

San Diego Water Board Practical Vision

Proactive Public Outreach and Communication

Transparency and Communication are two of the four Values of the Water Board and the Practical Vision. Participation of the public in the decision making process of the Water Board is a hallmark of the board governmental structure in California and essential to our success. Accordingly, greater efforts must be made in community outreach and information sharing with stakeholders, community groups, governmental and non-governmental organizations, researchers in academia, news media, elected officials, and the general public. A key goal of our Practical Vision is increasing Environmental Justice Community access to the Water Board, its staff, programs, and decision making. Increasing the Water Board's presence and accessibility through the internet, via our website and social media, is an effective way to share information with the public and solicit their participation. We strive to be a learning organization that considers the knowledge, expertise and insights of others and thus value the open sharing of ideas. This Practical Vision will begin to address these needs through the following projects:

- Website Update.
- Social Media Plan .
- Community Outreach Strategy.

Practical Vision Statement

The San Diego Water Board will have and maintain a proactive outreach and communication program that provides the public with user-friendly access to useful and easily understood information about our waters and our work and pathways to communicate easily with us.

Mission Statement

We will proactively communicate with the public using our website, social media, and staff knowledge to emphasize the importance of the San Diego Water Board's goal of healthy waters and the many ways we are working to achieve that goal.

Values Statement

The San Diego Water Board values good communication, trust, transparency, knowledge, and public service. As a learning organization, good communication not only allows our stakeholders to work with us to accomplish our goal of healthy waters, but it also leads directly to trust and transparency. In addition, improved communication, in the form of a more user-friendly website, an enhanced social media presence, and more public outreach forums, will improve the Water Board's public

image. Finally, timely and appropriate information exchange allows regulators to understand and apply the latest science and technology.

Where We Are in 2013

While the regulated community may know about the San Diego Water Board, those that are not may be unfamiliar with how and why the San Diego Water Board strives to achieve healthy waters. Currently, the San Diego Water Board has a website, Facebook account, and Twitter account. Our social media accounts are generally only used for providing updates on the status of Water Board meetings. However, most of the website is complicated and the social media accounts are underutilized. The San Diego Water Board needs to establish communication standards to ensure information is presented to the public on an ongoing basis. The current issues with our communication processes are:

1. Our website is poorly organized, hard to navigate, and contains outdated information.
2. We only use Twitter to broadcast the status of the Board Meetings and do not use all of the social media programs available to relay water quality information to the public on a regular basis.
3. We do not have a policy in place that establishes clear direction to staff regarding how and when to post information to the website and social media programs.
4. We do not have staff that periodically reviews the information on our website and social media accounts to ensure it is current and correct.

Because of these issues, the San Diego Water Board's presence on the internet and in social media is lacking and ineffective. An improved presence on the web will provide the public with basic information and allow staff the time to assist the public on more focused matters.

Why this Practical Vision is a Priority

This Practical Vision is a priority for three important reasons:

1. Because the Water Board is a public agency, the public should have easy access to information about the Water Board. This includes information about:
 - a. "What we do" (e.g., mission, responsibilities, and tools);
 - b. "What the rules are" (e.g., applicable statutes, regulations, plans, and policies);
 - c. "What we have done" (e.g., actions taken);
 - d. "Who we are" (e.g., board members, organization chart, and contacts); and
 - e. "How to participate" (e.g., board meetings, public forum, other public meetings, proposed actions, oral and written comments, and appeals).

Proactive Public Outreach and Communication

2. Since the Water Board regulates certain activities, those whose activities may be subject to regulation should have easy access to information they need. This includes information about:
 - a. The types of activities we regulate;
 - b. Application requirements, forms, and fees;
 - c. Regulatory requirements; and
 - d. Water Board Contacts.
3. Protecting and restoring the health of water bodies in the San Diego Region is important, therefore, anyone who is interested should have easy access to basic “Water 101” information. This includes information about:
 - a. Why the health of our water bodies is important;
 - b. Factors that can adversely affect the health of our water bodies;
 - c. How the health of our water bodies can be protected and restored;
 - d. Water bodies in the San Diego Region and their beneficial uses;
 - e. The health of water bodies in the San Diego Region (status and trends); and
 - f. What the Water Board has done and is doing to protect and restore the health of water bodies in the San Diego Region.

Aspirational Goals

The Proactive Public Outreach and Communication practical vision group would like to bring our mail processing and file review system into a web-based format. This would include a plan to:

- Require all incoming mail and reports to be submitted electronically, via a web-based mail submission program or program specific databases (e.g., Geotracker, SMARTS, and CIWQS) that will communicate directly with our Electronic Content Management (ECM) program.
- Require all incoming mail to be indexed by the person submitting the item. This will allow staff to spend time on priority work rather than indexing incoming mail.
- Create a web-based file review system that will allow file reviews to be completed on our website. This will reduce the amount of staff time spent collecting information and organizing public records requests.

