



**WEST BASIN MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT**  
17140 S. Avalon Blvd., Suite 210  
Carson, CA 90746

**AGENDA NO. 31.1**

**AUGUST 4, 2010 – Communications**  
Gray (Chair), Kwan  
**AUGUST 23, 2010 – Board Meeting**  
Prepared by: Noelle Collins  
Submitted by: Ron Wildermuth  
Approved by: Rich Nagel

## ACTION CALENDAR

### SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

#### SUMMARY:

Staff has been exploring new media for West Basin Municipal Water District's (West Basin) outreach. This new media includes an electronic newsletter, an online media center at westbasin.org, and social media. One key benefit is the low cost of participating in social media.

Our goals with these supplemental tools remain the same as with traditional media - to establish and share West Basin's Water Reliability 2020 (WR 2020) goals over the long-term and, more specifically, our expertise in water recycling, conservation, education and desalination; to share information with decision-makers and influential individuals in the community; to have an accessible tool to communicate directly with the public in crisis situations or about sensitive issues; to expand our base of support for projects and programs that make our water supply more reliable; and to participate in online "communities."

Social media will not take the place of, but will enhance, West Basin's focused WR 2020 outreach to community leaders. West Basin will continue publicizing information relevant to its core mission, commitments and programs through print, radio and TV mediums.

The intent and purpose of West Basin's entry into social media is to round out or supplement our outreach tools to allow us to better reach the communities we serve, to educate and inform the interested public about water issues, who West Basin is as an agency and how the agency accomplishes its WR 2020 goals. It can also be a valuable tool in crisis communications.

Through implementation of the attached plan and policy, safeguards will be in place to ensure inappropriate communications or posts are deterred, quickly blocked or deleted.

#### **Direct Link to Audience**

Social media tools will provide a direct link from West Basin to elected officials, our customers, traditional media, constituents and other audiences. Several local elected officials already participate in new media forums. Adding social media to West Basin's outreach toolbox will enable staff to communicate directly with the public and on a more frequent basis than through traditional media or from our website. Social media will give West Basin a vehicle to forward updates on the water supply situation, conservation tips and programs, upcoming events, awards, new water recycling customers, ocean-water desalination construction updates and research findings, and other similar West Basin news.

### **Audience Pulls our Posts**

Most importantly, West Basin will be reaching an audience that has an interest in our messages because they sign up to receive them. West Basin will be building and maintaining relationships with people who *choose* to receive our posts. This is one of the key differences between traditional and social media – in traditional media, we typically *push* information out to the public. With social media, we are still pushing the information, but the people receiving it will have signed on to *pull* our information their way.

### **Linking is Key**

Having the ability to link, share, post and cross-post is the key to expanding our reach through electronic mediums and impacting larger audiences. West Basin currently posts important information on its website and shares that information through email and e-newsletter updates, but social media creates an immediate and accessible means to share important, interesting, and, most importantly, relevant information. Imagine a West Basin post of a short, 5-minute version of the Huell Howser DVD on YouTube, linking it to Facebook, and having our fans share it on their pages with their friends. The audience growth potential is limitless. Adding these tools will maximize West Basin's cross-promotion abilities with other agencies, community leaders, and individuals.

### **Video is an Effective, Visual Means of Story Telling**

As mentioned earlier, social media is intended to supplement, not replace, West Basin's traditional outreach tools. Having a presence on Facebook and YouTube will help extend our reach in new ways that tell our stories in clear, visual mediums. West Basin has expanded the use of video on our website to tell important water reliability stories and can additionally increase accessibility to those videos through the use of YouTube and linking to Facebook.

### **Messaging**

West Basin's website will remain the clearinghouse for information about the agency. High traffic pages of the website that receive regular updates, ie. the Press Release page, Home page, and WR 2020 page, will be enabled with RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feed icons to allow visitors to "subscribe" to updates. Subscribers will receive brief notifications as updates occur. Staff intends to use the same messaging in Facebook and YouTube that is being used in "traditional" communications tools. Here are some examples:

- **Awards** – *Water is Life* Art Contest Awards presented by the Board of Directors. The artwork and photos of the Board meeting presentation can be easily uploaded to our website and linked to or posted on a Facebook page. Students can "like" West Basin's page and share the photos of their artwork or the presentation with their friends and family directly from West Basin's Facebook page.
- **Conservation Tips and Programs** – Facebook is a great vehicle to announce upcoming water-efficiency events in local communities, allow fans to add the event to their calendar and to remind constituents of the easy things they can do at home to use water more efficiently. People can be invited and RSVP in one click. An automatic reminder will appear on their home Facebook page on the day of the event.

- **Events** – The Smart Landscape Expo is a great opportunity to showcase water-efficient landscaping practices. West Basin can post calendar information about the event that allows fans to add the event to their own calendar and automatically reminds them about the event. It can also allow West Basin to post articles about water-efficient landscaping practices, share photos from the event, and receive post-event feedback. This can be a great tool for measuring the success of our events in addition to continuing the information-sharing after the day is over. The same can be true for Water Harvest, the dedication of the Ocean-Water Desalination Demonstration Facility, and other West Basin events.
- **Recycled Water** – With five pipeline construction projects currently underway, construction outreach could be assisted with regular updates about our progress and expected completion dates. It can also be a way for West Basin to hear from the community. If there are updates to road closures or openings, neighbors could post updates. This can be a way for people to inquire about the project and learn more about our water reliability efforts. We'll be able to announce new customers or connections coming online. Potential customers may find some value in seeing who else is using recycled water. In addition, we can link back to our animated water recycling process to educate "fans" and list the monthly public facility tours on the event calendar.
- **Water Reliability 2020** – West Basin regularly updates the WR 2020 supporters list on the website with new supporters. West Basin can make announcements on a Facebook page about new noteworthy supporters and link back to the WR 2020 page to encourage others to sign on to support the program through our e-support card.

West Basin's external and internal Social Media Policy for outreach are included as Exhibits "A" and "B" respectively.

West Basin's goal in implementing new media into the West Basin Media Plan is to directly and regularly share relevant information with decision-makers and constituents alike and to educate the public in a timely manner about who we are, what we do, and how we're focused on maintaining a reliable water supply for future generations.

#### STRATEGIC BUSINESS PLAN IMPLEMENTATION:

Goal 3: Customer Service – West Basin is committed to providing value by understanding and meeting the needs of our customers and the communities we serve.

#### FISCAL IMPACTS:

Funds are included in the Fiscal Year 2010-11 Public Information and Conservation Budget.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE:

Not applicable.

#### COMMITTEE STATUS:

This item was reviewed by the Communications Committee on August 4, 2010 and recommended for approval at the August 23, 2010 Board meeting.

RECOMMENDED MOTION:

That the Board approves the Social Media Policy and adopts Resolution No. 8-10-932 "A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF WEST BASIN MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT AMENDING RESOLUTION NO. 06-07-859 (THE ADMINISTRATIVE CODE) AS IT RELATES TO PART 3 HUMAN RESOURCES".

LIST OF EXHIBITS:

Exhibit "A" – Social Media External Policy  
Exhibit "B" – Social Media Internal Policy  
Exhibit "C" – Resolution No. 8-10-932

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