Westminster, Buena Park, Anaheim, Costa Mesa, Santa Ana, and within both OC San plant facilities. Website updates, email text alerts, and direct notifications continue to be distributed as the projects progress. Over this two-month reporting period, over 12,000 pieces were distributed in Seal Beach, Los Alamitos, Rossmoor, and Anaheim.

Internal Communication

Internal communication is a key component of the Public Affairs Office. There are daily posts on the employee intranet -*The San Box*, weekly emails are distributed on hot topics for the week, and the employee newsletter, *The Pipeline*, is published bimonthly, the most recent issue will be published this month.

Awards

OC San won four awards at the local section (SARBS - Santa Ana River Basin) of the California Water Environment Association. The recipients will attend an offsite banquet at the Disneyland Hotel in March to receive their award.

- Community Engagement & Outreach, Project of the Year: Large- 1st Place; Heritage Museum Outreach Partnership
- Victor Gonzalez (Division 880) - Mechanical Technician of the Year
- Milton Rocha (Division 840) - Operator of the Year
- Bryce Dragan (Division 620) - Silver Award for Pretreatment, Pollution Prevention, and Stormwater (P3S) Person of the Year

Prop 218 Public Notification

At the beginning of the month, OC San mailed Proposition 218 notifications to 550,000 parcels informing property owners about a proposed five-year sewer rate increase. A public hearing will be held at the Board meeting on March 22, 2023.

Upcoming Activities:**Wastewater 101 Citizens Academy**

The next session of OC San's citizens academy is starting in March. Registration is now open for community members 18 years and older to join. The session consists of four online workshops over the course of two months, culminating in a tour of the plant and a graduation at the April Board meeting.

GWRS Event

OC San and the Orange County Water District are preparing a celebration for the Groundwater Replenishment System. With the final expansion completed, it is time to acknowledge the achievements reached by the two agencies. A Save the Date notification was distributed late last month, and the official invitation will be emailed in the coming weeks. The event is scheduled for April 14, 2023.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

All items mentioned are included in OC San's 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 Report for January and February 2023