

BOARD MEETING DATE: September 3, 2021

AGENDA NO. 14

REPORT: Legislative, Public Affairs and Media Report

SYNOPSIS: This report highlights the July 2021 outreach activities of the Legislative, Public Affairs and Media Office, which includes Major Events, Community Events/Public Meetings, Environmental Justice Update, Speakers Bureau/Visitor Services, Communications Center, Public Information Center, Business Assistance, Media Relations, and Outreach to Community Groups and Federal, State and Local Governments.

COMMITTEE: No Committee Review

RECOMMENDED ACTION:  
Receive and file.

Wayne Nastri  
Executive Officer

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## **BACKGROUND**

This report summarizes the activities of the Legislative, Public Affairs and Media Office for July. The report includes: Major Events; Community Events/Public Meetings; Environmental Justice Update; AB 617; Speakers Bureau/Visitor Services; Communications Center; Public Information Center; Business Assistance; Media Relations; and Outreach to Community Groups and Governments.

## **MAJOR EVENTS (HOSTED AND SPONSORED)**

Each year, staff engage in holding and sponsoring several major events throughout South Coast AQMD's four county jurisdiction to promote, educate, and provide important information to the public regarding reducing air pollution, protecting public health, improving air quality and the economy.

No major events were hosted or sponsored in July.

## **COMMUNITY EVENTS/PUBLIC MEETINGS**

Each year, staff engage with thousands of residents and stakeholders, providing valuable information about the agency, incentive programs, and ways individuals can help reduce air pollution through events and meetings sponsored solely by South Coast AQMD or in partnership with others. Attendees typically receive the following information:

- Tips on reducing their exposure to smog and its health effects;
- Clean air technologies and their deployment;
- Invitations or notices of conferences, seminars, workshops, and other public events;
- South Coast AQMD incentive programs;
- Ways to participate in South Coast AQMD's rules and policy development; and
- Assistance in resolving air pollution-related problems.

Staff attended and/or provided information and updates at the following July events and meetings:

### **Orange County Business Council (OCBC)**

On July 9, staff participated in the virtual OCBC Government Affairs Committee meeting and provided information on current incentive program opportunities, South Coast AQMD's Mobile App and other air quality information.

### **Riverside County Health Coalition**

On July 21, staff attended a virtual Riverside County Health Coalition's (Coalition) quarterly meeting, which focused on how to address racism and injustice in the public health system. The meeting was attended by government, school districts, community businesses, local and regional organizations and community members.

### **Harbor Association of Industry and Commerce**

Staff participated in the virtual Harbor Association of Industry and Commerce Government Affairs Committee on July 22. Discussions took place regarding South Coast AQMD's upcoming Board meeting and the proposal to pursue an Indirect Source Rule for Marine Ports.

### **The Future of Public Engagement in a Hybrid World**

On July 22, Pepperdine University held a virtual meeting on emerging trends in fostering public participation using digital tools blended with tried-and-true engagement strategies. Staff participated in break-out sessions to discuss tools and methods for hybridized public meetings as well as lessons learned.

### **Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) Community Meeting**

On July 29, staff participated in a virtual community meeting hosted by DTSC regarding the temporary shutdown of closure work at the former Exide facility. The closure work was stopped due to monitoring data on May 17, 2021, where a fence-line monitor near the Exide cleanup location which showed levels of lead, reaching 80 percent of daily limits set forth in South Coast AQMD Rule 1420.1. Staff provided an update on South Coast AQMD compliance, enforcement and air monitoring activities.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE UPDATE**

The following are key environmental justice related (EJ) activities in which staff participated during July. These events and meetings involve communities affected disproportionately from adverse air quality impacts.

### **Pacoima Community Initiative Meeting**

On July 9, staff participated in the virtual Pacoima Community Initiative meeting hosted by Pacoima Charter School. This initiative brings together agencies like South Coast AQMD, non-profits, local elected offices, and school representatives to provide information to residents on current programs and community resources.

