

BOARD MEETING DATE: December 3, 2021

AGENDA NO. 12

REPORT: Legislative, Public Affairs and Media Report

SYNOPSIS: This report highlights the October 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 Natri
Executive Officer

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BACKGROUND

This report summarizes the activities of the Legislative, Public Affairs and Media Office for October. 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, and improving air quality and the economy.

7th Annual Environmental Justice Conference

South Coast AQMD held its 7th Annual EJ Conference, “The Fight for Clean Air, Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow.” Approximately 805 people joined either in-person at the Ontario Convention Center or virtually. Attendees included environmental justice activists, community advocates and organizations, health professionals, academic researchers, government officials, and high school students. Emcee Lou Calanche, Founder and Executive Director of Legacy LA engaged participants with her energy and passion for environmental justice. Vice Chair Vanessa Delgado delivered opening remarks and introduced the fireside chat with Chair Ben Benoit and former California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. The interview set the program in motion with remarks on the need to reduce pollution to address public health and climate issues. There was a robust discussion on the need for the federal government to address mobile sources and provide South Coast AQMD resources to clean the air. The conference included breakout sessions for discussions on: Surviving the Pandemic Through Community Engagement, Environmental ARTivism, and Clean Air Heroes on the Move. Another highlight was CBS2’s Pat Harvey who moderated a discussion with Assembly Majority Leader Eloise Gomez-Reyes, Assembly Member Isaac Bryan, and Vice Mayor Richardson. The panel discussion focused on local and state efforts to address mobile sources, the South Coast AQMD warehouse ISR, the importance of community participation in the policy-making process and how the media can play a role by providing local news to communities.

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 to 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 October events and meetings:

Pick-n-Treat Clean Air Day

On October 2, staff participated in person at the Pick-n-Treat Clean Air Day hosted by Long Beach's Neighborhood Leadership Program Ambassadors. Information on South Coast AQMD, air quality, how to file an air quality complaint and residential incentive programs was provided to event attendees as well as items branded with 1-800-CUT-SMOG®.

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Meeting

Staff participated in a virtual agency and stakeholder meeting regarding AllenCo Energy in University Park on October 6. Staff provided updates on monthly compliance activities including surveillance conducted with a toxic vapor analyzer and thermal imaging camera. Neither device detected elevated readings. Staff also reported that no complaints had been received related to AllenCo Energy since the last meeting on September 1.

Riverside Transit Agency (RTA) Transportation NOW

Staff participated in the virtual RTA Transportation NOW, San Geronio meeting on October 7. Staff shared an update on the AQ-SPEC Educational Toolkit on air quality sensors and other information.

South Pasadena Chamber of Commerce

Staff participated in the South Pasadena Chamber of Commerce virtual Legislative Committee meeting on October 13. Updates were provided on the EJ Conference, AQ-SPEC Toolkit air quality sensors, and an upcoming Warehouse Actions and Investments to Reduce Emissions (WAIRE) Program webinar.

San Fernando Valley Council of Governments

On October 21, staff participated in a virtual meeting to provide updates on vehicle incentives, the EJ Conference, Check Before You Burn and WAIRE program.

San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments Environment & Natural Resources Committee

On October 20, staff participated in a virtual meeting to report the start of Check Before You Burn and information on the request for proposals on the Wildfire Smoke Clean Air Centers for Vulnerable Populations Incentive Pilot Program.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE UPDATE

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

Pacoima Community Initiative

On October 1, staff participated in the Pacoima Community Initiative’s monthly virtual meeting. Updates included how to sign-up for the Clean Air Program for Elementary Students program and other community events and projects.

San Bernardino Valley College

Staff partnered with San Bernardino Valley College to host a hybrid meeting for 36 students on October 6. Discussion focused on air quality and EJ issues including the AB 617 program and air monitoring in San Bernardino County. Staff shared their academic and professional experiences and discussed career pathways. The meeting concluded with a question-and-answer session.

Communities, Climate Change, and Health Equity

On October 12 and 14, staff participated in a two-day virtual workshop hosted by Environmental Health Matters Initiative. The workshop brought people together to discuss the disproportionate impacts that climate change has on communities experiencing health disparities and environmental injustices.

Environmental Law Institute

Staff attended a webinar “Achieving Environmental Justice: Lessons from Communities, Companies, and Government” on October 19. Experts from communities, companies and government came together to share their lessons learned on environmental justice issues.

Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG)

On October 19, staff attended SCAG’s “Toolbox Tuesday” training webinar. Speakers discussed case studies involving inland, rural, and underserved communities, relationship building, supporting trust, and community engagement.

Environmental Justice Advisory Group (EJAG)

Staff hosted the quarterly EJAG meeting virtually on October 22. Presentations focused on school air filtration projects and the Environmental Justice Community Partnership. Members shared information on environmental issues and projects in their communities.

AB 617 UPDATE

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

AB 617 Community Identification Meeting

Approximately 60 people participated in an AB 617 Community Identification meeting on October 6. Staff provided an overview of South Coast AQMD and the AB 617

program, and staff's recommendation to defer additional community selection to 2022. Staff provided an overview of the Environmental Justice Story Map, including basic usage, navigation, and highlights of featured information. Members of the public asked about the 2021 Environmental Justice conference, potential new communities and funding sources for existing education and outreach programs.

South Los Angeles (South LA) Community Steering Committee Meeting

On October 7, approximately 35 people participated in a meeting. Staff provided an overview of the emissions inventory and facilities categorized under the general industrial air quality priority. Breakout discussions were used to identify air quality concerns related to general industrial facilities that may be addressed through the Community Emissions Reduction Plan (CERP) and Community Air Monitoring Plan. Committee members expressed concern with emission sources close to sensitive receptors (e.g., facilities, gas stations, diesel mobile sources), unpermitted small businesses, recycling centers, construction sites, automobile repair shops, and the accuracy of facility self-reported emissions. They also requested increased outreach and education, community health impact studies and monitoring efforts.

Regionwide Community Steering Committee Meeting

Approximately 65 people participated in a meeting for all six South Coast AQMD AB 617 designated communities on October 20. Discussion focused on the reason for the program pause and heard suggestions for building trust with the community. Committee members suggested creating an online forum for committee members from the different communities to share ideas, enhance discussions, and increase participation. Committee members also commented on increasing participation from other agencies to help with CERP implementation.

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. There were no Speakers Bureau/Visitor Service in October.

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 October:

| | |
|---|-------|
| Calls to South Coast AQMD’s Main Line and 1-800-CUT-SMOG® | 4,399 |
| Calls to South Coast AQMD’s Spanish-language Line | 116 |
| Total Calls | 4,515 |

PUBLIC INFORMATION CENTER STATISTICS

The Public Information Center (PIC) handles phone calls for general information. The PIC did not take walk-in requests in October 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 October is summarized below:

| | |
|---------------------------|-----|
| Calls Received by PIC | 9 |
| Calls to Automated System | 572 |
| Total Calls | 581 |

| | |
|-----------------------|--------|
| Email Advisories Sent | 79,255 |
|-----------------------|--------|

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 for October.

- Provided permit application assistance to 178 companies; and
- Processed 72 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 October reports are listed below:

| | |
|--------------------------|-----|
| Major Media Interactions | 104 |
| Press Releases | 11 |
| News Carousel | 4 |

Major Media Topics:

- **Air Pollution and Health Effects:** A written response was provided to the USC reporter, closing a September inquiry regarding air pollution and health effects in South Los Angeles.
- **Landfills:** Written responses were provided to RMI regarding Landfill Best Practices.
- **Diesel Pollution:** Staff participated in an interview with Environmental Health News on diesel pollution inequality and satellite air monitoring.
- **Low-Cost Sensors:** The San Francisco Chronicle requested an interview regarding the use of PurpleAir sensors. Reporter to follow up.
- **Windblown Dust:** Staff participated in an interview with USC Annenberg on recent heavy winds and air quality impacts.
- **Ports Backlog:** Written responses were provided to The Takeaway regarding increased air pollution due to 24/7 operations. E&E News, Spectrum News, and KNX-AM Radio requested information regarding potential environmental and air quality impacts of ports remaining open 24/7.
- **AES Power Plant:** The Daily Breeze requested emissions data for the AES power plant in Redondo Beach. The reporter was referred to the FIND information system and provided a link to AES data.
- **Oil and Gas Wells:** The LA Times inquired about current air quality monitoring regulations for existing oil and gas wells. A written response was sent.
- **All American Asphalt:** Spectrum News requested information regarding the All American Asphalt site, complaint information and monitoring results. Written responses were provided.
- **Odors:** Staff participated in an interview with Associated Press on the challenges of reducing odors from industrial facilities, and how regulations approved in 2017 have affected odors in Vernon.
- **Flaring:** Red Canary Magazine requested information regarding flaring and monitoring techniques of refinery flare incidents. Staff is working on responses.
- **Inland Empire Air Quality:** The Center for Health Reporting inquired about air quality issues in San Bernardino and Riverside counties, especially regarding children's health.

