



Santa Clara Valley Water District

File No.: 19-0924

Agenda Date: 12/10/2019

Item No.: 7.2.

BOARD AGENDA MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT:

2019 Update on Programs and Activities in the Office of Civic Engagement.

RECOMMENDATION:

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

SUMMARY:

Staff is providing the Board with the annual update for the Office of Civic Engagement. This report covers the period from December 2019 through November 2019, with projections through the end of the year for some program activities.

The Office of Civic Engagement manages the following program areas:

- Community Benefits
- Water Education & Volunteer
- Community Rating System
- Youth Commission

All programs are designed to educate, engage, and make positive impacts in the community through partnerships and collaborations in support of Santa Clara Valley Water District's (Valley Water) 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 restoration, and trails and open space. This year, the program awarded 13 grants and 2 partnerships, including:

- 6 mini-grants (\$30,000)
- 1 water conservation (\$30,000)

- 3 volunteer outreach & education (\$96,112)
- 3 trails and open space (\$329,906)
- 1 wildlife restoration partnership (\$50,000)
- 1 pollution prevention partnership (\$200,000)

The program also released another \$1.9 million in funding this past August, using a new grants management system to facilitate the submission, review, and management of the grants for successful applicants. Recommendations for the FY20 grant cycle will come to the Board in February 2020.

The **Creek Stewardship Program** provides opportunities for the community to engage in cleanup activities, such as volunteering for National River Cleanup Day or Coastal Cleanup Day and through participating in the Adopt-A-Creek Program, which allows the community to adopt sections of creek on Valley Water property and commit to cleaning them at least twice a year. This year the program mobilized over 3,600 volunteers to remove over 117,000 pounds of trash along 152 miles of creek. This is a 3% increase in the amount of trash collected and a 5% increase in the number of volunteers from the previous year.

The **Public Arts & Signage Program** provides Valley Water 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. This year, the program partnered with the Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition to expand Valley Water's signage inventory. The coalition worked with their membership to identify over 1,500 Valley Water signage in a span of two weeks. This spring the coalition will work with their members to spend another two months on the inventory efforts. Additionally, the program has been working with the Youth Commission to pilot the Adopt-A-Bench Art Project. Seven interpretive benches have been selected and the youth will work with a local artist to create artwork to revitalize the benches. Staff is continuing the efforts to thoroughly research and develop a public arts mural program at Valley Water. With the additional staffing resources approved by the Board in November, staff anticipates implementing the mural program in the next fiscal year.

Water Education and Volunteer Program

The Water Education and Volunteer Program is responsible for the management and oversight of Valley Water's comprehensive Volunteer Project, Education Outreach, and Recycled/Purified Water Outreach.

The comprehensive **Valley Water Volunteer Project** seeks to provide meaningful volunteer opportunities for the community to get directly involved in Valley Water programs and projects throughout the year and engage in ways that foster deeper environmental stewardship, apart from the Creek Stewardship program. This year the project successfully launched the Water 101 Academy, inducting 21 inaugural water ambassadors from the community. The ambassadors engaged in a five-week long intensive training. Sessions included presentations and a field-trip covering various water related issues impacting them and their communities. Staff is currently in the process of launching the second Water 101 Academy early next year.

The **Education Outreach Program** focuses on engaging students throughout the county, ranging

from K-12 and college, on issues pertaining to water conservation, environmental stewardship, and flood protection. This year, the program engaged 16,187 students and 584 teachers, including 558 classrooms visits, as well as 17 outdoor classroom tours. The program also engaged in partnerships with the Santa Clara County Office of Education, CommUniversity (a collective of San Jose State University professors and students), Mid-Peninsula Environmental Education Alliance, and Walden West. The program also successfully aligned seven Valley Water Education curriculum lesson plans to the Next Generation Science Standards. This year, the program also successfully launched Zoom webinars as an additional outreach tool. Additionally, to expand our outdoor classroom efforts in District 7, the Education Outreach Program will collaborate with the Safe, Clean Water Grants Program to release a request for proposal to build out an outdoor classroom. Staff anticipates working on the RFP next year.

