



# Santa Clara Valley Water District

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**File No.:** 18-0879

**Agenda Date:** 11/27/2018

**Item No.:** 7.1.

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## BOARD AGENDA MEMORANDUM

### **SUBJECT:**

Update on the Programs and Activities of the Office of Civic Engagement.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Receive information and updates on the programs and activities of the Office of Civic Engagement.

### **SUMMARY:**

Staff is providing the Board with the annual update for the Office of Civic Engagement. The first report of the unit was provided to the Board on December 12, 2017. This report covers the period from January 1, 2018 through October 2018.

The Office of Civic Engagement continues to manage three program areas:

- Community Benefits
- Water Education & Volunteer
- Santa Clara Valley Water District Youth Commission

All programs are designed to engage, inform and educate the community through partnerships and collaborations in support of the District's goals and mission.

### **Community Benefits Program:**

The Community Benefits Program is responsible for the management and oversight of the following programs: Safe, Clean Water and Natural Flood Protection (Safe, Clean Water) Grants & Partnerships, Creek Stewardship, and Public Arts & Signage.

**Safe, Clean Water Grants & Partnerships Program** is responsible for reinvesting over \$30 million dollars in funding back into the community through grants & partnerships. Funds are used to support projects in the areas of water conservation, pollution prevention, volunteer outreach and education, wildlife habitat restoration, and trails and open space.

From January through October 2018, staff released five grant programs facilitating the District's investment of \$697,000 in 7 projects for Pollution Prevention; \$429,000 in 10 projects to Support of

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Volunteer Cleanup Efforts and Education; \$1,673,056 in support of 7 projects to Restore Wildlife Habitat and Access to Trails and Open Space; and \$105,976 in mini-grant support to 22 projects that engage the community on environmental stewardship through our various watersheds, removing invasive species, restoring native gardens, and supporting the habitat of native birds.

The **Creek Stewardship Program** provides opportunities for the community to engage in creek stewardship activities, such as volunteering for the annual National River Cleanup Day or Coastal Cleanup Day events and through participation in the Adopt-A-Creek Program, which allows the community to adopt sections of creeks on District property and commit to cleaning them at least twice-a-year to help reduce trash, debris, and other pollutants in waterways.

In 2018, Creek Stewardship continued to engage the public in environmental stewardship by mobilizing more than 3,500 volunteers and removing more than 114,000 lbs. of debris from creeks and waterways. The Adopt-A-Creek Program currently has 150 partners, including individuals, businesses, nonprofit organizations, schools and elected officials.

The **Public Arts & Signage Program** provides the District the opportunity to be visible throughout the community and inform the public about important messages, such as public safety, stewardship, or identifying marker for key facilities. Staff conducted a District-wide sign inventory that identified more than 1,000 signs on District property. The inventory identified the locations of all signs, and determined the condition and relevancy of each sign. Staff will use this information to develop a sign management system for the District, which includes ongoing monitoring, maintenance, and tracking of the signs.

Staff is in the process of launching a public arts project, *Adopt-A-Bench*, which seeks to revitalize the interpretive benches by allowing the public to “adopt” a bench and propose and design artwork on the bench. Staff is continuing to research and gather information to build out the components of the arts program. Staff is reaching out to all the cities in the county to understand the procedures for commissioning public arts within each respective jurisdiction.

Staff anticipates additional funding needs this year to support the costs associated with the replacement and or repair of signs and to support the public arts projects. The total funding needed for this year is still being determined. Staff is looking at potential cost-savings from other programs, as well as a possible budget adjustment later in the year.

#### **Water Education & Volunteer Program:**

The Water Education and Volunteer Program is responsible for the management and oversight of the District Volunteer Project, Water Education Outreach, and Recycled Water Outreach.

The year-round **District Volunteer Project** seeks to provide meaningful volunteer opportunities for residents to get directly involved with District programs and projects year-round and engage in ways that fosters deeper environmental stewardship.

