

WEST BASIN MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT

JULY 17, 2003 - Jt. Communications
McDonald, Kwan

JULY 28, 2003 - Board Meeting

Prepared by: Joone Lopez

Submitted by: Art Aguilar

Approved by: Darryl G. Miller

ACTION CALENDAR

OCEAN-WATER DESALINATION & SEAWATER BARRIER WATER
PUBLIC RELATIONS

SUMMARY

In a continued effort to promote Ocean-Water Desalination and Seawater Barrier Water Conservation Programs, the Public Affairs department will develop and carry out a comprehensive public outreach campaign. With the one-year anniversary of the desalination public outreach and progress in plans to convert Seawater Barrier to 100% recycled water, West Basin is prepared to take full advantage of the many prospects for outreach opportunities.

Combined efforts of the District and contractors in the previous fiscal year set a solid foundation from which new ideas and approaches can flourish. The goal is to evaluate and improve past practices in order to ensure a coordinated in-house outreach campaign. Contractors will be selected for specific projects based on their experience and expertise in the particular area. Based on previous promotional efforts, staff has identified several key components to a successful outreach program as well as a sound method for ensuring a timely and proper execution of these components. Aside from the cost-saving factor, additional benefits of utilizing internal staff are as follows:

- Responsiveness - Accessibility and flexibility allow the staff to gain greater insight into the programs' development and respond effectively in getting the message to the public;
- Accountability - By using staff members, responsibilities and results will be better defined and evaluated;
- Flexibility - As new ideas and/or concerns arise, staff is able to modify its message points and strategy;
- Insight - Staff members are familiar with the various political, social and economical implications of certain programs and/or messages; and
- Consistency - As members of the District, staff will deliver the message points with consistency and diligence.

In order to maximize the above-mentioned benefits, staff has developed the following overview of its outreach strategy for the next fiscal year. The overall campaign will be categorized into six areas: internal communication, public awareness, media exposure, industry exposure, community and government outreach. Estimated costs are shown for the 2003-04 fiscal year. Staff is also recommending that the Board to extend the current contract with Lang, Pan, Chan (LPC) through August 2003 to allow for expenditure of leftover funds remaining for strategic planning and video production.

1. INTERNAL COMMUNICATION (Cost: \$2,000.00 - part of the original contract from previous fiscal year)

Goal

Staff will review the established message points to determine what changes, if any, need to be made. Knowing what the District wants to communicate to the public about its projects will provide a clear direction for staff. Established message points also promote consistency in the information delivered to the public. The message points will serve as the overriding goal of future outreach efforts.

Objectives:

- Review by Directors and staff of the established message points for any modifications or additions:
 - Use the same methodology as the initial brainstorming session (*John Ruetten*);
- Establish final set of message points and distribute internally:
 - Department memo;
- Public Affairs - team effort:
 - Involve staff members,
 - Meet on a monthly basis to discuss strategy, progress, etc.; and
- Meet with representatives from other agencies promoting desalination:
 - Research what outreach efforts were used by other agencies,
 - Work with U.S. Desalination Coalition.

2. PUBLIC AWARENESS (Cost: \$10,000.00)

Goal

To gain public support for West Basin's projects, staff will work to inform and educate the public regarding water-related issues and the District's efforts to identify solutions. Staff will evaluate the findings from previous focus group sessions and public surveys to assess the level of awareness on topics such as water shortage and recycled water.

Objectives:

- Determine the level of public awareness and interest in order to gauge our starting point:
 - Evaluate information gathered from the focus groups,
 - Develop a summary based on report from LPC and internal discussions,
 - Discuss any strategy modification or types of collateral development;
- Identify current programs/efforts where we can incorporate the message points:
 - WET Tours, special events, promotional items;
- Develop partnerships with customers (i.e. National Training Center, Toyota, Chevron) to promote public awareness:
 - Contact their public information or relations person,
 - Discuss ideas and mutual benefits; and
- Develop collaterals that will address public concerns and demonstrate District's efforts to serve the interest of the people:
 - Desalination video (*MBI Group*),
 - Brochures,
 - Web page on current web site (*contractor*),
 - PowerPoint presentation for a general audience with limited knowledge of water.

3. MEDIA COVERAGE (Cost: \$10,000.00 - part of the original contract from previous fiscal year)

Goal

The goal of media exposure is to incite public interest and familiarize them with the District's programs. Competing with myriad of newsworthy stories requires a persistent and aggressive approach. Media outreach will be a two-pronged approach: print and broadcast.

Print

- Update current listing of contact information for each of the following: newspaper, city and/or civic group newsletters:
 - Establish priorities and strategies;
- Develop story topics and establish a quarterly press release schedule:
 - Identify possible topics,
 - Confer with Furman Group;

- Send out bi-weekly press releases:
 - Maintain a log containing copies of all press releases;
- Contact reporters/editors of newspapers:
 - Cold calls; follow-up,
 - Research if paper has reporters specifically assigned to water/environment issues,
 - Known contacts; *and*
- Develop a database of contact, date of release, and result.

