



ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

Agenda Report

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Agenda Item No: 12.

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

SUBJECT:

PUBLIC AFFAIRS UPDATE FOR THE MONTH OF MAY 2025

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive and file the Public Affairs Update for the month of May 2025.

BACKGROUND

Included in this report are recent activities of interest, managed by the Public Affairs Office for the month of May 2025.

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 May:

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 (through May 27)

OC San messaging, announcements, and program updates are posted across OC San's social media platforms. Our social media handle is @OCSanDistrict.

- Facebook: 18 posts reaching 2.5k people
- X: 16 posts reaching 544 people
- Instagram: 28 posts reaching 7.6k people
- LinkedIn: 4 posts reaching 2.5k people
- Nextdoor: 2 posts with 8.2k impressions

Presentations and Outreach Events

In May, OC San hosted 11 tours, welcoming a variety of groups including Orange Coast College, Servite High School, University of California Irvine, Fountain Valley Chamber of Commerce, members of the California Water Environment Association, Director Carlos Leon and his staff, and a general public tour. Staff also participated in a Career Day at Curtis Middle School. Overall, we reached approximately 230 people.

Internal Communication

Over the course of the month, there were 65 posts on the employee intranet -*The San Box*, and four emails were distributed to staff on relevant weekly topics through our Three Things to Know email.

Construction Outreach Update

Outreach efforts for OC San construction activities are ongoing throughout the service area. Updates were shared for projects taking place in Orange and Costa Mesa and Newport Beach through our website, email text alerts, and direct notifications reaching over 2000 subscribers via our GovDelivery platform. For details on each project, visit www.ocsan.gov/construction.

Awards

OC San was awarded the Platinum Peak Performance Award from the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA), which recognizes member agencies for achieving 100 percent water discharge permit compliance over a consecutive five- year period. OC San has received Platinum status for eight straight years. The award is for both Plant Nos. 1 and 2.

Employee T-shirt Design Contest

OC San held a staff-inspired T-Shirt Design Contest that celebrates creativity and pride in our mission. The winning design was voted by staff in May, the t-shirt will soon be available for purchase on the OC San company store. The intent is for the t-shirt to be worn by staff, family, and community members.

Introducing the RISE Program

As industry pioneers, OC San has various ongoing efforts that highlight our innovation to protect the environment. To promote those efforts, we have launched a new program- Resource Innovation for a Sustainable Environment (RISE). This program captures many of the efforts previously undertaken by OC San, currently underway, and new initiatives such as Supercritical Water Oxidation and Deep Well Injection. Explore www.ocsan.gov/RISE to see how we're implementing transformative technologies and initiatives.

OC San Featured in OC Register's Online Water Insert

For the sixth consecutive year, OC San participated in the Orange County Register California Water Supplemental Educational online insert. The water insert features OC San and several other local agencies. The article highlights our newly launched Resource Innovation for a Sustainable Environment (RISE) program. The insert is now published and available at www.ocsan.gov and via our social media channels.

Celebrating Public Works Week

The third week of May is nationally recognized as Public Works Week. OC San recognized employees with treats at our various locations, a video message from the General Manager posted on our intranet, social media posts featuring our staff, and a raffle to win OC San swag bags. The week is an opportunity to acknowledge the various departments throughout the agency and the work we do to provide an essential service.

Activities in June:**Social Media**

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

Launching New Employee Intranet Site

The Public Affairs Office in collaboration with the IT Division has developed an updated OC San

intranet site - The San Box. This revamped platform will introduce much-needed upgrades to improve internal communication and enhance the overall employee experience. The new San Box is expected to launch in mid-June.

Presentations & Outreach

In June, OC San has eight (8) scheduled tours, welcoming a variety of groups including County of Orange, Cal State Fullerton, San Diego Public Utilities, Achievement Institute for STEM Scholars, United for Student Success, new employees, and Orange County Emergency Management Organization.

Honor Wall Ceremony

This year's celebration is honoring five outstanding contributors to OC San's success. Former General Manager, Jim Herberg; Principal Environmental Specialist, Mike McCarthy; Engineering Supervisor, Brian Bingman; Senior Scientist, Yu-Li Tsai and former Board Member and Board Chairman, Greg Sebourn. They will be recognized on Wednesday, June 25, 2025, at 3:30 pm in front of OC San Headquarters.

Internal Communication

The bimonthly issue of the employee newsletter, the Pipeline, will be published highlighting our talented staff and promoting various programs.

Community Newsletter

The summer issue of the OC San Connection newsletter is scheduled to be published in late June featuring various informative articles for the over 3,000 subscribers.

Construction Outreach

Outreach efforts will commence in June for two construction projects starting this summer, the Bay Bridge Pump Station and Force Main project in Newport Beach; and the Cypress Trunk Sewer project in Cypress and Los Alamitos. Presentations will be provided at the City Council meetings for Los Alamitos and Cypress on the Cypress Trunk Sewer Project.

CEQA

N/A

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

All items mentioned are included in OC San's FY 2024-25 and FY 2025-26 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 and Media Report for May 2025