This will not only streamline our incoming mail processing, which will free up Water Board staff to work on priority projects, but it will allow the public to access our records quickly and easily from our website as well.

Projects for Practical Vision Success

The following Proactive Public Outreach and Communication projects will assist the San Diego Water Board in achieving this practical vision.

1. Website Update

a. Project Description or Purpose

This project will update and maintain the San Diego Water Board website, including contact information, program information, referring links, org chart, etc., and revise the website map, making the website current, intuitive, and more user-friendly.

b. Project Goals

- i. Create a task force with the responsibility of revising and maintaining the website.
- ii. Develop and maintain a current, intuitive, and user-friendly website.

c. Desired Outcomes

- i. A website that is current, intuitive, and user friendly.
- ii. Identify and fulfill the public's need for information.
- iii. A website that meets the public's needs for information, relieving staff of this time consuming task.
- iv. Create and implement a website use and maintenance policy.

d. Underlying Contradictions

- i. The main challenge will be untangling and making sense of the current website.
- ii. Another challenge will be allocating resources for the initial website design and on-going website maintenance.
- iii. Replacing the existing design may initially cause viewers to have a difficult time finding familiar information. This difficulty should be short lived as the more intuitive and logical website layout will quickly lead the customer to the desired information.

e. Contribution to the Practical Vision

People increasingly use the internet to find needed information. An easily navigable, user-friendly website is essential in any public outreach program. Such a website will allow the San Diego Water Board to be more proactive in promoting healthy waters. A well-educated public can assist the San Diego Water Board in achieving our goal.

f. Schedule/Milestones

- i. 3 – 6 Month Milestones:
 - a. Identify one coordinator from each Branch, including one from the executive branch, to form a website update task force that will include the coordinators and others identified by the coordinators.
 - b. Form focus groups from inside and outside of the San Diego Water Board that will be asked to review and comment on the current website and provide suggestions to the task force.
- ii. 6 – 9 Month Milestones:
 - a. Each task force member will review their branch’s portions of the website for incorrect information and provide new information to be used on the revised website.
 - b. Develop a website map for a new website design. Task force members will work together to develop a website map that will set the design and flow of the new website. The site map is a visual representation of how each page will link to the next and how topic pages will be grouped from general to specific.
- iii. 1 Year Milestones:

Implement the website map and launch the new website.

g. Resources Needed

Staff time and updated website design software will be needed for this project. Most of the website review, including checking the current website information for accuracy and testing the functionality of pages and links, can be done by student interns. Task force members will need to develop the content and organization of the new website. An IT person will need to make the changes to the website based on the new site map and design provided by task force members. Ongoing fact checking and maintenance of the website should continue and be done by task force members and student interns.

h. Tasks that Might Not be Done in Order to do this Project

This project would involve at least 4 people in the task force and an IT person. Initially, there would be a lot of work to redesign the website and implement the new design. After the implementation, upkeep is expected to take minimal resources and will eventually save resources by allowing the public to find information easily without needing to contact staff.

Initially, 4 people could each spend approximately 10 percent of their time on this website update. In addition, an IT person would need to implement the changes towards the end of the first year. A small amount of work in each branch would not be done to facilitate this project.

2. Social Media Plan

a. Project Description or Purpose

Create a network of social media accounts for the San Diego Water Board. This project will enable the San Diego Water Board to share information via Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube with the general public, stakeholders, dischargers, and other governmental agencies. Information shared via Facebook and Twitter will be linked to existing information on our website. A San Diego Water Board YouTube channel will be created and populated with instructional and educational videos that we create and/or outsource to help the public better understand our work and methods.

b. Project Goals

- i. Create a social media task force with the responsibility of overseeing the Water Board's social media sites.
- ii. The task force will develop and maintain appropriate social media accounts.
- iii. Create and maintain a social media policy. Determine if the State Board has any restrictions for posting videos.
- iv. Determine what methods of social media the public supports and uses.
- v. Determine the resources needed to write scripts, record, and edit videos.
- vi. Share video and audio recordings of public forums, workshops, public meetings, and presentations.
- vii. Identify sources of existing videos that could be used.

c. Desired Outcomes

Information about the San Diego Water Board's work and water quality will be available at the public's fingertips. Digital "push" notifications will keep the subscribers updated. San Diego Water Board actions and information will be more transparent. Communication among the San Diego Water Board and public will be more efficient. The public will be more aware of water quality issues and projects.

d. Values and Underlying Contradictions

- i. The main challenge will be integrating the social media with current activities.
- ii. Another challenge will be allocating resources for the initial social media policy and for the on-going maintenance.

e. Contribution to the Practical Vision

The use of social media adds new pathways to share user-friendly information about our waters and work and adds new avenues for the public to communicate with us.