This year, staff launched a new online volunteer management system, VolunteerHub to register and track prospective volunteers. Staff established a Volunteer Staff Advisory Group which meets quarterly to assist the District with volunteer recruitment and engagement. Staff has held two volunteer orientations with monthly orientations scheduled for the rest of the year. Staff has also recently developed a plan for a new water ambassador pilot program, which will be promoted externally as the Water 101 Academy. The application period is set to open in November with the goal to recruit County residents from all seven of the Director's districts. The Water 101 Academy will provide training sessions on water issues beginning in February 2018 with the goal to empower community volunteers to be leaders and water ambassadors in their own neighborhoods and places of work.

The **Education Outreach Program** focuses on educating pre-K-12 students , including college students on issues pertaining to water conservation, environmental stewardship, and flood protection.

Since January, staff reached more than 12,830 students and 462 teachers in more than 390 classrooms. Staff was involved in 19 tours at the District's outdoor classrooms, the Silicon Valley Advanced Water Purification Center (SVAWPC) and the Water Quality Lab. In addition, more than 4,000 contacts were made through public outreach events in libraries and community centers.

Highlights this year also included holding a flood awareness coloring contest, a collaboration with the District's Community Rating System (CRS). The "Are You Flood Ready?" coloring contest received more than 350 entries from 16 different schools throughout the County and included winners in each of the seven Board members' districts. To promote the District's flood awareness coloring contest, staff presented flood awareness programming in classrooms throughout the County from October 2017-March 2018, inviting more than 4,000 students grades K-6 in 176 classrooms, from 39 schools. The winning students received an emergency hand-crank radio, a mini emergency starter kit, and copies of "Chicken Little's Flood Advice" and the Red Cross Emergency Contact Card. Teachers in the winning students' classrooms received a back-pack of emergency supplies to keep in the classroom. Winning art from the contest was recently displayed in the lobby of the District's Headquarters building as part of California's Flood Preparedness Week during October 20-26, 2018.

Staff was involved in teaching several local First Lego League Teams about the processes involved in the treatment of water, in preparation for their participation in Hydrodynamics, a worldwide competition about water for middle and high schoolers. Several of those First Lego League Teams were honored at the Board Meeting on April 24, 2018 for their ability to identify real world problems and creating and designing solutions in HydroDynamics. Because of our facilitating the learning of water purification and treatment processes by these First Lego League teams, the District was invited to be part of the judging of the 8<sup>th</sup> annual FIRST LEGO league Global Innovation Award held in San Jose on June 19-21, 2019.

Staff also participated in the promotion and distribution of the first District's Day at the San Jose Giants. Working with the City of San José Parks and Recreation Department, staff distributed 120 tickets to summer camp students in the Rock Springs neighborhood and at the Joyce Ellington Library. The team continued its collaboration with the City of San José Parks and Recreation Department and the Boys and Girls Club leading to interactions with 898 campers in 9 camps during

the summer season.

The **Recycled Water Outreach Program** educates and informs the public of recycled and purified water to build support of the District's efforts to expand water reuse in the future.

Since January 2018, more than 1,200 visitors in 69 separate tours visited the Silicon Valley Advanced Water Purification Center (SVAWPC) through the public tour program. Highlights this year include hosting a Senior Water Tour Day on September 7, 2018, where Chair Santos and Director Estremera welcomed 256 seniors to the SVAWPC. Staff coordinated 11 separate tours throughout the day and provided educational activities with a new recycled water 'enviroscape' model, as well as featured the District's Water Truck and provided District swag bags.

In addition to tours for residents, the SVAWPC hosted delegations from South Korea and Brazil. Staff also participated in other District events including hosting a booth and serving taste test water at the Rinconada Open House on June 16, 2018. In March 2018, the District also received the 2018 Silicon Valley Conservation Award for Education for the District's outreach work promoting the SVAWPC. Director Kremen received the award on behalf of the District accompanied by both Chair Santos and Vice-Chair LeZotte.

During this period, staff engaged a public relations firm to launch a new social media campaign with influencer testimonials. The campaign will begin this winter with the purpose of promoting the tour program at SVAWPC as well as continuing to promote recycled and purified water as a sustainable and reliable source of our future water supply.

### **The Santa Clara Valley Water District Youth Commission**

The Youth Commission was launched as a new Board Advisory Committee in the fall of 2017 and received 118 applications from eager high school students throughout the county. The Board appointed 21 high school aged students to the Youth Commission on April 24 2018. The first Youth Commission meeting was held on May 10 and 18 commissioners took the oath of office. Two subsequent meetings were held on June 12 and September 12 where the commissioners elected officers, and 8 members toured several District facilities with 19 other high school summer interns.

