



# STEERING COMMITTEE

## Agenda Report

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**File #:** 2024-3767

**Agenda Date:** 8/28/2024

**Agenda Item No:** 3.

**FROM:** Robert Thompson, General Manager  
Originator: Jennifer Cabral, Director of Communications

**SUBJECT:**

**PUBLIC AFFAIRS UPDATE FOR THE MONTH OF JULY 2024**

**GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION**

RECOMMENDATION: Recommend to the Board of Directors to:

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

**BACKGROUND**

Included in this report are recent activities of interest managed by the Public Affairs Office for the month of July 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, reclamation 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 2024 - Public Affairs Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024-2026 approved.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### Activities in July:

#### **Outreach Report**

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

#### **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: 14 posts reaching 2.k people
- X: 10 posts reaching 726 people
- Instagram: 31 posts reaching 3.7k people
- LinkedIn: 5 posts reaching 13.7k people

#### **Presentations and Outreach Events**

This month, staff conducted three tours at Plant No.1 and Headquarters, engaging guests from the Cal State Long Beach Nursing Program, the public, and new employees. Additionally, staff presented to the Orange County Realtors Group on waste in Orange County and participated in a story time focusing on water awareness at the Newhope Branch Library in Santa Ana. Our General Manager presented at the California Association of Sanitation Agencies Conference on Empowering through Collaboration. In total we reached approximately 200 people for the month. Details can be found in the Outreach Report.

#### **Internal Communication**

In July, there were 67 posts on the employee intranet -*The San Box*, and four weekly emails were distributed on relevant topics.

### **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, Rossmoor, and within both of our treatment plants. 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](http://www.ocsan.gov/construction).

### **Neighborhood Connection Newsletter**

The summer issue of OC San's community newsletter was distributed in July. It features a recap of our 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Open House, infrastructure project updates, our budget process, and more. The newsletter is sent electronically to about 4,000 readers and shared on our social media platforms.

### **Member Agency Outreach Toolkit**

The summer outreach toolkit was distributed to our member agencies to spread OC San messaging across a wider audience. It covers summer topics which include sand in the pipes and fats, oil, and grease. The toolkit includes graphics, articles for websites and newsletters, and social media posts.

### **OC San Receives Award**

OC San won the 2024 American Inhouse Design Awards from Graphic Design USA, a prestigious competition for design professionals that receives over 5,000 entries annually. Only 10 percent of the entries are recognized as winners. Awards were given for the Capital Improvement Program Annual Report <<https://www.ocsan.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/34221/638309854338200000>>, OC San's Connection Newsletter, and for the Keep it Flowing brochure which includes OC San messaging.

### **Local Legislative and Governmental Support**

Whittingham Public Affairs Advisors (WPAA) continues to provide support to OC San. 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.

### **Activities in August:**

#### **Social Media**

OC San continues to share messaging across the various social media platforms.

#### **Presentations and Outreach Efforts**

Presentations were given to the Fullerton Rotary Club, SoCal Waste Discharge Requirements Group, and the City of San Diego. OC San also participated in the Orange County Business Council Legislative Day and the State of the County.

#### **CEQA**

N/A

**FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

All items mentioned are included in OC San's FY 2024-26 Budget.

**ATTACHMENT**

*The following attachment(s) may be viewed on-line at the OC San website ([www.ocsan.gov](http://www.ocsan.gov)) with the complete agenda package:*

- Outreach and Media Report - July 2024
- WPAA Local Public Affairs Report - July 2024