



## Mt. View Sanitary District Communication Plan

### **Objectives**

Mt. View Sanitary District's communication plan objectives are to:

- 1) Build awareness of the treatment plant and its processes.
- 2) Increase engagement with stakeholders and the surrounding community.
- 3) Convey knowledge that reflects the District's mission, vision, and core values.

### **Stakeholders**

MVSD stakeholders include its ratepayers, surrounding community, environmental regulatory bodies, Contra Costa Resource Conservation District, Friends of Alhambra Creek, Mt. Diablo Bird Alliance, volunteer groups, and employees.

### **Messages**

District messages are created to be specific, clear, and concise. The District's messages can be categorized as general information, wastewater treatment processes and functions, pollution prevention, education, environmental, and community relations.

In the event of an emergency or spill that results in the closure of a public area or interruption of services, the public will be alerted through all social media platforms and the website. Additional notice may be provided via door knockers or mailers, as appropriate.

The Sewer Spill Emergency Response Plan, Sewer Spill Emergency Response Plan Workbook, and Sewer System Management Plan govern the communication of sewer spills. These plans are reviewed and updated as required by regulations. The Local Hazard Mitigation Plan governs the communication of hazards as a result of disasters. This plan is reviewed and updated every 5 years or as required by regulations.

Messages are designed by the Public Outreach Coordinator under the guidance of the General Manager and Deputy General Manager.

## **Media/Timelines**

The District uses the following media and timelines to convey its messaging:

- 1) **Newsletter** - The District newsletter “Mt. View Monitor” is mailed and emailed to subscribers on a quarterly basis. The newsletter generally contains sections for a feature/capital improvement project update, pollution prevention, employee highlight, and critter of the quarter. Other sections are added as needed to address any currently relevant areas of concern or focus. Details for creating and publishing the newsletter are found in [COM-004 Newsletter SOP](#).
- 2) **Billboard** - A highly visible billboard adjacent to the treatment plant along the I-680 freeway is available to the District for eight weeks annually (May & September).
  - a) The billboard messages and designs are created by the Public Outreach Coordinator to meet required billboard specifications, and they generally have a pollution prevention focus. Details for creating the billboards are found in [COM-017 Billboard SOP](#).
- 3) **Website** - The District’s website, [www.mvsd.org](http://www.mvsd.org), is a central hub for all District-related information. Messaging provided in other media platforms includes links that direct readers to the District’s website to encourage the public to gather additional information on the topic presented. It is reviewed on a quarterly basis by the Public Outreach Coordinator, who works with District staff to update the website content. Staff may also submit requests for website updates as needed. Details for managing the website are found in [COM-008 Website Content Management SOP](#).
- 4) **Social Media** - The District maintains a presence on social media through Facebook, Instagram, and NextDoor.
  - a) Instagram and Facebook - An average of about 3-4 posts per week are scheduled on Facebook and Instagram. The same messages are posted on both platforms. Topics include important notices about planned sewer work, current topics of concern, tips for preventing sewer blockages or damage, introductions to District staff, pollution prevention, upcoming community events, celebration of holidays, resources available to the public, and best practices to protect the environment.
  - b) NextDoor – This platform is used to convey messages that include important notices about planned sewer work, District plan and/or rate updates, and other current topics of concern. These messages are posted as needed.
  - c) Details on managing the social media platforms are found in [COM-006 Social Media SOP](#).
- 5) **Public Education** - The District conducts a public education program which includes tours of its environmental interpretive center, wetlands, and treatment plant.
  - a) Environmental Interpretive Center (IC) – The IC is a covered area next to Moorhen Marsh with tables to provide a classroom environment. The IC is used for hosting school field trips, industry tours, public tours, workshops, and employee events.
  - b) Wetlands – The District owns Moorhen Marsh and is co-owner of McNabney Marsh.

- i) McNabney – McNabney has a viewing platform and is available to the public for recreation and bird watching. There are four interpretive panels that provide information about the marsh to the public. Public events and volunteer events are also hosted at McNabney.
    - ii) Moorhen Marsh – Moorhen also has a viewing platform and walkable levees and is available to the public for tours, workshops, or field trips.
      - (1) The Districts hosts a robust, award-winning Wetlands Field Trip Program in Moorhen that is available for free to local elementary schools. Details on field trips are found in [COM-007 Wetlands Field trip SOP](#).
  - c) Treatment Plant – The Districts hosts treatment plant tours that are modified to meet the needs of various types of tour groups. The District provides tours to industry professionals, college students aiming to join the industry, high school environmental students, elementary school students, and any interested members of the public.
    - i) Details on facility tours are found in [COM-001 Facility Tours Marsh Visits SOP](#).
- 6) Public Events - District staff participate in public events that provide opportunities to increase the public presence of the District and allow for sharing of information and educational materials pertaining to District functions, the local environment, or concerns that may impact rate payers. Routine events include:
- a) Earth Day – The Earth Day/John Muir Birthday Celebration event is held in April at the John Muir National Historic Site in Martinez, CA. The event features exhibits and activities for all ages that focus on the environment and its protection. The District hosts a booth at this event with an interactive activity focused on pollution prevention education, along with informational pamphlets on topics like FOG, pesticide/herbicide usage, etc.
  - b) Coastal Cleanup – The District partners with local organizations and volunteers to remove trash and invasive plants from McNabney Marsh one day in September.
  - c) 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade – The District participates in this parade in downtown Martinez to increase its public presence and to show the public an up-close view of the vehicles they may see performing essential services in their neighborhoods.
  - d) Halloween Spooktacular – The District participates in this annual event in downtown Martinez. District staff and volunteers wear pee, poop, and toilet paper costumes to share the message that these are the only three things to be flushed down the toilet.
- 7) Collaborative Groups – The District collaborates with other agencies, volunteer groups, and committees to share information and leverage opportunities or tools to most effectively communicate with the public.
- a) Bay Area Pollution Prevention Group (BAPPG) – This is a committee comprised of wastewater professionals focused on pollution prevention outreach to the public on topics relevant to wastewater treatment or protection of the environment. The District is a participating member of the BAPPG committee that meets quarterly.
  - b) Contra Costa Resource Conservation District (CCRCD) – This is a special district whose mission is to conserve the natural resources of Contra Costa County, and it helps support the District's efforts to protect the environment through the organization of cleanup efforts in McNabney Marsh.
  - c) Alhambra Creek Watershed Council – This is a stakeholder group whose mission is to protect and enhance the health of the Alhambra Creek Watershed which lies in a portion of the District that is in the west region of Martinez. The District is a participating member of the group, which meets monthly to discuss topics that are relevant to the preservation of the watershed.
  - d) Contra Costa County – The District is part of the County's Local Hazard Mitigation Plan. The development and maintenance of this plan requires a large and specific outreach effort. The