### **Green Amendment Day Meeting**

Staff attended the virtual “Green Amendment Day, A Panel of Leading Environmental Justice Voices” meeting on July 13. Panelists discussed their pursuit for EJ through educational and civil rights engagement to bring about systemic legal and government reform.

### **SCAG Sustainable Communities Program Learning Session Meeting**

Staff attended SCAG’s “Sustainable Communities Learning Session on Civic Engagement, Equity & Environmental Justice” on July 13. The learning session provided background on SCAG’s Sustainable Communities program as well as funding opportunities for organizations to support civic engagement.

### **Coachella Valley Environmental Justice Task Force**

Staff participated in a virtual monthly Coachella Valley Environmental Task Force meeting led by the new Community Co-chair from Comite Civico de Valle on July 28. Staff updated the Task Force on AB 617 and other South Coast AQMD programs.

### **National Environmental Justice Conference**

On July 29, the National Environmental Justice Conference hosted a series of virtual workshops and training sessions on citizen science to address issues related to disasters and/or community hazards. Staff participated and received information on a citizen science strategies toolkit for community preparedness, response, and recovery.

### **AB 617 UPDATE**

The following are key AB 617 related activities in which staff participated during July. These events, workshops and meetings involve AB 617 communities to support the Community Steering Committees (CSC), Community Air Monitoring Plans (CAMPs) and Community Emissions Reduction Plans (CERPs).

### **South Los Angeles (South LA) CSC**

Approximately 45 people participated in a virtual South LA CSC meeting on July 22. Staff, co-leads, Physicians for Social Responsibility – Los Angeles, Strategic Concepts in Organizing Policy Education, and Watts Clean Air and Energy Committee led an exercise to build community among CSC members and an interactive activity to identify local air quality concerns. Discussions continued on the CSC Charter and stipends.

### **Advanced Public Engagement for Local Government Training**

Staff participated in the Advanced Public Engagement for Local Government Training, a Pepperdine University professional certificate program. The program prepares professionals to lead a publicly engaged organization by gaining an understanding of the context, purpose, and best practices for engaging residents in the decisions that affect their lives and communities.

### **SPEAKERS BUREAU/VISITOR SERVICES**

South Coast AQMD regularly receives requests for staff to speak on air quality-related issues from a wide variety of organizations, such as trade associations, chambers of commerce, community-based groups, schools, hospitals and health-based organizations. South Coast AQMD also hosts visitors from around the world who meet with staff on a wide range of air quality issues. And these were received for July.

### **UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs**

On July 7, staff participated in a virtual panel, hosted by the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs entitled, “Achieving Higher Air Quality by Analyzing the Unexpected.” *The discussion centered on* the connection between global warming, air pollution, and negative health outcomes, and impacts on disadvantaged communities.

### COMMUNICATION CENTER STATISTICS

The Communication Center handles calls on South Coast AQMD’s main line, 1-800-CUT-SMOG®, the Spanish line, and after-hours calls to those lines. Total calls received in the month of July:

Calls to South Coast AQMD’s Main Line and 1-800-CUT-SMOG®	2,793
Calls to South Coast AQMD’s Spanish-language Line	33
Total Calls	2,826

### PUBLIC INFORMATION CENTER STATISTICS

The Public Information Center (PIC) handles phone calls for general information. The PIC did not take walk-in requests in July because of the COVID pandemic. Email advisories provided information on upcoming meetings and events, program announcements and alerts on time sensitive issues. Information for the month of July is summarized below:

Calls Received by PIC Staff	7
Calls to Automated System	657
Total Calls	664

Email Advisories Sent	8,119
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### SMALL BUSINESS ASSISTANCE

South Coast AQMD notifies local businesses of proposed regulations so they can participate in the agency’s rule development process. South Coast AQMD works with other agencies and governments to identify efficient, cost-effective ways to reduce air pollution and shares that information broadly. Staff provides personalized assistance to small businesses both over the telephone and via virtual on-site consultation, as summarized below July.

