

**AGENDA**  
**COMMUNITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**LEUCADIA WASTEWATER DISTRICT**  
August 6, 2014 – 9:30 AM  
1960 La Costa Avenue, Carlsbad, CA

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1. **Call to Order**
2. **Roll Call**
3. **Public Comment**
4. **New Business**
  - A. Review the draft Communication Plan Update. (Pages 2-18)
  - B. Discuss the Fall 2014 Newsletter Topics. (verbal)
5. **Information Items**

None.
6. **Director's Comments**
7. **General Manager's Comments**
8. **Adjournment**

**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** July 31, 2014  
**TO:** Community Affairs Committee  
**FROM:** Paul J. Bushee, General Manager  
**SUBJECT:** **Communication Plan Update**



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**RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff requests that the Community Affairs Committee (CAC):

1. Review the draft Communication Plan Update; and
2. Discuss and provide direction, as appropriate.

**DISCUSSION:**

The Communication Plan Update is included as a goal in the Fiscal Year 2015 (FY15) Tactics & Action Plan.

LWD's current Communication Plan was adopted in August 2006. The Plan includes goals and objectives, recommended programs and a monthly action item list to increase the District's community exposure and to encourage public involvement. TRG & Associates (TRG) and staff recently reviewed the current plan to determine which goals and objectives best meet the District's needs.

Attached please find the draft Communication Plan Update for your review. It includes the following areas: 1) District Identification 2) Strategic Initiatives 3) Goals and Objectives 4) Target Audiences and 5) Recommendations based on the analysis of the 2006 Plan.

Staff requests that the committee review the proposed Plan and provide direction as appropriate.

Attachment

cal:PJB



**Leucadia Wastewater District**

**Communication Plan – Draft 1  
July 2, 2014**



**Prepared by TRG & Associates**

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## Communication Plan – Draft 1

### Executive Summary

The purpose of the Communication Plan is to provide a framework to direct LWD's external communications with target audiences. The first question to ask is: why communicate with District ratepayers and other target audiences?

- Ratepayers' service charges and other charges fund District operations and therefore, ratepayers have a right to know how money is being spent
- Proposition 218 hearings and processes will occur every three years according to the District Financial Management Plan; therefore it is incumbent on the District to communicate regularly in order to inform ratepayers of LWD activities and operations while establishing a communication relationship with ratepayers. The most recent Proposition 218 hearing was successfully passed with no formal protests at the public hearing and we can assume that this means that people are satisfied with small rate increases
- Communications in various forms (newsletters, website, etc.) have generated small but positive responses to District news, and no one is criticizing the District for the communication avenues that have been used; barring a quantitative analysis in the form of a survey, comments are the only information we have right now
- Communicating regularly is a proactive means of informing audiences of what the District does in the event that there is a major catastrophe or controversy. Staying in touch with helps build trust and openness with ratepayers.

Beginning with the strategic initiatives (the areas of operations that the District wants to focus on), and reflecting the District's brand, the Plan includes clear goals and objectives, recommended tasks and activities, and recommended communication tools. The Plan is intended to span up to three years, with an annual review/development of activities that should reflect changes such as new Board policies, new capital projects, financial activities and other initiatives that evolve over time. Both LWD staff and Board members will help provide feedback and priorities in development of the Plan.

There isn't one "magic bullet" with communicating to the audiences; rather it's a multi-pronged approach that helps lay a ground work of understanding while building trust over time with consistent messaging. What we know from past communications is that there has been a small but very positive response to newsletters and in particular, face-to-face communications have helped build a good reputation over the years.

The District's brand includes environmental protection and financial stability. LWD people/staff, excellent customer service and staying abreast of technology are key elements that are woven throughout District operations. The brand has been reinforced in newsletters, on the new website, the Teacher Grant Program, tours, presentations, past Open House events and other miscellaneous communications. In all communications the messaging has reinforced the benefits to the ratepayer (saving/protecting the environment, low rates, efficiencies in operations, etc.).