The **Recycled/Purified Water Outreach Program** educates and informs the public on recycled and purified water to build community support of Valley Water's efforts to expand water reuse in the future. The program hosts educational tours at the Silicon Valley Advanced Water Purification Center.

This year, the purification center celebrated its 5-year anniversary of operations, including the hosting of public and private educational tours. Since 2014, the tour program has hosted 421 tours, reaching 8,427 attendees. In 2019, the program hosted 67 tours at the purification center, which drew in 1,783 attendees. This year's community-focused tours included the celebration of Pride and Veterans Day. In addition to touring the facility, attendees have the opportunity to taste test purified water through bottled samples provided by the Orange County Water District (OCWD). The program has provided over 900 bottled water taste tests. The program has also increased its digital and social media efforts, developing a series of social media campaigns to promote the purification center tours and highlight the center's advanced treatment processes.

Community Rating System

The **Community Rating System** (CRS) program transitioned from the Water Resources Planning & Policy Unit in Watersheds to Civic Engagement in February 2019. CRS is a program under FEMA that allows communities to earn flood insurance premium discounts for their residents and businesses. As the lead agency providing flood protection for Santa Clara County, Valley Water's participation as a fictitious agency, results in credits for specific flood risk-reduction activities. The credits are then transferred to participating communities in the county, which translates to discounts for flood insurance policyholders' premiums within their respective cities/jurisdictions.

As a result of Valley Water's activities, three cities were able to improve their class ratings and increased the discounts for their residents' flood insurance premiums. Mountain View and Santa Clara both improved to a class rating 7, which translated to a 15% discount for their residents/businesses. Palo Alto improved to a class 6, which translated to a 20% discount. This year, Valley Water's CRS program underwent the five-year audit. A FEMA specialist conducted an onsite verification visit to examine Valley Water's flood mitigation activities in order to determine the class rating and potential transferable credits to the cities in the county. The audit took place in August and staff anticipates the full results some time next year. Results of the audit will be shared with the Board Audit Committee. Additionally, the CRS program engaged in the Department of Water Resources' state-wide California Flood Preparedness Week efforts. This year, Valley Water used the "Get Flood

Ready” theme to push out extensive outreach and messaging to the community on how and why to be flood ready.

Youth Commission

The **Youth Commission** is a Board Advisory Committee made up of 21-high school students throughout Santa Clara County that have been appointed by Valley Water’s Board of Directors. The Youth Commission works to ensure that youth voice is heard and empowered at policy and decision-making levels.

This year, the Youth Commission developed a workplan that helps to guide the vision and objectives for the commission. Several working groups were formed this past year, including Mentorship/Career Shadowing, Creek Stewardship, Adopt-A-Bench, and Youth Citizens Science Network. These working groups allow the commissioners to engage in several projects/issues that they are passionate about, such as ensuring the creeks are clean, preparing themselves for future career opportunities, and engaging in public arts.

The Youth Commission also helped to organize Valley Water’s Job Shadow Day in March. The event was organized for high school students throughout the county to learn about the careers available in the water industry and to network with industry working professionals at Valley Water. Since May, several of the commissioners graduated and moved onto college. In August, the Youth Commission welcomed 14 new commissioners.

Looking Ahead

Staff will continue to build relationships with the community through our existing programs. With the additional resources approved by the Board at the November 12, 2019 Board meeting, staff will be able to expand our water supply outreach and tour program, our public arts mural & signage program, and get additional support to meet the needs of existing programs.

Staff is currently in the planning stages of several programs, such as launching our second annual Water 101 Academy, collaborating with the Youth Commission on Job Shadow Day 2020, organizing our annual Volunteer Recognition event, coordinating a special environmental cleanup effort along Coyote Creek, evaluating and recommending funding for up to \$1.9 million in grant projects, planning and developing our public arts mural program, working on a request for proposals to seek a partner to build out an outdoor classroom in District 7, and gearing up for a collaboration between our Education Outreach program and the Santa Clara County Office of Education. Additionally, staff will be focusing on more concerted outreach efforts in the community ensure equity in terms of engagement in all of our programs, such as grant opportunities, creek stewardship, and volunteerism.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

The recommended action does not have any financial impact on Valley Water.

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:

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