



MONTEREY REGIONAL WASTE MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

FY 20/21 Communications and Public Education Plan

Summary

This fiscal year is going to create some challenges for the Monterey Regional Waste Management District. The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted projected revenues and shelter in place orders have delivered operational constraints.

The District has budgeted an 11% reduction in FY 20/21 as compared to FY 19/20. The Communications and Public Education department's budget has been cut by 35% as compared to FY 19/20 spending. In addition, staffing in the department has been reduced by 30% as compared to previous years.

State and County shelter in place orders are providing constraints which we must work under in order to keep our staff and the community safe and healthy. To that end, many traditional public education initiatives will need to be revamped and delivered in a different way or delayed until a future year when revenues are back to normal and/or those activities are deemed safe.

While it will be challenging to work with these parameters, it also presents an opportunity for us to focus inward. This fiscal year, emphasis will shift away from community outreach in the form of events, on-site tours and workshops, and instead our efforts will aim to revise and better-utilize owned and earned media. We will create a stable foundation for future expansion of activities.

In addition, staff will be laying the groundwork for SB 1383 legislation that takes effect in January 2022; strengthening internal communications to build trust within the workforce; and work to complete rebranding of District by October 2021 in coordination with District's 70th anniversary.

As 2020 has been markedly different than any of us would have predicted at the beginning of the year, staff will be nimble with our approach and may need to adjust these plans according to external conditions related to COVID 19 issues.

GOALS

Assess SB1383 Short Lived Climate Pollutants process for jurisdictional adherence

Description/Activity	Metrics	Management Lead
Develop SB1383 action plan on operations and public education and outreach with each member jurisdiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor and track program developments in each member agency for compliance with SB1383 and consistency with District’s service programs • Draft District’s Services strategy in compliance with State direction for TAC and Board review by end of fiscal year 	General Manager/ Director of Communications

Evaluate and advance public education programs to engage the public and foster behavior change more effectively

Description/Activity	Metrics	Management Lead
Strengthen digital platforms: website, social media, What Goes Where app	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build new District website that consolidates all District websites, is compliant with accessibility regulations and is mobile-friendly • Continually evaluate effectiveness of various social media and email newsletter platforms • Update What Goes Where database quarterly 	Dir. of Communications
Reevaluate use of paid, earned, and owned media, and increase use of earned and owned media during a time of financial constraint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate mediums used for each communication and increase use of earned media (news stories) • Produce a standardized quarterly Board report to track all media reach 	Dir. of Communications
Strengthen internal communications to educate and build trust within the workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and develop an internal communication plan to broaden employees’ business knowledge • Conduct quarterly “round table” small group feedback sessions with staff • Produce a GM message to staff twice monthly until all-staff meetings can safely resume 	Dir. of Communications and Human Resources Manager

EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Rebranding

Within the last decade, the Monterey Regional Waste Management District has identified the need to rebrand. The name is often confused with the national and locally contracted hauler, Waste Management, as well as other local government entities with lengthy acronyms that start with the letter M. In addition, the outdated logo developed in the 1970s references the filming of *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* on-site, but without the reference point is simply a seagull flying over a landfill...an image that the District would rather not be associated with.

In FY 20/21, staff will seek to identify a qualified vendor to engage us in a rebranding process with the goal of unveiling a final product in October 2021 in coordination with the District's 70th anniversary.

- Seek input from other public agencies who recently rebranded
- Identify a vendor (specialty rebranding agency or local agency?)
- Identify and engage stakeholders
- Seek Board direction for approval

When an updated brand is approved, staff will work to update related collateral to include:

- Brand guidelines/style guide (for the District and What Goes Where)
- Stationary
- Other digital and print collateral (website, social media, brochures, flyers, etc.)
- Presentation deck (PowerPoint) templates
- Identity signage

Campaigns

Here is a list of initiatives that the District would like to highlight in the coming fiscal year:

- **Recycling contamination reduction**
Goal: Decrease recycling contamination in each member jurisdiction and increase downloads and searches in What Goes Where database. Increase collaboration with haulers in messaging to the public.
 - Results of annual recycling contamination study (PR, social)
 - Continuation of "Recyclable? Yep/Nope" campaign based on results from recycling contamination study, daily MRF audits and What Goes Where search items. Consider a focus on single-use plastics.
- **Proper disposal of batteries/fires**
Goal: Reduce the number and frequency of battery-related fires at District facilities. Increase batteries recycled through curbside hauler pick-up and HHW drop-off.