The demographics of District ratepayers has remained fairly stable: the majority of residents are in age group 45-64; live in single family homes, have a relatively high income, mostly Caucasian and are well educated for the most part. They live mostly in suburban communities and since they pay sewer service charges on the property tax bill, direct communications have been limited to twice yearly newsletters and the occasional Proposition 218 notice. Post cards for Open Houses have also been used.

The demographics help us evaluate the most appropriate communication tools for this group; however we know from general communication practices that direct mail and direct face to face communications work the most effectively with most adults of all ages. Other research shows that information needs to be simple enough to understand and technical enough to built trust, and that consistent messaging helps improve technical literacy – this is important to note because much of what LWD does is technical in nature (treatment, collection, monitoring, recording, etc.).

Social media use continues to grow in LWD's demographic target market but it's not one specific avenue that works for everyone. LWD's audience is middle aged and older, highly educated and most likely (according to research) growing their use of Facebook, Twitter, Linked In and other social media sites. Social media requires consistent, interesting, helpful and relevant information, requiring a level of development and maintenance on the part of the outreach consultant and/or the District staff. We want to carefully calculate and target the best "bang for the buck" with the use of social media.

In developing recommended communication strategies and tools, the consultants have considered demographics; effectiveness of past communication efforts, outside research, general communication tactics, and feedback from staff to make assumptions. In each recommended strategy/tool, we have placed a value both from a communication angle and the fiscal impact on the recommendations. We are also recommending some tactics for developing more quantitative measurements for future years of public outreach.

**District Identification:**

The tag line, mission statement and vision statement are the overarching description of what the District does and what it stands for. The Communication Plan should reflect what these statements stand for in all communications.

- **Name and Tag Line:**  
Leucadia Wastewater District - Leaders in Environmental Protection
- **Mission Statement:**  
To serve the public by collecting, transporting, recycling, and treating wastewater in a safe, reliable, efficient, cost effective and environmentally safe manner, while providing excellent customer service
- **Vision Statement:**  
To be the recognized leader in wastewater services, water recycling and environmental protection

**Strategic Initiatives**

The strategic initiatives are the statements that LWD wishes to communicate—the most critical areas of operations to the District. These include:

- LWD's core business is collection and conveyance of wastewater – there are still many opportunities to inform and educate the audiences about this service
- LWD is looking to the future by examining and evaluating catastrophic forces that can impact its core business. These may include climate change impacts, terrorism, earthquakes, tsunamis and others. Informing the public about their role and how to be prepared in the event of an emergency will be an ongoing communication effort.
- Encina Wastewater Authority is a critical element of LWD's function and a significant financial asset and as such, should be included in communications and outreach on a more frequent basis

**Goals and Objectives:**

- Clearly articulate and raise awareness of LWD's core business with target audiences
- Inform and educate audiences about wastewater, recycling and environmental protection and how they can prevent pollution
- Emphasize LWD's role in protecting the public's health and its financial resources
- Create meaningful communications where the ratepayer understands the benefits and the value of wastewater collection and the use of technology to improve operations

- Increase LWD's engagement in the community through programs and resources
- Direct all communications through the lens of LWD's branding as "local, environmentally responsible, and financially sound".
- Continue to promote employees' achievements and knowledge through communications
- Generate feedback mechanisms and calls to action to gauge public's interest and attention and pinpoint meaningful communications

