



Orange County Sanitation District

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Agenda Report

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FROM: Robert Thompson, General Manager

SUBJECT:

PUBLIC AFFAIRS UPDATE FOR THE MONTH OF MAY 2024

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION:

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

BACKGROUND

Included in this report are recent activities of interest managed by the Public Affairs Office for the month of May 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, treatment 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 2022 - Public Affairs Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2022-2024 approved.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Activities in May:

Outreach Report

An outreach report that includes tours, website, 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: 21 posts reaching 4.2k people
- X: 17 posts reaching 902 people
- Instagram: 38 posts reaching 5.9k people
- LinkedIn: 10 posts and reaching 8.8k people

Presentations and Outreach Events

This month, staff participated in 7 tours including Cal State Long Beach Nursing program, Godinez High School, Santiago Canyon College, Samueli Academy, Association of Facility Engineers, Air & Waste Management Association, and the general public. OC San also participated in the Children and Family Health Fair in Fullerton with Supervisor Chaney's Office and at the Construction Network event. Staff spoke at El Modena High School to discuss the Beach Monitoring Program and to the Waste Stream Management & Circularity group. In total, we reached approximately 600 people for the month. Details can be found in the Outreach Report.

Internal Communication

In May, there were 68 posts on the employee intranet -*The San Box*, and five weekly emails distributed on relevant topics for the week.

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, and within both of our treatment plants. Construction has begun on the Seal Beach Pump Station. Outreach has also commenced for the Cypress Trunk Sewer Project. 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.

OC San All Hands Meeting

On May 8, staff gathered for an in-person All Hands meeting. General Manager, Rob Thompson highlighted organizational achievements, the budget, various strategic initiatives, upcoming efforts, and recognized Plant No. 1's Cal/VPP STAR certification.

OC San Headquarters Ribbon Cutting

On May 22, OC San held a Ribbon Cutting ceremony for the Headquarters Building in Fountain Valley. The event was attended by dignitaries from across the county, those involved in making the project happen, as well as neighboring businesses. Following the ribbon cutting a short tour of the building was provided to highlight the features that set the building apart. ABC 7 and the Public Cable Television Authority featured the event on their channels, and the L.A. Times also covered the event. This article can be found in the attached outreach report.

OC San Featured in OC Register's Online Water Insert

For the fifth consecutive year, OC San participated in the Orange County Register California Water Supplemental Educational online insert. The piece features OC San and several other local agencies. The article highlights who we are, what we do, the Supercritical Water Oxidation Project, OC San's 70th Anniversary, and the Plant No. 1 Voluntary Protection Program.

Celebrating Public Works Week

The third week of May is nationally recognized as Public Works Week. OC San celebrated employees by providing OC San polo shirts, a direct message from the General Manager, and acknowledgement cards from managers and supervisors. This is an opportunity to acknowledge the various departments throughout the agency and the hard work done to provide an essential service.

OC San Connection Newsletter

The spring issue of the OC San Connection newsletter was distributed in early May. The issue included highlights of our history, information about the 70th Anniversary Open House, construction improvements throughout our service area, and much more. The newsletter was distributed electronically to approximately 3,500 people and shared via our various social media platforms.

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 June:

70th Anniversary Open House

OC San's Community Open House occurred on Saturday, June 8. The event welcomed 1,300 people to learn about the essential service we provide and how they too can become environmental stewards. OC San was joined by several agencies from across the county to showcase their contributions to the community as well as various entertainment groups from local schools and performance groups.

Headquarters Move In

The first week of June, OC San administrative staff moved into the new Headquarters building. This move consolidated over 300 staff members into one building allowing for easier collaboration across divisions.

CEQA

N/A

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

All items mentioned are included in OC San's FY 2022-24 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 - May 2024
- WPAA Local Public Affairs Report - May 2024