- Provided permit application assistance to 234 companies; and
- Processed 63 Air Quality Permit Checklists.

Types of businesses assisted:

Architecture Firms	Engineering Firms	Restaurants
Auto Body Shops	Gas Stations	Retail Operations
Construction Firms	Manufacturing Facilities	Warehouses
Dry Cleaners	Offices	

## MEDIA RELATIONS

The Media Office handles all South Coast AQMD outreach and communications with television, radio, newspapers and all other publications, and media operations. The July reports are listed below:

Major Media Interactions	102
Press Releases	12
News Carousel	1

### Major Media Topics:

- **Fireworks:** The Los Angeles Times, Telemundo, KESQ, KPCC, KFI, KNX and Radio Korea taped interviews with staff on the air quality impacts due to the July 4th fireworks.
- **EPA TRI/RSEI:** ProPublica interviewed staff for background on U.S. EPA's Toxics Release Inventory and Risk-Screening Environmental Indicators programs.
- **Deferred Compensation Plan:** Financial Investment News requested information on South Coast AQMD's selection for administrative services for the deferred compensation plan. A written response was provided.
- **All American Asphalt:** Voice of OC requested information on South Coast AQMD's co-location of sensors with the Jun Wu Research Group and the release of air monitoring data. Written responses were provided.
- **School Air Filtration:** ABC7 interviewed staff on school air filtration systems in Southern California.
- **Rule 444:** The Long Beach Business Journal requested information on air quality regulations for law enforcement burning contraband. A written response was provided.
- **Warehouse ISR:** Southern California Records requested comment on the economic impact of the Warehouse rule. Written responses were provided.
- **Wildfires:** Spectrum News 1 interviewed staff on the impact wildfires have on air quality and public health.
- **Lake Forest Odor:** OC Register requested information about odor complaints reported in the Lake Forest Area. A written response was provided.
- **Clean Vehicles:** Southern California Edison requested a taped interview to discuss how electric vehicles can help improve air quality in the region. The Board Chair participated in the interview to discuss the \$500,000 reward for hydrogen fuel cell truck demonstrations.
- **CIO 100 Conference:** IDG interviewed the Chief Information Officer for the CIO 100 Symposium in August
- **Unplanned Flaring:** Bloomberg requested information regarding unplanned flaring events at the Valero, Chevron and Marathon refineries. Written responses were provided. Bloomberg requested additional information regarding unplanned

flaring events at Air Liquide Large Industries and Torrance Refinery. Written responses were prepared.

- **Natural Organic Reduction:** CalMatters requested an interview to discuss air quality impacts from burial practices and potential impacts of the new natural organic reduction proposal. Additional details were requested.
- **Hyperion:** Engineering News-Record submitted questions regarding permitting requirements and air quality impacts in light of the sewage spill at Hyperion. Written responses were provided.
- **Salton Sea:** NPR inquired about emissions from the Salton Sea and South Coast AQMD's efforts with the AB 617 Eastern Coachella Valley community. A written response was provided. KESQ did a taped interview with staff regarding ongoing odors near the Salton Sea.
- **PurpleAir Sensors:** San Francisco Chronicle interviewed staff about South Coast AQMD's data analysis and findings from PurpleAir sensors to better understand how to approach their own data analysis.
- **Fireworks Advisories:** Pitches were sent to local news outlets before and after July 4 regarding elevated levels of particulate matter, resulting in coverage from television, radio and online outlets.
- **Smoke Advisory:** Pitches were sent to local news outlets on the smoke advisory due to the Tumbleweed fire, resulting in coverage from television, radio and online outlets.
- **Odor Advisory:** Pitches were sent to local news outlets on the odor advisory impacting the Eastern Coachella Valley, resulting in coverage from television, radio and online outlets.
- **MATES V Tools:** Pitches were sent to local news outlets with the press release announcing the Air Monitoring Data Dashboard and Data Visualization Tool for MATES V.