## **Target Audiences**

- **Ratepayers**  
Ratepayer sewer service charges provide the bulk of financial resources to the District therefore they need to know how this funding is spent. When rate increases/Prop 218 notices are scheduled, ratepayers need the compelling information that justifies these increases or there could be negative consequences. By communicating regularly, the District builds a positive relationship with ratepayers and provides good information so they can form opinions and build trust. Although there were a few protests via mail, no one showed up to protest at the June 2014 Proposition 218 public hearing.
- **Development industry and contractors**  
The business community needs to interact with the District to get permits, pay fees and have inspections. As a public agency, LWD must communicate the regulations that govern these transactions in a manner that provides the highest level of efficiency and customer service.
- **Neighboring cities and special districts**  
Public agencies in proximity very often depend on each other in emergencies, and they can learn from each other with cost efficiencies and other information. Cooperation among agencies helps the overall service to local residents.
- **Affiliated organizations such as CASA, CWEA, CSDA, etc.**  
The trade organizations are another vehicle for two way communications and learning and they are opportunities for generating presentations and awards. These vehicles help support and reinforce staff achievements and are positive stories to communicate to ratepayers as they show high work efforts, innovations and significant achievements.
- **Media**  
There have only been a few interactions with the media over the past several years, mostly requesting public records for investigations. Although "no news is good news" is a familiar litany, it's important to generate some proactive communications to increase familiarity with what LWD does and how it



operates efficiently so that in the event of a controversy or catastrophe, they have some knowledge about the District.

## **Recommended Year One Tasks and Activities**

### **1. Website**

#### ***Analysis***

The new website is a core communication tool that every business and government agency uses to provide the user with thorough and detailed information about the agency. Since it was just developed during the past year, the content and design are reflections of what the staff and Board desired for the site. Although the upfront costs for the website were fairly high, continual upkeep and maintenance is relatively inexpensive, in light of the fact that we have a number of graphics and articles from the newsletters that can be reused.

Current analytics suggest that the site visits are averaging about 350 users monthly, split about 50/50 between new and returning visitors. Most active pages are the home page, HR pages and About pages for the District and the BOD. The bounce rate (users that only look at the page they came to the site on) is about 40%. This suggests that we can do a better job of providing more content to bring users deeper into the site—especially from the home page. However, many users are there for the information they need—i.e. job listings and forms and documents—and the number of entries straight into those pages suggests that users are able to find the information they need quickly, so functionally, the site is working well.

#### ***Recommendations***

The website should be updated monthly so that as traffic increases, users will find new and relevant information. Photographs should also be cycled to add interest. Existing newsletter content and graphics can be leveraged for the website with little cost or effort. Examples are the underground pipeline information, pollution prevention articles, the Finance and Planning article and diagrams.

It is recommended that we insert brief periodic surveys on the website (perhaps quarterly) that will aid in providing quantitative feedback on newsletter content, familiarity with the District, knowledge about wastewater, etc. and invite more opportunities for interaction with the District. This data can be accrued and provide direction on outreach activities in future years. We can offer an incentive for taking the survey (enter into a drawing perhaps) which also adds interest and traffic to the website.

We would also start publicizing social media avenues on the website including a potential YouTube channel. Effectiveness and reach on the

website are fairly low but activity and interest will grow as social media evolves and more people see and share interesting information.

***Deliverables:***

- *Meetings with staff and development of 2 website surveys*
- *Management/coordination of survey requests with annual report of findings*
- *Graphics and content as needed for updates (most covered under newsletters, social media, etc.)*

**2. Newsletters**

***Analysis***

Direct mail remains the most effective method for reaching LWD's core audiences—typically, 80% of households read or browse mail. Although it's limited, the amount of feedback that has been received about the newsletters is positive. It is recommended that we continue producing two direct mail newsletters per year to the residents and businesses within the District, as well as to neighboring agencies, elected officials, and other interested parties because it is the only method that reaches all the District ratepayers (the primary target audience).

Although the newsletter is the most costly communication vehicle (approximately \$1.20 each to design, print and mail), it is the most cost effective for its value to reach every single resident and business, and because we can “recycle” graphics and articles for the website, fact sheets and posters from the newsletter. The reach (number of people reached) is high since it's sent to every home in the District.

It's more effective to publish twice yearly because there's a higher potential that people will remember the previous newsletter. If it were sent only once a year, its focus would change more to an annual summary of activities, finances, operations and other program information rather than brief updates and news.

***Recommendations***

We can increase feedback about the District by always including a “call to action” in the newsletter—asking users to fill out the website survey, or sign up for email alerts or newsletters, for example. Directing users to the website gives them more detailed information on operations and pollution prevention, increases social media activity, gathers responses to brief surveys, and continues to reinforce the benefits of efficient wastewater treatment. Because Encina represents a major budget category and it is responsible for the wastewater treatment, disposal of biosolids and recycled

water, we recommend that we highlight a story about Encina in each newsletter.

