



TO: Orange County Sanitation District

FROM: Whittingham Public Affairs Advisors

DATE: February 18, 2025

SUBJECT: Local Legislative Report

The months of January and February were dominated by rainstorms, mudslides, and high winds across the region and the tragic fires in Los Angeles County. This has led to a subsequent emphasis on infrastructure and emergency preparedness here in Orange County. In addition, many newly elected City Council members were seated and participated in their first Council meetings. Following is a few of the more notable developments and issues for the last two months:

- Orange County’s Interim Chief Executive Officer Michelle Aguirre and Chief Financial Officer Kim Engleby have instructed all County departments to implement a variety of cost-cutting measures, including a “hard freeze” on vacant positions, restrictions on discretionary spending and reductions in service levels and non-mandated services. The memo to all departments cited forecasts showing national, state and local economies being below trend growth, with the County already experiencing this trend in fiscal year 2024-25, which began last July 1. Of the \$9.5 billion in appropriations for the County’s 2024-25 budget, 39 percent, or \$3.7 billion, comes from state or federal allocations or grants to administer specific programs, much of which is likely to be impacted by state resources being strained by wildfire recovery.
- In the wake of the Palisades and Eaton fires, numerous cities and water districts in high fire areas shared updates on both their water supplies and backup power available in the event of emergency. Since the 1993 Laguna Canyon Fire, the Laguna Beach County Water District has added two reservoirs, bringing its total number to 21 with a combined storage capacity of 33.5 million gallons. In addition, numerous pumps equipped with generators have been incorporated into the system to ensure water transport in an emergency.

Two heli-hydrants, which are water tanks that provide a remote water source for helicopters to use in fighting wildfires have been installed near Laguna Canyon.

- A stretch of beaches in Laguna Beach were closed for approximately ten days after a broken sewer line near Laguna Niguel Regional Park released roughly 600,000 gallons of sewage. Approximately 130,000 gallons were recovered before reaching the Sulphur Creek and Aliso Creek confluence, and about one million gallons of creek water were removed by Moulton Niguel Water District, owner of the main line.
- The filing period closed for the April 15 special election to fill the City of Irvine Fifth District City Council seat created by former Councilmember Larry Agran's election as Mayor. Four candidates qualified for the ballot but former Councilmember Tammy Kim, who finished second to Mayor Agran last November, withdrew from the race on February 7.
- The Newport Beach City Council approved a plan in January that put an end to years of debate over the disposal of contaminated sediment in Newport Harbor. When the Army Corps of Engineers begins dredging the main navigational channels of Newport Harbor this June, a portion of the contaminated sediment will be transported to the Port of Long Beach to fill a huge slip that once fit some of the largest container ships. Roughly 225,000 of the 950,000 cubic yards to be dredged will help fill the slip, with the remainder to be dumped roughly six miles out in the open ocean.
- Powerful atmospheric river storms brought the first significant rainfall of the season to Southern California, with four to five inches of rain falling over a 24-hour period in many of Orange County's canyon communities. Evacuation orders were issued for many canyon residents and Trabuco Canyon Road was closed for several days, with Trabuco Creek Road through the President's Day weekend to allow work crews to clear out debris and reposition barriers. Mudslides came in much of the area impacted by last year's Airport Fire, which burned more than 23,000 acres after a county public works crew accidentally started a fire in the canyons.
- At its meeting of February 11, the Orange County Board of Supervisors approved settlement offers from Southern California Edison for \$18.125 million to pay for county damages from the 2020 Silverado fire and the 2022 Coastal fire. The Silverado fire broke out on Oct. 26, 2020, near Santiago and Silverado Canyon roads, blackening roughly 12,400 acres and leading to evacuation orders for some 70,000 people in Irvine and about 9,500 in Lake Forest. Two firefighters suffered severe burns while battling the blaze.

As part of our scope of work, Whittingham Public Affairs Advisors (WPAA) has continued to monitor the various City Council agendas of each of the District's members and highlighted issues and items of relevance to OC San. We also continued to monitor activities at the South Coast Air Quality Management District, including the ongoing consideration of Proposed Amended Rule (PAR) 410, dealing with Odors from Transfer Stations and Materials Recovery Facilities; Proposed Rules 1110.2 and 1110.4, related to Emissions from Emergency Generators; and PAR 1133.3, which will seek to reduce VOC and ammonia emissions from green waste and organics composting.

It is a pleasure to work with you and to represent the Orange County Sanitation District.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Peter Whittingham". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Peter" being more prominent than the last name.

Peter Whittingham