The Youth Commission is currently in the process of developing it's workplan. The commission has come up with ideas to populate their workplan with several projects including getting the District involved in the sponsorship of a science fair; seeking the District to work on strengthening the provisions of SB407, a water conservation bill which seeks the replacement of old plumbing fixtures in properties built before 1994, and hosting a job-fair targeted at youth.

In order to better engage the youth in activities which relate to their age group and interest, a survey was sent to youth commissioners to obtain their feedback on how the District can better engage them. The commission will discuss and take action based on the survey results at the Youth Commission meeting on November 28, 2018.

### **Moving Forward:**

Staff will continue to build positive and proactive relationships with the community through engagement, education, & partnerships to build understanding, trust and support for the District's mission.

To ensure that programs and activities provided by Civic Engagement are accessible to all throughout the County, staff is working with external partners to identify where resources in the areas of environmental education, grantmaking, volunteer recruitment, and other outreach efforts have been concentrated and where they could be better spread out. Data collected from this effort will be used to develop a community needs assessment. The needs assessment will allow staff to develop a strategic outreach plan to target underserved areas in the county where resources have not been accessible for all Civic Engagement program areas.

Staff will continue to work on implementing a full-scale grants management system for the Safe, Clean Water Grants Program. The new system will allow for pre-award management, which includes the application and review process, and the post-award management, which includes grantee reporting, invoicing, and ongoing project management. This will streamline the grants processing system in ways that will be beneficial to grantees.

In addition, staff will continue to build out the Public Arts program. Staff is in the process of developing the Adopt-A-Bench program. The program will allow the community to adopt the various interpretive benches throughout the County and propose creative water-related artwork to adorn the bench, like the artwork seen lately on utility boxes throughout bay area cities.

In the Water Education & Volunteer Program, staff is also exploring new ways to enhance the impact of its programming in Education Outreach, Recycled & Purified Water Outreach, and the year-round District Volunteer programs. Through its Education Outreach efforts, staff intends to increase outdoor classroom visits through additional promotion, advertising, social media and targeted outreach to teachers, educators, youth groups, community groups and city Parks & Recreation Departments. Staff will continue to explore community partnerships with cities, libraries, school districts, nonprofits, foundations and other civic groups to increase program usage, particularly in underserved communities. To make their educational presentations conform to current trends in education, staff will align all program curriculum with the state's new Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). To reaffirm the impact of its work, staff will pilot a pre-post survey for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students to assess curriculum effectiveness. Staff is also exploring online educational modules to increase access to teachers for distance learning as well as explore new partnerships and funding opportunities to develop train-the-teacher modules and certification programs in environmental education.

In the Recycled Water Outreach program area, staff intends to refine existing communication and outreach plans for potable reuse efforts. Staff will launch an influencer social marketing campaign on potable reuse this winter as well as conduct an annual opinion poll survey to track support levels for potable reuse and to measure social media campaign recall effectiveness. Staff intends to continue working with staff on the Water Bottling Workgroup to advance efforts in bottling of purified water for educational purposes and to promote advanced water recycling.

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Under the year-round District Volunteer Program, staff will launch in February 2019 the inaugural Water 101 Academy, which is the District's new ambassador pilot program. Staff will continue to recruit and place new volunteers in civic engagement programs, recruit and train new tour docents for the SVAWPC and other District facilities.

Staff will continue to seek and implement strategies to keep the Youth Commission engaged in the fulfillment of its role as an advisory committee to the Board and a vehicle through which the Board connects with the youth in the District. Staff will support the Commission's engagement with the March 2019 Santa Clara County Synopsis Science Fair through its Community Partnering Sponsorship program. Staff will further use the results of the recent Youth Commission survey to implement strategies to get the youth more engaged in the fulfillment of its role.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

The recommended action does not have any financial impact on the District.

**CEQA:**

The recommended action does not constitute a project under CEQA because it does not have the potential for resulting in direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment 1: PowerPoint

**UNCLASSIFIED MANAGER:**

Rick L. Callender, 408-630-2017