- **Check Before You Burn (CBYB) Season Start:** Pitches were sent to local news outlets announcing the start of the Check Before You Burn season resulting in coverage in all local TV and radio outlets as well as online papers. Staff participated in interviews with KNX and KPCC's Morning Edition.
- **Windblown Dust Advisory:** Pitches were sent to local news outlets for the October 10, 2021 windblown dust advisory and the October 12, 2021 update to the advisory, resulting in coverage from television, radio and both online and print outlets.
- **Smoke Advisory:** Pitches were sent to local news outlets for the smoke advisory due to the Alisal Fire, resulting in coverage from television, radio and online and print outlets.

Special Topics:

Orange County Oil Spill

- The Media office staff has been integrated into the Joint Information Center (JIC) as part of the Unified Command which acts as the centralized media and public contact for the incident. Inquiries were received from Voice of OC, Associated Press and Spectrum News. Responses were provided and reporters were referred to the JIC for further response information. Associated Press submitted a public records request and the request is in progress.

Carson Odors

- Staff participated in a press conference regarding the odors in odors in Carson and neighboring areas. KPCC, KNX, the Daily Breeze, the LA Times, and Spectrum News participated. KPCC and City News Service submitted follow-up questions after the press conference, and written responses were sent. Staff participated in a Carson City Council meeting on October 25, 2021, and town hall meetings on October 22 and 27, 2021 regarding developments on the odor situation.
- A joint press release was issued from Unified Command with an update on the ongoing response:
<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/CALACOUNTY/bulletins/2f81902>.
- Staff participated in an interview with LA Times and Spectrum News on the Carson odors. Univision requested an interview with a Spanish speaker. Univision was referred to the Los Angeles Department of Public Health. KPCC, FOX 11 News, City News Service, LA Times, NBC, CBS, Spectrum News and Univision inquired about hydrogen sulfide and odors in Carson. Written responses were provided.
- KTLA requested an update regarding the Carson odor situation. Telemundo requested information on air monitoring operations relating to the Carson odors. Reporters were referred to the new Dominguez Channel web page on the South Coast AQMD website.

News Releases:

- **South Coast AQMD Issues Windblown Dust Advisory for Portions of the Eastern South Coast Air Basin and the Coachella Valley—October 10, 2021 (English and Spanish):** Informed residents about the windblown dust advisory.
- **South Coast AQMD Updates Windblown Dust Advisory for Portions of the South Coast Air Basin and the Coachella Valley—October 12, 2021 (English and Spanish):** Informed residents about the windblown dust advisory.
- **South Coast AQMD Issues Advisory Due to Smoke from Alisal Fire near Santa Barbara – October 13, 2021 (English and Spanish):** Informed residents of the smoke conditions due to the Alisal Fire.
- **Check Before You Burn to Improve Air Quality in the Cooler Months Ahead – October 29, 2021 (English and Spanish):** Informed residents of the upcoming Check Before You Burn season, starting November 1.

Social Media Notable posts:

- **AQ Forecast (10/2):** 8,326 Twitter Impressions
- **Carson Odor Update (10/7):** 19,102 Twitter Impressions
- **Dust Advisory (10/11):** 60,475 Twitter Impressions
- **Alisal Fire Advisory (10/13):** 22,498 Twitter Impressions
- **AQ Forecast (10/17):** 7,441 Twitter Impressions
- **EJ Conf: Schwarzenegger Intro (10/27):** 64,222 Twitter Impressions
- **EJ Conf: Schwarzenegger Quote (10/27):** 59,141 Twitter Impressions

News Carousel:

- **South Coast AQMD is a Proud Sponsor of California Clean Air Day on October 6 – October 5, 2021:** Provided a link to the California Clean Air Day webpage.
- **Receive up to \$9,500 to replace your older, high-polluting vehicle, or vouchers for car-sharing or public transit – October 20, 2021:** Provided a link to the Replace Your Ride program page.
- **VW money available statewide for Combustion Freight and Marine Projects – October 27, 2021:** Provided a link to the VW Mitigation Funds program page.
- **Keep up with the Latest News from South Coast AQMD – October 29, 2021:** Provided a link to the latest edition of the Advisor.

