



STEERING COMMITTEE

Agenda Report

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Agenda Item No: 9.

FROM: James D. Herberg, General Manager

SUBJECT:

PUBLIC AFFAIRS UPDATE FOR THE MONTHS OF NOVEMBER & DECEMBER 2022 AND JANUARY 2023

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive and file the Public Affairs Update for the months of November & December 2022 and January 2023.

BACKGROUND

Monthly, staff presents an update on recent and upcoming public affairs activities. In recent years, this information has been presented to the Board of Directors (Board) through the Legislative and Public Affairs (LaPA) Committee, but with the dissolution of the LaPA Committee, the information will be presented to the Board through the Steering Committee.

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 our service area, as we do not have a direct communications through a billing method, there may be limited knowledge by our customers of the important work we do to protect public health and the environment. In general, the customers we serve may not realize that when they improperly dispose of waste into the sanitation system, it can negatively affect our sewer lines, our treatment plants, and the quality of water we supply for the Groundwater Replenishment System.

PROPOSED SOLUTION

By providing tours, community outreach, education, and general communication via OC San's website, social media outlets, 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

If we do 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 - Received and filed the Public Affairs Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2022-2024.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Current activities for the months of November & December 2022 and January 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: 40 posts reaching 10.1k people
- Twitter: 35 posts reaching 3.6k people
- Instagram: 44 posts reaching 9k people
- LinkedIn: 15 posts and reaching 41.4k people

Presentations

Over the last three months, employees participated in eight tours and six speaking engagements. Details about the tours and speaking engagements can be found in the outreach report. Overall, OC San was able to reach over 420 people with these events.

State of OC San

On November 15 the State of OC San was hosted to provide an update on the agency, accomplishments over the year, and the future direction of OC San. The virtual event was attended by over 150 Local, State, and Federal dignitaries and community members. The event was followed by a virtual plant tour.

Annual Report

Following the State of OC San, the agency annual report was released and captures highlights of the 2021-2022 fiscal year. The "We Are OC San" report included updates on the COVID-19 Public Health Surveillance System, the Wastewater 101 Citizens Academy, the upcoming Supercritical Water Oxidation project to combat PFAS, the Headquarters building currently under construction, OC San's financial situation, and more. The full report can be viewed at www.ocsan.gov.

OC San Celebrated Our Veterans

During the month of November, OC San recognized and celebrated employees who have proudly served in the Armed Forces. Street light banners were created and put up throughout the two plants highlighting each veteran. Staff also posted on social media platforms and created poster boards which were placed in the control centers at Plant Nos. 1 and 2.

Community Newsletter

The fall issue of OC San's quarterly newsletter, The Neighborhood Connection, was distributed electronically to approximately 4,500 readers. The issue featured stories on the Headquarters building, the Westminster Blvd. Sewer Project, a reminder about the proper disposal of FOG (fats, oil, and grease), and more. The issue is posted at www.ocsan.gov/newsletter.

Vendor Outreach

In 2022 OC San hosted five vendor workshops to reach new prospective bidders to the various contract opportunities available. The fifth and final workshop took place in November, focusing on maintenance services. There were over 30 companies registered to participate. Information on how to do business with OC San can be found at www.ocsan.gov/DoingBusiness.

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 plant facilities. Website updates, email text alerts, and direct notifications continue to be distributed as the projects progress. A virtual community meeting for the upcoming Taft Sewer Project in the city of Orange was hosted to provide the community a preview of the activity to come. A recording of the presentation is available at www.ocsan.gov/taft.

Internal Communication

Internal communication is a key component of the Public Affairs Office. To keep employees informed of OC San happenings, a variety of communication methods are used. There are daily posts on the employee intranet - *The San Box*, weekly emails are distributed on hot topics for the week, a monthly bathroom publication with general updates (last issue published in December 2022), and the employee newsletter - *The Pipeline*, which is published bimonthly. Of special interest, a yearbook was created in November to foster relationship building and capture staff highlights over the last couple of years.

Awards

The National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA) awarded General Manager Jim Herberg the 2023 National Environmental Achievement Award in Utility Leadership. The award honors Jim's exemplary commitment to the community, the environment, and the challenges faced by NACWA member agencies. Jim will receive the award in February during the NACWA Conference.

Groundwater Replenishment System Anniversary

To commemorate the 15th anniversary of the world-renowned Groundwater Replenishment System (GWRS), OC San launched a social media campaign to promote the long trajectory of this project. The campaign included historical facts, short video clips of staff, images of the various phases of the project, and culminated with a video of both OCWD and OC San General Managers.

Prop 218 Public Notification

With the sewer rate study completed, and in preparation for the rate increase, a Proposition 218 Notification was prepared for distribution to OC San's 550,000 parcels within the service area. The Notification will be distributed on February 3, 2023.

Upcoming activities:**Construction Outreach Support Services**

Over the next couple of years, OC San will experience an increase in Capital Improvement Program projects to continue supporting the mission and meeting the level of services commitment. To aid with the influx of projects that will require outreach, through a competitive bid process, OC San has contracted with Katz & Associates to continue with the successful program OC San has established over the years. The contract will begin this month.

Community Newsletter

The winter issue of The Neighborhood Connection newsletter will be distributed in the coming weeks. As previously noted, the issue is distributed electronically to readers across OC San's service area and shared with member agencies for distribution to their constituents.

General Manager

With the upcoming retirement of the current General Manager (GM) and the recent announcement of the new GM, the Public Affairs Office continues to focus on the transition plan. Part of the plan includes media and industry outreach, internal communications, and activities to recognize OC San's outgoing GM, as well as a thorough outreach strategy and communication plan for the tenure of the next GM.

Member Agency Outreach Toolkit

On a quarterly basis, OC San prepares and distributes outreach toolkits to our member agencies with messaging to be shared with the community. This quarter's toolkit will be issued in the coming weeks and will once again include material for our member agencies to use on their websites, newsletters, and social media.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The items comply with the authority levels of OC San's Purchasing Ordinance and have been budgeted in the 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 Report for November & December 2022 and January 2023