Tours of the Gafner Facility and the Encina Wastewater Facility should be promoted in every newsletter. In our experience, most people who tour a wastewater treatment facility come away with a very positive view of the technology and a favorable attitude towards the agency providing the tour.

As we promote and encourage people to sign up for newsletters via email, the list of participants will grow, allowing a smaller number of printed newsletters. It is not possible to purchase e-mail lists by geography presently so there is no simple way to change to e-news entirely. E-news is considered “permission marketing” meaning one has to have the readers’ permission to use their email address.

***Deliverables:***

- ***Development and supervision of printing and mailing for two newsletters per year***

**3. Social Media**

***Analysis***

Social media is a less formal method of communication than a newsletter; however it simulates one on one interaction because users can directly comment or respond to a posting, which increases citizen engagement and interest. Social media use is increasing amongst the District’s age demographic, but we recommend that it should be limited to Facebook and You Tube to ensure value and conserve outreach budgets. Effectiveness and reach of social media will be low in the early stages but will grow with an active social media presence.

***Recommendations***

Facebook requires a small amount of preparation every month, and it should be updated weekly at a minimum to maintain consistent interest. Posts need to be informative, interesting and helpful to the user. A calendar of postings and content can be prepared each month with news centered on interesting and helpful pollution prevention tips, events, new information on the website, Board meetings and public hearings and other related community information. Staff can review and approve the postings in advance, and TRG or staff can make actual posts. We will also “friend” other Facebook pages of neighboring cities, agencies and appropriate environmental groups to increase visibility and grow the list of viewers.

YouTube videos can be produced inexpensively that demonstrate District operations. Video sharing on You Tube adds value and understanding because users feel a personal connection to the people in the video.

We recommend that one articulate operator be selected to be the spokesperson, and with some brief training, the videos can be produced by staff or the consultants. The videos should take a lighthearted approach and yet be interesting and engaging about the nuts and bolts of wastewater treatment. The videos can be posted on YouTube, Facebook, the website, promoted in the newsletters, and shown at conferences. Some examples of topics include:

- Showing the Vactor at work
- Demonstrating the CCTV operation and what is seen down the drain and why it's important to only flush what's acceptable down the drain
- A brief tour of the Gafner Water Recycling Facility
- Inside of a pump station
- A tour of the Encina facility
- Scenes of the outfall and description of how testing is done
- A look at a lateral that requires servicing, and tips for preventing clogs

***Deliverables:***

- ***Development and calendar for Facebook content for twelve months***
- ***Development and execution of a minimum of 2 YouTube videos***

#### **4. Events**

***Analysis***

Events in the past (the opening of the Administration Building and the 2011 Open House event generated a fair amount of interest and participation but they were expensive to execute. The benefits of events are:

- The public learns more about LWD and its operations which generates trust and positive attitudes about the agency through face to face interaction
- LWD employees get to demonstrate their skills and knowledge
- Awareness of pollution prevention is increased

Even with these benefits, consideration must be given to cost. There may be a more focused approach to events that provide strong consideration because of the value to District ratepayers.

***Recommendations***

There is a common interest amongst many of the CASA member agencies and California cities to promote the No Drugs Down the Drain program. The thrust of the program is to educate the public about not flushing prescription drugs down the drain or toilet because of the harm to the local environment and potential threats to the wastewater treatment process.

The District could potentially partner with the local Sheriff's office, San Dieguito Alliance for Drug Free Youth, CVS Pharmacy and other local agencies in conducting an annual No Drugs Day where residents could bring

and dispose for free, their unwanted prescription drugs to LWD. There is a lot of information and verbiage about the program on other agencies' websites so that material can be duplicated.

This program would have a more focused purpose than an Open House, providing a much-needed educational program for the community while increasing awareness of LWD and its mission. The local media would also be interested in publicizing this event, which would increase its awareness and knowledge of LWD.