Broadcast

- Work with MBI Group to develop a listing of contact information for each of the following: television, radio, and cable:
 - Determine strategy for each medium,
 - Identify shows that may be interested in the story,
 - Explore traditional and informal approaches;
- Work with MBI Group to distribute video news release (VNR) and press material:
 - Determine a distribution methodology,
 - Conduct follow-up,
 - Track materials sent out and outcome; and
- Work with MBI Group to produce a 30-minute cable program:
 - Utilize segments of current desalination video,
 - A talk-show format with Director McDonald, other Directors, and staff,
 - There are several cable stations interested in the story,
 - Determine distribution.

Media Day

- Coordinate a Media Day at the West Basin Plant;
- Send out invitation and conduct follow-up;
- Work with Furman Group & U.S. Desalination Coalition to assess the feasibility of conducting a news conference; and
- Invite customers such as Toyota, Goodyear, BP refinery, Chevron, National Training Center to participate; attract wide media attention.

4. INDUSTRY OUTREACH

Goal

The purpose of the industry outreach is to gain recognition for the District and West Basin's projects among its peers in the water industry. With industry support and

partnerships with other agencies, West Basin will remain in the forefront of desalination and recycled water quality.

Objectives:

- Major article development with various versions and insert quotes;
- Utilize a listing of various industry publications to contact editors for article submissions:
 - Research topic interest, submission guidelines, deadlines, etc.,
 - Public Affairs will work with senior managers to make contacts,
 - Develop articles for submission; and
- Seek opportunities to make presentations and speak at various conferences:
 - Contact agencies to research future opportunities, programs, conferences, etc.,
 - Identify Directors and/or senior staff members who will give the presentations.

Additional item: Preliminary discussions were held with the U.S. Desalination Coalition members and the Water Education Foundation (WEF) on the possibility of a state-wide desalination outreach video. This item will be explored independent of this strategic plan, and staff will present the final proposal to the board at a future date.

5. COMMUNITY OUTREACH (Cost: \$10,000.00)

Goal

With an aggressive outreach campaign, West Basin will seek to gain the support of the communities in its service areas. Staff will work diligently to inform the public about the benefits of desalination and the quality of recycled water. By utilizing current opportunities as well as exploring new approaches, the staff will reach a large audience with the District's message points.

Objectives:

- Develop a plan for multi-cultural outreach:
 - Identify current and new opportunities for community outreach,
 - Establish contacts with newspapers that write for specific ethnic groups
(LPC, Valerie Martinez);
- Evaluate previous efforts and their outcomes;
- Evaluate current PowerPoint presentation:

- Assess feasibility of variation of PowerPoints based on the audience's level of knowledge;
- Promote Speakers Bureau for community/civic organizations and local chambers of commerce:
 - David Cobb will work with staff to make contacts and conduct follow-ups,
 - Attend chamber events and network,
 - Newsletter inserts,
 - Web site with links to request forms;
- Participate in community events to provide information:
 - Provide literature and information,
 - Work with event sponsors to discuss possibilities of inserting District information into the programs or other materials,
 - Identify any opportunities to present;
- Research feasibility of bill inserts:
 - Develop and design inserts in utility bills,
 - Work with retail agencies and cities to promote public awareness; and
- Incorporate desalination and recycled water information as part of the tours at the West Basin Water Recycling Plant:
 - WET Tours,
 - Incorporate into other visitor tours.

6. GOVERNMENT OUTREACH (Cost: \$10,000.00)

Goal

Staff will work with lobbyists to garner support from local, state, and federal levels. As West Basin looks to secure funds from Proposition 50, an effective government outreach campaign is critical.

Objectives:

- Evaluate previous government outreach efforts;
- Coordinate with lobbyists to gain legislative support:
 - David Cobb will work with local legislators and cities to identify opportunities for presentations and to promote the Speakers Bureau,
 - Determine if additional collaterals need to be developed; and
- Provide input and share information with the Furman Group.

7. SEAWATER BARRIER WATER CONSERVATION PROJECT (Cost: \$20,000.00)

Staff will work with Katz & Associates to receive strategic counseling on the Seawater Barrier Outreach Plan. The community and media outreach will continue to be a reactive plan geared towards addressing public concerns as they arise. The government outreach, on the other hand, will be a proactive effort aimed at informing local legislators and garnering their support for the Project. Promotion of various uses and benefits of recycled water will be pursued aggressively in all of the outreach efforts.

The Public Affairs Department is committed to working with various departments, community groups, water agencies, legislators, and contractors to create a dynamic collaboration to promote West Basin and its programs.

FISCAL IMPACTS:

Funding for the in-house outreach campaign has been included in the FY 2003-04 budget. In addition, funds remain from the 2002-03 allocation that will be used if the Board extends LPC's contract.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE:

Not applicable.

COMMITTEE STATUS:

This item was reviewed by the Joint Communications Committee on July 17, 2003. West Basin Committee members recommended approval at the July 28, 2003 West Basin Board meeting. The recommended concepts for each phase of the in-house outreach campaign were recommended for approval. Costs of these concepts will be presented at the August Committee.

RECOMMENDED MOTION: That the Board approves:

1. The recommended concept for each phase of the in-house outreach campaign outlined in this memo that will be managed by the Public Affairs Department; and
2. Extends the FY 2002-03 contract with LPC through August 2003 to allow for completion of ongoing projects.

LIST OF EXHIBITS:

None.