- Share frequency or number of fires regularly on-site that we believe are related to improper battery disposal
- Highlight danger of fires for our workforce
- Speak to potential cost of fire at our facility (public funds)
- Promote easy and safe disposal through haulers or drop-off locations
- **Holiday**

Goal: Encourage and provide specific waste reduction strategies at home during a time of high consumption. Promote upstream solutions as we transition towards zero waste.

 - Provide waste reduction strategies instead of what can/cannot be recycled. If available, consider utilizing a toolkit from an industry organization or other waste district.
- **Last Chance Mercantile Reopening**

Goal: Publicize the store's reopening to generate sales, promote the benefit of third-party operator partnership (if chosen), and inform customers of operational changes.

The Last Chance Mercantile closed mid-March 2020 due to COVID-19 shelter in place orders. While closed, staff was preparing the FY 20/21 budget and with reduced revenues, planned for \$4.5 M in spending reductions. In June, MRWMD Leadership and the Board of Directors decided to continue the temporary closure of the Last Chance Mercantile while a best path forward was reassessed.

Depending on the future operations of the store, MRWMD will lead or support the future store operator in a reopening strategy. As the store closure received considerable attention from news media and comments on social media, a heavy reliance on earned media (PR) and owned media (website, social media) will be utilized. Paid media will also be considered.

- What customers can expect with new operating model (e.g. COVID-19 safety precautions, potential changes in operating hours, etc.)
- If the store is operated by a third-party, highlight benefits of partnership model to include benefit of supporting operator's mission and ability for public to write-off donations.
- If the store reopens with former LCM employees, highlight that they are back and what is changed in LCM 2.0. Provide strategy to address promotion of products or services.
- **Earth Day**

Goal: Continue to align the District with this holiday that benefits the Planet.

 - Traditionally MRWMD has supported Earth Day attending community outreach events throughout the month and with paid media promotion. This year, we will plan to be nimble and provide an approach that can be effective with COVID-19 safety concerns and availability of resources.

In addition, the District will provide a support role for campaigns created by/for the Illegal Dumping and Litter abatement Task Force (IDLATF) and Central Coast Recycling Media Coalition (CCRMC).

Digital Assets

Currently the District manages four separate websites: the District's main website, mrwmd.org; a recycling website, WhatGoesWhere.info; the Organics to Energy pilot compost project website, organicstoenergy.org; and a litter abatement website, KeepMontereyCountyClean.org. In addition to the websites, the District manages the What Goes Where mobile app and multiple social media accounts for the District and Last Chance Mercantile.

Website

Staff is proposing a complete redesign of the District's websites to consolidate the four separate sites into one unified resource. The new website will aim to be:

- Mobile-first or mobile-friendly/responsive (over half of users view websites on mobile devices)
- More accessible: Eliminate or greatly reduce PDFs in favor of HTML content
- Provide content in multiple languages
- Provide transparency requirements necessary as a special district
- Conduct a click analysis of existing sites to help inform what content is important
- Eliminate duplication of content in multiple locations
- Provide a redirect of web traffic from existing sites

What Goes Where Database Management

In Spring of 2020 a thorough update of the What Goes Where database was conducted by MRWMD's Communications and Public Education department. This brought the directions for all items with outdated recycling or disposal guidelines up to date for the County of Monterey and every city within the County.

In FY 20/21, MRWMD plans to work with Salinas Valley Recycles (SVR), whom we share the app and website with, to:

- Provide bi-annual updates to database
- Respond to customer inquiries generated on the app
- Conduct general account maintenance

Social Media

Currently, the District has social media accounts on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and You Tube. Staff will continually evaluate the effectiveness of each of these platforms as well as emerging social media platforms, for the District overall and Last Chance Mercantile. Emphasis will be placed on more effective platforms.

Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

In conjunction with the building of a new website, staff will explore use of customer relationship management (CRM) software to track District contacts and their interactions. Employing a CRM could prove useful should we want to develop an outreach strategy that includes a digital newsletter or promotion of products/services to applicable contacts in the future.