The October/November/December edition of the Advisor was published and distributed to subscribers on October 7.

Board Member newsletters for Board Members Rodriguez and Cacciotti were distributed October 14.

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

Outreach was conducted in-person and virtually in October utilizing web-based and other technologies to communicate with elected officials or staff from the following cities:

| | | |
|--------------|----------------------|------------------|
| Alhambra | Glendora | Pomona |
| Arcadia | Hermosa Beach | Rancho Cucamonga |
| Avalon | Huntington Beach | Riverside |
| Azusa | Industry | Rosemead |
| Baldwin Park | Irvine | San Bernardino |
| Banning | Irwindale | San Dimas |
| Bradbury | La Cañada Flintridge | San Fernando |
| Burbank | La Puente | San Gabriel |
| Carson | La Quinta | San Marino |
| Claremont | La Verne | Santa Clarita |
| Colton | Long Beach | Sierra Madre |
| Covina | Los Angeles | South El Monte |
| Cudahy | Menifee | South Gate |
| Diamond Bar | Monrovia | South Pasadena |
| Duarte | Monterey Park | Temple City |
| El Monte | Moreno Valley | Walnut |
| Fontana | Ontario | West Covina |
| Glendale | Pasadena | |

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

- U.S. Senator Alex Padilla
- Assembly Member Chris Holden
- Assembly Member Lisa Calderon
- Representative Adam Schiff
- Representative Grace Napolitano
- Representative Judy Chu
- Senator Bob Archuleta
- Senator Anthony Portantino
- Senator Susan Rubio
- Assembly Member Isaac Bryan
- Assembly Majority Leader Eloise Gomez Reyes

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

Black Chamber of Orange County
Burbank Chamber of Commerce
Burbank-Glendale-Pasadena Airport Authority
California Fuel Cell Partnership
California High Speed Rail
CARB

Costa Mesa Chamber of Commerce
Department of Toxic Substances Control
Federal Emergency Management Agency, Resilient Nation Partnership Network
Foothill Gold Line Construction Authority
Foothill Transit
Gateway Cities Council of Governments
Glendale Chamber of Commerce
Harbor Association of Industry and Commerce
Imperial Irrigation District
Industry Business Council, Los Angeles
Inland Action
Inland Valley Development Agency
Irwindale Chamber of Commerce
Las Virgenes-Malibu Council of Governments
Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors
League of California Cities, Los Angeles Division
Los Angeles County Fire Department
Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board
March Joint Powers Authority
Metro
Metrolink
Metropolitan Water District of Southern California
Mountain Transit Board
National Park Service
Omnitrans
Orange County Business Council
Orange County Council of Governments
Regional Chamber of Commerce, San Gabriel Valley
Riverside Transit Agency
San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors
San Bernardino County Transportation Authority
San Bernardino International Airport Authority
San Fernando Valley Chamber of Commerce
San Fernando Valley Council of Governments
San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy
San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments
San Gabriel Valley Economic Partnership
San Gabriel Valley Mosquito & Vector Control District
Santa Clarita Valley Chamber of Commerce
Southern California Association of Governments
Upper San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District

Valley Industry and Commerce Association
Western Riverside Council of Governments

In October, staff represented South Coast AQMD and/or provided updates or a presentation to the following community and educational groups and organizations:

Active San Gabriel Valley
Asian Pacific Islander Forward Movement
California State University, San Bernardino
Center for Asian Americans United for Self-Empowerment
Clean Air Coalition of North Whittier and Avocado Heights
Clean Healthy Air, Clean Healthy Altadena
Ground Truthing California, Whittier College
Habitat for Humanity
Hacienda Heights Improvement Association
Healthy Fontana
Historical Society of Long Beach
League of Women Voters
Move LA
Mujeres de la Tierra
Nature for All
North Whittier Neighborhood Watch Avocado Heights Association
Pacoima Community Initiative
Pasadena City College
Pasadena Forward
Pomona College
San Bernardino Valley College
San Gabriel Mountains Community Collaborative
San Gabriel Valley Conservation Corps
Sierra Club, Pasadena
Taking Responsibility and Control 91746, La Puente
The Energy Coalition
The Trust for Public Land