



# ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

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## Agenda Report

**File #:** 2024-3802

**Agenda Date:** 10/9/2024

**Agenda Item No:** 4.

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

**SUBJECT:**

**PUBLIC AFFAIRS UPDATE FOR THE MONTHS OF AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER 2024**

**GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION**

RECOMMENDATION: Recommend to the Board of Directors to:

Receive and file the Public Affairs Update for the months of August and September 2024.

**BACKGROUND**

Included in this report are the recent activities of interest, managed by the Public Affairs Office. This report covers August and September 2024, following the transition of these items from the Steering Committee to the Administration Committee.

**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 comprehend 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

June 2024 - Received and filed the Public Affairs Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024- 2026.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### Activities in August and September:

#### **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: 15 posts reaching 2.1k people
- X: 12 posts reaching 636 people
- Instagram: 30 posts reaching 5.9k people
- LinkedIn: 4 posts reaching 2.2k people

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

During the months of August and September, staff presented to various groups including the Fullerton Rotary Club, the SoCal Waste Discharge Requirements Group, the City of San Diego, Wake Up Newport with the Chamber of Commerce, the Construction Management Association of America, and the South California Municipal Labs Workgroup.

OC San staff conducted 17 tours, engaging guests from the Grand Jury, the Allen Matkins law firm, students from the Bassett Adult School, and new OC San employees. Additionally, a tour of the Headquarters building was given to the Net Zero Conference participants. Staff also participated in the Orange County Business Council Legislative Day, State of the County, and the Orange County Water District's Water Summit. In total we reached approximately 400 people over the course of the past two months. Details can be found in the Outreach and Media Report.

### **Member Agency Outreach Meetings**

As part of our General Manager's outreach efforts, Mr. Thompson is actively engaging with our member agencies through a series of meetings. These meetings provide an opportunity to strengthen partnerships, discuss key initiatives impacting each agency, and explore collaborative opportunities. By fostering open communication, we aim to ensure alignment on regional goals and enhance the collective impact of our work across Orange County. Meetings have taken place with the cities of Fullerton, Santa Ana, Huntington Beach, and Seal Beach. In October, we have scheduled meetings with the cities of Villa Park, Los Alamitos, Fountain Valley, Newport Beach, and the County of Orange. In addition, City Council presentations are scheduled with the cities of Tustin and Orange.

### **Internal Communication**

Over the course of two months, there were 91 posts on the employee intranet page, The San Box, and nine emails were distributed on relevant weekly topics through our Three Things to Know staff email distribution.

### **Construction Outreach Update**

Outreach efforts continue for OC San construction activities throughout the service area. Projects are ongoing in Costa Mesa, Seal Beach, Newport Beach, and within both of our reclamation plants. Construction for the Taft Sewer Improvement project is scheduled to begin in October in the City of Orange. As a part of our outreach efforts, OC San distributed over 1,100 mailers and held an Open House in September, allowing residents to learn about the project and address any concerns before construction began. 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).

### **Member Agency Outreach Toolkit**

The fall outreach toolkit was distributed to our member agencies to spread OC San messaging across a wider audience. It covers holiday themed topics which include the What2Flush and 3Ps campaign. The toolkit includes graphics, articles for websites and newsletters, and social media posts.

### **Recognizing Our VIP's**

OC San celebrated and recognized our VIPs through the Volunteer Incentive Program; a program designed to give our employees and retirees an opportunity to engage with the communities we serve while sharing OC San messaging. Our VIPs were recognized with an appreciation lunch celebrating their time which resulted in 94 tours, 14 community events, 35 speaking engagements, and one Open House to support OC San's Educational Outreach Program. Through these efforts, it is estimated that OC San reached 6,600 people in fiscal year 2023-2024.

### **Activities in October:**

#### **Social Media**

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

#### **State of OC San**

The State of OC San will take place on Friday, October 25 from 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. at the Mile Square Golf Course in Fountain Valley. The event will host community members, as well as local, state, and

federal dignitaries, and will provide an update on OC San, including our accomplishments and future direction.

**Annual Report**

OC San's Annual Report will highlight various 2023-2024 fiscal year accomplishments including the recent completion of the Headquarters building, the Pretreatment Honor Roll Program, and our financial stability.

**OC San Connection Newsletter**

The fall issue of the community newsletter will be published and distributed in October. It will include information on upcoming construction projects, an update on various programs, and a schedule of upcoming community events that OC San will be participating in. Past issues can be found at [www.ocsan.gov/newsletter](http://www.ocsan.gov/newsletter).

**Community Event Participation**

As part of OC San's educational outreach efforts, staff will be at the Cypress Community Festival on Saturday, October 12, and at the Placentia Heritage Festival on Saturday, October 19. Participation in these events allows OC San the opportunity to share information on topics of interest such as What2Flush and the 3Ps.

**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 - August and September 2024
- Presentation