Signage

This year MRWMD will undertake an exercise in evaluating and beginning to update signage on-site. Existing signage appears to have been created over time and without a master plan. It has an inconsistent look depending on when it was created. More importantly, customers are regularly confused about how to navigate the site or where to dispose of their items and how. A new master signage plan will be developed and follow a three-phase approach:

- Phase 1: Audit and Site Map (completion goal: Spring 2020)
 - Identify existing signage
 - Collect comments/suggestions
 - Develop project overview
 - Pull permits
 - Place the proposed signage
 - Created new flow schematic
 - Testing?
- Phase 2: Design and Specs (completion goal: June 2020)
 - Design
 - Production
 - Testing?
 - Create production specs
- Phase 3: Bids, Proofing, Fabrication, and Installation (completion TBD based on cost and budget)
 - Acquire bids from signage companies
 - Proof individual signs
 - Fabricate
 - Install

Print Collateral

Existing print collateral (brochures, flyers, etc.) will be updated to provide content in English and Spanish for customers. This will take place over the course of this fiscal year and next as we look to incorporate the rebranding efforts into the print collateral as well.

Outreach Programs

Workshops/Presentations

With COVID-19 restrictions, hosting in-person workshops on-site will not be possible for the foreseeable future. Staff will investigate various methods of providing virtual workshops and preform pilot tests to determine the best delivery and level of interest in the community. If found more successful, virtual workshops could compliment or replace in-person workshops in the future. Surveys of workshops could gauge effectiveness and engagement.

To streamline resources with a reduced staff, workshops will develop standards and focus on three (3) topics:

1. Composting
2. Recycling
3. Zero Waste

Public Tours

With COVID-19 restrictions, hosting in-person on-site tours for the public will not be possible for the foreseeable future. Staff will investigate various methods of providing virtual tours to determine the best delivery method. These virtual tours could be given live, pre-recorded, or using a hybrid live/pre-recorded approach.

Staff will monitor the level of community interest in virtual tours. If found more successful, less disruptive to Operations staff, or more streamlined for Communications and Public Education Staff to deliver (and assuming impact remains in-tact) virtual tours could compliment or replace in-person tours in the future. Surveys of virtual tours could gauge effectiveness and engagement.

To streamline resources with a reduced staff, public tours will develop standards, hosting tours at set times once per month and not customizable per groups' requests. Tour topics will also be standardized, focusing on two (2) programmatic topics rather than what the District does:

1. "What Goes Where: A complete site tour"
2. "Sorting Out What's Recyclable: A tour of our Materials Recovery Facility (MRF)"

Timeline:

- Spring 2021: Pilot a digital tour to determine the public's interest
- Fall 2021: Target relaunch of tours in conjunction with launch of new website (digital tour rollout or in-person if determined better)

School Programs

Due to COVID-19 safety concerns, in-person school tours will be cancelled for the 2020-2021 school year.

MRWMD will instead shift our focus working with school districts to cleaning up the waste stream:

1. **To-Go School Lunch Packaging:** With all of the packaged school lunches being given to students while distance learning, MRWMD staff will be working with school district food service directors on sustainable packaging alternatives to single-use plastics.
2. **SB 1383 Preparation:** Staff will work with Waste Management and school district food service directors to launch SB 1383 food waste reduction strategies. We will target strategy implementation at the beginning of the 2021/2022 school year so students are making new habits at the beginning of the school year rather than mid-year when the legislation is implemented.

Artists in Residence: Due to COVID-19 safety concerns, unknowns about future operations management of the Last Chance Mercantile, and reduced Communications and Public Education staffing, this program will not be delivered in the 2020/2021 school year. CSUMB and MRWMD staff will consider if the program can safely continue in future years.

Community Events

Most, if not all, community events will be cancelled this year due to COVID-19 safety concerns around large gatherings. Staff will take this time to develop standards for outreach events when they are allowed again.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

The Communications and Public Education department will be partnering with Human Resources to achieve our shared goal to “strengthen internal communications to educate and build trust within the workforce.”

- Design and develop an internal communication plan to broaden employees’ business knowledge
- Continue to produce a General Manager’s Message to staff twice monthly until all-staff meetings can safely resume
- Conduct quarterly “round table” small group feedback sessions with staff
- Create an onboarding District education program for new employees (e.g. presentation and site tour)
- Incorporate internal communications strategies for external campaigns

Staff will utilize the following existing resources as appropriate:

- Marlin digital messaging board
- All-staff emails
- Paycom timeclock notification system
- Emergency text and call alerts with Text-Em-All