The San Dieguito Alliance for Drug Free Youth works in local communities and schools to encourage adults to clean out their medicine cabinets to help prevent teenagers from using prescription drugs. The Teacher Grant Program could even be expanded to provide grants to schools to advance this cause, and it would still be consistent with LWD's mission to help protect the environment.

If LWD is interested in this concept, we can pursue it further with more research and contact with potential partners, and to develop specific costs. An event like this can be promoted in the newsletters, on the website, through social media, the Teacher Grant Program, media relations, and through partners' own communication vehicles.

LWD has also been participating in the Encinitas Environmental Day, with mostly staff managing the event. This would also be a good topic for the Facebook page.

***Deliverables:***

- ***Research and evaluate participation in the No Drugs Down the Drain program***

**5. Teacher Grant Program**

***Analysis***

The Teacher Grant Program provides much-needed financial assistance to local schools for implementing projects that promote environmental awareness. Generally, 3-4 schools participate annually, although last fiscal year only two schools applied and received the grant. The budget allocation is fairly small but the value to the schools and the resulting positive relationship with LWD is high.

There are a couple of reasons why only a few schools participate:

- New Common Core requirements have taken up most of teachers' time in the last year and their time is very limited for extra activities

- The only notification about the grant is via a letter to the school principals and some teachers, and brief announcements at environmental meetings
- The notice for the program goes out late in the school year, which doesn't allow for a lot of lead time to plan.

### ***Recommendations***

It is recommended that we publicize the program and perhaps even award funding earlier in the school year which would allow teachers to have more time to prepare their projects. We could also try to generate more parent volunteer interest through PTA's and school site councils, which would free up teachers' time. If the criteria could include the No Drugs Down the Drain theme and perhaps include other environmental projects such as recycling, perhaps there would be more interest. TRG staff has numerous contacts within the Encinitas School District and could determine where needs might lie that don't fit perfectly within the parameters of the Teacher Grant Program.

We should also promote the Teacher Grant Program on social media and could even encourage a school to produce a video about gardening and other environmental ventures. And we should contact the middle and high school environmental clubs to see if they have projects that need funding.

### ***Deliverables:***

- ***Distribution of a flyer to local schools and meetings if needed***
- ***Evaluate development of expanded Teacher Grant program criteria***
- ***Promotion, meetings and communications with local schools***

## **6. Communication Materials**

### ***Analysis***

Materials are another communication tool that are included in outreach programs when there is a need for handouts at events, press conferences, tours and other types of traffic to the plant. They are helpful in providing more detailed and specific information about a topic.

In the past, LWD fact sheets have been developed and printed for distribution to the media and the general public; however demand for these fact sheets have remained fairly low due to the lack of traffic from either the public or media. We would not recommend printing fact sheets unless they are done in house when needed.

There is a benefit and value to fact sheets: in a double-sided two page format, they provide valuable information on a particular subject in layperson's language. Some examples of topics are:

- Finances and rates
- Environmental protection
- Lateral grant program
- Redundancy systems
- Recycled water and its benefits

We also examined and considered changes to the LWD logo and tag line. The past logo was developed more than ten years ago. There has been a recent Board discussion regarding changing the name of District, which could potentially involve changing the logo and tag line as well-it was decided that the cost would be high to modify everything from uniforms to signs, letterhead and more therefore the idea was tabled. We do believe that the logo is looking a bit dated (especially the font); however, the cost, staff and consultant time would be fairly high and certainly not a priority. Perhaps a reconsideration of a logo change (not name or tag line change) could be discussed and considered in several years.

### ***Recommendations***

Existing fact sheets need to be updated; however, much of that information is readily available to be copied (either through newsletter articles, or the website) and updating should be fairly simple. TRG could develop a template look for the fact sheets and staff could be responsible for annual updates if staff prefers (TRG could proof if needed). The template fact sheets could be posted on the website to avoid printing costs.

