
File #: 2023-2932

Agenda Date: 4/26/2023

Agenda Item No: 15.

FROM: Robert Thompson, General Manager

SUBJECT:

PUBLIC AFFAIRS UPDATE FOR THE MONTH OF MARCH 2023

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive and file the Public Affairs Update for the month of March 2023.

BACKGROUND

Included in this report are recent activities of interest managed by the Public Affairs Office for the month of March 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 San 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 GWRS.

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

Activities for the month of March 2023:

Outreach Report

An outreach report that includes tours, website and social media posts, construction notifications, speaking engagements, etc. is attached to this Agenda Report.

Social Media

OC San messaging, announcements, and program updates were posted across OC San's social media platforms.

- Facebook: 17 posts reaching 2.9k people
- Twitter: 12 posts reaching 1.1k people
- Instagram: 22 posts reaching 4.3k people
- LinkedIn: 4 posts and reaching 3.1k people

Media Coverage

OC San has had some media coverage recently with articles published 374WaterInc and Kokomo Tribune. Both articles highlighted the Supercritical Water Oxidation Demonstration project. OC San was also mentioned in the Daily Pilot with an article highlighting the GWRS. These articles can be found in the Outreach Report.

Presentations

During the month of March, employees participated in six tours and six speaking engagements including the Newport Beach City Council; University of California, Irvine; Construction Network Water Event; and Children's Water Festival. Details about the speaking engagements can be found in the Outreach Report.

Construction Outreach

Outreach efforts are ongoing for OC San construction activities throughout the service area. Projects are ongoing in Fountain Valley, Seal Beach, Westminster, Buena Park, Anaheim, Costa Mesa, Santa Ana, and within both of our treatment plants. Website updates, email text alerts, and direct notifications continue to be distributed as the projects progress. In March, over 9,000 notifications were distributed in Seal Beach, Los Alamitos, and Rossmoor.

Ice Cream Social Event

OC San hosted the first in-person event for employees since the start of the pandemic. An Ice Cream Social took place to give employees the opportunity to socialize and as a farewell to recent retirees. Retirees from the last three years were invited to attend. Overall, we had 300 people participate in the event.

Children's Water Festival

OC San once again participated in the Orange County Water District's Children's Water Festival. Over the two-day period, OC San engaged over 340 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students from various Orange County schools.

Wastewater 101 Citizens Academy

The third session of OC San's Wastewater 101 Citizens Academy began in March, with two workshops taking place. The next two workshops will take place in April concluding with a tour of the plant and a graduation at the April Board meeting.

Internal Communication

Internal communication is a key pillar of the Public Affairs Office. There were 67 posts on the employee intranet - *The San Box*, four weekly emails distributed on hot topics for the week, and the employee newsletter, *The Pipeline*, is scheduled to be published in April.

Awards

- The American Academy of Environmental Engineers and Scientists (AAEES) awarded OC San and OCWD the Grand Prize for Design for "A Headworks Divided - The Key to Unlocking Expanded Water Reuse in Orange County, CA". The award was presented virtually during the AAEES Conference on April 13.
- The California Municipal Treasurers Association awarded OC San with an Investment Policy Certification. To receive certification, OC San's policy must adhere with the State of California Government Code and meet the program requirements within 18 different topic areas deemed to be best practices for investment policies such as delegation of authority, internal controls, performance standards, reporting, investment policy adoption, ethics, and conflicts of interest.
- The American Society of Civil Engineers recognized OC San and OCWD with the 2022 Outstanding Water Treatment Project and Project of the Year Award for the GWRS. The awards will be presented in May during their annual awards ceremony.

Upcoming Activities for April:**Honor Walk**

The employee nominations for Honor Walk recognition were submitted in March with review by an employee led committee taking place in April. Employee recommendations for recognition, along with former Board Member nominations, will be presented to the Steering Committee in May. The Honor Walk celebration will be held on Wednesday, June 28 at 4 p.m.

Neighborhood Connection Newsletter

The spring issue of OC San's community newsletter is set for distribution in April. The issue includes updates on infrastructure projects throughout the service area and both plants. There are also articles on OC San programs. The newsletter is distributed electronically to approximately 4,500 readers.

Groundwater Final Expansion Event

OC San and the Orange County Water District hosted a dedication event for the final completion of the GWRS on April 14. Over 350 dignitaries attended the event.

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 Report - March 2023