f. Schedule/Milestones

i. 3 – 6 Month Milestones:

- a. Identify one person from each Branch, including one from the executive branch, to be a Social Media Coordinator. The Social Media Coordinators will be responsible for monitoring and posting information about their branch’s work and hot topics to the appropriate social media site. The Coordinators will evaluate our current social media sites and create new accounts as needed.
- b. Social Media Coordinators will draft a Social Media Policy that will set standards for all content posted to social media sites.
- c. Each Coordinator will develop a list of topics for their branch that should be shared on Facebook and Twitter regularly, as well as a list of ideas for short education videos for the YouTube channel.

ii. 6 – 9 Month Milestone:

Prepare and/or source 3-5 short educational videos for the YouTube channel.

iii. 1 Year and Beyond Milestones:

- a. Implement the Social Media Policy.
- b. Coordinators will post information to the social media sites.

g. Resources Needed

Staff time will be needed for this project. Social Media Coordinators will need to post content and monitor the social media sites. Ongoing updates, maintenance, and following other related social media accounts will continue and be done by the Social Media Coordinators.

h. Tasks that Might Not be Done in Order to do this Project

After the initial resources are spent on setting up this social media plan, the amount of these resources will decline as the project produces the desired outcome of our practical vision. Since this project will create a means of user-friendly access to information about our waters and work and creates a more efficient means of communication, the prior resources used to complete these tasks will then be available to other areas of the San Diego Water Board’s. Ultimately, if we take the time now to organize our information and create user-friendly and efficient communication pathways, we will reduce time spent helping customers find basic information, resulting in more time to focus on our projects and other public needs.

3. Community Outreach Strategy

a. Project Description or Purpose

The Community Outreach Strategy will keep the public outreach momentum going after the Website Update and Social Media Plan Projects are complete. This project will use public forums, workshops, public meetings, presentations, shared information, public surveys, and San Diego Water Board educational information to continue our vision of providing proactive public outreach and communication.

b. Project Goals

The project goal is to provide the public with San Diego Water Board information via:

- i. Public discussions.
- ii. Training workshops.
- iii. Public meetings.
- iv. Presentations.
- v. Shared information.
- vi. Public surveys.
- vii. San Diego Water Board educational information.

c. Desired Outcomes

- i. Provide the public and regulated community with information that will help them understand the San Diego Water Board's vision.
- ii. Provide the regulated community with the information and tools necessary to comply with San Diego Water Board plans, policies, and regulations.
- iii. Collect feedback from the regulated community and non-regulated interested parties to help us ensure we are providing information that is needed and relevant.
- iv. Enlist anyone interested to assist us in achieving our goal of healthy waters. Provide opportunities for the San Diego Water Board to learn about the latest innovations in science and technology.

d. Values and Underlying Contradictions

The public and regulated communities will be better informed and better able to move us towards having healthy waters. Obstacles that may exist for this project are budget limitations, staff time limitations, and difficulty getting enough participation and survey responses from the public.

e. Contribution to the Practical Vision

This project would ensure that the Proactive Public Outreach and Communication vision continues long after the hands on projects (Website and Social Media) are implemented. The project goals and desired outcomes for this project commit the San Diego Water Board to a high standard of public outreach and communication for today and the future.

f. Schedule/Milestones

i. 3 – 6 Month Milestones:

- a. Form an office wide work group to brainstorm Community Outreach strategies and determine the resources needed to accomplish the projects.
- b. The work group will prioritize the projects and develop an implementation plan for each project. This could include recordings of our public meetings, participation in educational events, or speaking at various events. It should include a list of projects and events with dates and a method of assigning staff resources to each project or event.

ii. 6 – 9 Month Milestones:

- a. The work group will present their implementation plan to staff and management.
- b. The work group will revise the implementation plan to address comments from staff and management.

iii. 1 Year Milestones:

- a. Put into effect the “Community Outreach implementation plan”.
- b. Ask staff quarterly for new items that should be added to the Community Outreach implementation plan.
- c. Ask the public annually for new community outreach strategy ideas.

g. Resources Needed

Resources needed for this project are: staff dollars and hours, access to a web-based survey program; access to the San Diego Water Board website and social media accounts; and a method to record and share video and audio recordings of the resulting communication projects.

h. Tasks that Might Not be Done in Order to do this Project

Implementing this project’s short term tasks should not result in much loss of productivity from current staff. Implementing the office wide workgroup will divert some staff time away from regular duties. The work of the office wide workgroup will likely involve members working independently and then discussing findings as a group. This effort is expected to result in minor delays

Proactive Public Outreach and Communication

in members' routine tasks, such as returning phone calls and emails, indexing documents, and updating databases. No high-priority projects should be affected. In addition, the groups are expected to identify work that would not get done by those affected by the groups' recommendations, if the recommendations are adopted by the office.