The Community Info heading on the website needs more simple content for ratepayers, and this would be an effective place for fact sheets. They could be publicized in the newsletters, on the Home page of the website and on Facebook.

Once the fact sheets are completed, staff can merely print them out if a media kit or information is required. We could include 1 or 2 fact sheets in the FY 2015 outreach budget.

### ***Deliverables:***

- ***Preparation of fact sheets as required (not printed)***

## **7. Lateral Grant Program**

### ***Analysis***

This program is a valuable asset to homeowners since most clogged drain problems are expensive fixes. According to LWD records, 35 homeowners have taken advantage of the program over the past two years. LWD budgets

\$100,000 per year for the Lateral Grant program, which means that many more homeowners could take advantage of the program if they knew about it.

***Recommendation***

If LWD determines that they want to increase participation, we can increase promotion through newsletter articles, the website, and Facebook.

We would also recommend changing the name of the program to the Homeowners Lateral Grant Assistance Program to help people better understand what the program is about.

***Deliverables:***

- ***Continue to mention of Lateral Grant Program in newsletters, social media and on website***
- ***Preparation of a one page Fact Sheet about the program***

**8. Community Presentations**

***Analysis***

Presentations to groups and associations hold high value because people can meet the organization leader face to face and these interactions build trust and knowledge about the district. They are time consuming for staff but well worth the effort. Since LWD staff has a presentation already assembled that might only require minor tweaking, any offers for presentations could be considered. Last year the General Manager conducted a presentation to the Encinitas Rotary, which was well received.

TRG spent approximately 12 hours calling and emailing potential organizations to offer LWD's General Manager for a presentation. Organizations reserve their presentations months in advance so it's challenging to get an organization to agree to a presentation that might not occur for six months or longer, and the contacts change every year because they are volunteers.

***Recommendation***

If the GM is interested in pursuing speaking opportunities, TRG can narrow a list of potential candidate organizations, and spend time finding several presentation opportunities. This would depend on the General Manager's schedule and availability.

***Deliverables:***

- ***Assist staff as required when speaker opportunities exist***

**9. Media Relations**



### ***Analysis***

According to staff, there have only been two requests from the media for public information in the past couple of years. Although it's easy to say, "No news is good news" and avoid contact with the media, it's not effective in the event that there's a controversy, a major spill or other problem – the media needs to know what LWD does and how it does it well. They may well make negative assumptions that can slant a news story and few reporters (especially local ones) have little or no knowledge about wastewater treatment. Media relations is not a high cost outreach item, unless there's a problem and staff and consultants are reacting rather than being proactive.

### ***Recommendation***

Rather than attempt to invite the local media or plan a media event that could be time consuming and costly, we recommend that we make a goal to send out a quarterly press release about some topic of interest that will keep LWD in the news. As mentioned under Social Media, sending press releases or story ideas accompanied by videos will pique media outlets' attention. If the District decides to consider the No Drugs Down the Drain event, we can pursue local media to help publicize.

We would also recommend that if there is another public information request, that staff invite the requesting reporter in for a brief meeting so that he or she can meet the General Manager in person and get more information about the District in order to build familiarity. For other agencies, we have also invited local media to lunch (individually) in order to build a relationship and provide information, and that has been helpful in getting reporters to write more accurately about wastewater and recycled water.

Once several of the fact sheets have been modified and updated, they can be printed up in house, and along with several newsletters, provide basic information for a media kit.

### ***Deliverables:***

- ***4 or more press releases per year***

## **10. Proposition 218 Mailings**

Although there will not be another Prop 218 process for another five -six years, at that time the mailed public notice should include simple information to will reassure ratepayers about the rationale for the rate increase. People don't want to or don't have the time to read the entire Financial Plan to understand the rate increase. We recommend that the website be updated now with the past newsletter article that explains the financial planning process, so if more stakeholders are interested they can directed to the more easily-understood information.

According to conversations with other CASA member communications staff, agencies that sent out a Prop 218 publication that had more information in an easy to read format (more like a newsletter) received fewer protests and calls than in previous years.