outreach topics and methods are coordinated with the County and all participating agencies within the County are encouraged to collaborate on messaging so that the public are provided multiple avenues to provide input on the plan.

- e) California Association of Sanitation Agencies (CASA) – CASA hosts a Communications Committee comprised of communication professionals in the wastewater industry. The District is a participating member of this committee that meets bi-monthly to discuss outreach strategies for topics relevant to the industry.
  - f) California Public Information Officials (CAPIO) – This District is a participating member of this organization that is dedicated to advancing public sector communicators across all levels of government. CAPIO offers professional development throughout the year through webinars, conferences, and mentoring.
  - g) Central Contra Costa Sanitation District (Central San) – Central San is a neighboring wastewater agency that the District partners with for the Household Hazardous Waste Facility and for inspections of businesses or industries that discharge to MVSD.
- 8) Mt. Diablo Wetlands Fund – This is a non-profit organization managed by the District for the purpose of funding the public education programs and is a means of soliciting grants to fund environmental projects that may improve the District’s marshes to better the experience for the community who utilize these areas.
- 9) Community Advisory Group - The District hosts a Community Advisory Group meeting once per quarter. Members of the group include District staff and ratepayers. The goal of the groups is to provide input on capital improvement, policies, goals, performance, strategic plans, rates, and other community-related topics.
- a) The Public Outreach Coordinator solicits participation from the public through social media every other month.
  - b) Topics of the meetings vary and are focused on current relevant topics.
  - c) Details for the Community Advisory Group can be found in [COM-003 Community Advisory Group SOP](#).
- 10) Door Hangers - Door hangers are a means of providing a focused message of an urgent nature that may only impact specific areas of the community. These include educational information on pollution prevention and are placed as needed at homes in areas that have experienced clogged sewer lines as a result of fats, oils, and grease (FOG). Details for the door hangers can be found at [COM-026 Door Hangers SOP](#).
- 11) Bill Inserts – Messages are placed with the bi-monthly bill for the solid waste services provided by Republic Services in the District. These messages provide tips to the public on composting, recycling, household hazardous waste disposal, and pollution prevention topics such as FOG, leaves/nutrients in waterways, and pesticide/herbicide alternatives. Details for the bill inserts can be found at [COM-025 Bill Inserts SOP](#).
- 12) Mailers – Mailers are used as an additional means to communicate critical topics to the public. The messages provided in the mailers are also provided via social media and the District’s website.
- a) Sewer rate increases – the District complies with Proposition 218 when it becomes necessary to increase sewer rates. Part of that process includes ensuring the public is made aware of the proposed increase. Proposed increases are discussed with the Community Advisory Group and outreach is provided in the newsletter, on the website, on social media platforms, and in mailers sent to all rate payers. Details for Proposition 218 Outreach can be found at [COM-009 Prop 218 Outreach SOP](#).
  - b) Notices regarding safety or urgency – Mailers may be used to communicate topics that impact either public or employee safety or topics that are of particular urgency.

### **Public Communication to the District**

The main page of the District website contains the address and main telephone number for the District. Additionally, there is a “Contact Us” button on the main page that directs users to a page with more detailed contact information, including hours of operation, map, and emails to specific staff.

Emergency contact information is provided through a “Sewer Emergencies” button on the main website page. The Sewer Emergency page provides a phone number for 24/7 contact and instructions about important information that may be needed when reporting an emergency.

When outreach messages that solicit input or that may illicit a response are posted, the appropriate contact information is included in the outreach message.

### **Implementation/Updates**

The District’s communication plan will be reviewed and updated annually. Notices will be made to the public of the annual plan update via social media platforms, the District website, and through participation in the Community Advisory Group.

1. Social media – Notices of the update will be provided via Facebook and Instagram for at least one month prior to the update. At least one message per week will be posted the first two weeks of that month. At least two messages per week will be posted the second two weeks of that month. The messages will provide notice of the upcoming update and instructions for how and when to participate.
2. District website – Notice of the upcoming update will be posted on the District website. Notice may be included in the carousel to draw extra attention to the notice. The notice will include instructions for how and when to participate.
3. Community Advisory Group – Notice of the upcoming update will be on the agenda for the meeting preceding the update and input will be solicited from the group.