



## Agenda Report

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**FROM:** James D. Herberg, General Manager

**SUBJECT:**

**PUBLIC AFFAIRS UPDATE FOR THE MONTHS OF JULY THROUGH AUGUST 2020**

**GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION**

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive and file the Public Affairs Update for the months of July through August 2020.

**BACKGROUND**

Staff will provide an update on recent public affairs activities.

**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 (Sanitation District) is well-recognized within the water/wastewater industry; however, within our service area there is limited knowledge by our customers of the important work we do to protect public health and the environment. In general, the customers we serve do not realize that when they improperly dispose of waste into the sanitation system, it can negatively affect our sewer lines, our treatment plants, and the quality of water we supply for the Groundwater Replenishment System.

**PROPOSED SOLUTION**

By providing tours, community outreach, education, and general communication via the Sanitation District's website, social media outlets, and direct mailings, we have the ability to educate 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.

## **TIMING CONCERNS**

N/A

## **RAMIFICATIONS OF NOT TAKING ACTION**

If we do not educate the community, local agencies, and area businesses about the Sanitation District, we may not have the support necessary to deliver our mission.

## **PRIOR COMMITTEE/BOARD ACTIONS**

N/A

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

### **Current activities for the months of July and August:**

#### **Outreach Report**

Staff has created a new outreach report that includes tours, website postings, social media postings, construction notifications, speaker engagements, and more. This report is included as an attachment to this Agenda Report.

#### **Virtual Tours**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our Plant tours were discontinued. To continue engaging with the community and our stakeholders, staff created a virtual tour of the Plant that has allowed participants an opportunity to remotely visit the Plant and learn how we protect public health and the environment. Thus far, three virtual tours have taken place with a fourth scheduled for later this month.

#### **First Joint Virtual Tours with the Orange County Water District**

The Sanitation District and the Orange County Water District (OCWD) have partnered to present a live virtual tour of the two agency's treatment facilities. The tours took place on Friday, July 31 and Wednesday, August 19. OCWD General Manager Mike Markus and Sanitation District General Manager Jim Herberg served as the tour guides and presenters. The tour had 150 virtual attendees.

#### **Staff Participates in GWRS Webinar**

In August, Sanitation District employee Cindy Murra participated in a webinar hosted by OCWD titled *How'd They Do That? An Insider's Look at Expanding the World's Largest Potable Reuse Facility*; the Groundwater Replenishment System which is a joint project between the Sanitation District and OCWD.

#### **Plant No 2. Newsletter**

To keep the community surrounding Plant No. 2 informed of our activities, a neighborhood newsletter is distributed quarterly to portions of Huntington Beach, Newport Beach, and Costa Mesa. The summer issue of the *Neighborhood Connection* was recently distributed to 1,400 of our neighbors to let them know about upcoming and current construction projects.

#### **Meeting the Moment Video**

To showcase the importance of sanitary agencies during the COVID-19 pandemic, the California Association of Sanitation Agencies (CASA) created a video called *Meeting the Moment* featuring employees from across the state highlighting their role and effort in the everyday process of protecting public health. Two of our employees were featured in the video, April Frost, Operations Supervisor, and Absalon Diaz, Environmental Specialist. The video is currently posted on our website.

### **CASA 2020 Virtual Conference**

On, Wednesday, August 12 Lan Wiborg, Director of Environmental Services and Rebecca Long, Senior Public Affairs Specialist presented at the California Association of Sanitation Agencies (CASA) Virtual Annual Conference. Lan facilitated a roundtable on COVID-19 and Wastewater Based Epidemiology and Rebecca facilitated a roundtable on how to develop a virtual tour.

### **NACWA Peak Performance Award**

The Sanitation District was recently recognized as a recipient of the Platinum Peak Performance Award for our Reclamations Plant No. 1 and Treatment Plant No. 2. Receiving the Platinum Peak Performance Award means the Sanitation District was 100 percent compliant over a five-year period. This is the 7<sup>th</sup> year receiving this recognition.

### **Ocean Monitoring Vessel Logo Update**

The *Nerissa*, the Sanitation District's Ocean Monitoring vessel, is used as part of the Ocean Monitoring Program. *Nerissa* makes trips along the Orange County coastline, therefore having a current and visual brand displayed is important. The vessel will be updated with a larger sign of our name and will add the Sanitation District's social media information. The branding updates will take place next month.

### **OC Polling**

As a follow-up to the poll conducted in March 2020 to determine the service area's awareness of the Sanitation District, a new poll is taking place to identify any changes or improvements in the awareness level. The polling is taking place using social media and direct phone calls and will be reported back to this Committee once concluded.

### **CEQA**

N/A

### **FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

N/A

### **ATTACHMENTS**

*The following attachment(s) may be viewed on-line at the OCSD website ([www.ocsd.com](http://www.ocsd.com)) with the complete agenda package:*

- Outreach and Media Summary Report July-August 2020
- Presentation