#### News Releases

- **South Coast AQMD Issues Particulate Advisory due to 4th of July Fireworks – July 3, 2021 (English and Spanish):** Informed residents of potential air quality impacts for upcoming July 4 celebrations.
- **South Coast AQMD issues Smoke Advisory due to Tumbleweed Fire – July 4, 2021 (English and Spanish):** Informed residents of air quality impacts in the Santa Clarita Valley and San Gabriel Mountains due to the Tumbleweed fire.
- **4th of July Fireworks Led to Elevated PM2.5 Levels – July 13, 2021 (English and Spanish):** Informed residents of the recorded high levels of fine particulate matter in the South Coast Air Basin on July 4 and 5.
- **South Coast AQMD Issues Odor Advisory for Eastern Coachella Valley – July 25, 2021 (English and Spanish):** Informed residents of odors impacting portions of the Eastern Coachella Valley.

- **South Coast AQMD Unveils News Interactive Tools for Understanding Toxic Air Pollution – July 30, 2021 (English and Spanish):** Informed residents of the new MATES V visual tools available on AQMD.gov.

**Social Media Notable posts:**

- **Particulate Advisory Reminder (7/3):** 28,734 Twitter Impressions
- **Particulate Advisory Reminder (7/4):** 30,549 Twitter Impressions
- **AQ Forecast (7/12):** 11,367 Twitter Impressions
- **AQ Forecast (7/21):** 12,430 Twitter Impressions

**News Carousel:**

- **Check your local air quality on the South Coast AQMD app – July 21, 2021:** Provided links to the South Coast AQMD mobile app.

**OUTREACH TO COMMUNITY GROUPS AND FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS**

Due to COVID-19, outreach was conducted personally and virtually in July utilizing web based and other technologies to communicate with elected officials or staff from the following cities:

Alhambra	Industry	San Fernando
Arcadia	Irvine	San Marino
Azusa	Irwindale	Santa Clarita
Baldwin Park	La Cañada Flintridge	Sierra Madre
Bradbury	La Puente	South El Monte
Burbank	La Verne	South Pasadena
Claremont	Los Angeles	Temple City
Covina	Monrovia	Walnut
Diamond Bar	Monterey Park	West Covina
Duarte	Pasadena	Yucaipa
El Monte	Pomona	
Glendale	Rosemead	
Glendora	San Dimas	
Huntington Beach	San Gabriel	

Communication conducted in July with elected officials and/or staff from the following state and federal offices:

- U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein
- U.S. Senator Alex Padilla
- U.S Representative Nanette Diaz Barragán
- U.S Representative Tony Cárdenas
- U.S. Representative Young Kim
- Senator Lena Gonzalez
- Senator Dave Min
- Senator Josh Newman
- Senator Thomas Umberg
- Assembly Member Lisa Calderon
- Assembly Member Cristina Garcia
- Assembly Member Alex Lee
- Assembly Member Sharon Quirk-Silva
- Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon

Staff represented South Coast AQMD in July and/or provided updates or a presentation to the following governmental agencies and business organizations:

Coachella Valley Association of Governments  
DTSC  
Harbor Association of Industry and Commerce  
Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors  
Los Angeles County Department of Public Health  
Los Angeles County Regional Planning Department  
Newport Beach Chamber of Commerce  
Office of State Controller  
Orange County Business Council  
Riverside Transit Agency  
Riverside County Board of Supervisors  
San Fernando Valley Council of Governments  
San Gabriel Valley Economic Partnership  
San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments  
U.S. EPA  
Valley Industry and Commerce Association  
Western Riverside Council of Governments

Staff represented South Coast AQMD in July and/or provided updates or a presentation to the following community and educational groups and organizations:

API Forward Movement, Los Angeles  
Active San Gabriel Valley  
Breathe Southern California  
Clean Healthy Air, Clean Healthy Altadena  
Glendale Community College