THE METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Board Report

External Affairs

- **Monthly Activity Report for August 2026**

Summary

This report provides a summary of External Affairs activities for July 23, 2026, through August 21, 2026.

Purpose

Informational

Attachments

Detailed Report – External Affairs Group's Monthly Activities for July 23, 2026, through August 21, 2026

Activities Supporting the General Manager's Business Plan Goals

Empower the workforce and promote diversity, equity, and inclusion

The Creative Design Team continued its work supporting safety initiatives that included videos of employees speaking about "modeling the behavior" to support a culture focused on safety; the General Manager speaking to the importance of the safety program and his own personal plan to visit and support facilities; and a new information card for visitors to critical infrastructure detailing safety procedures and requirements.

Adapt to changing climate and water resources

Colorado River

The Press Office issued a statement from Assistant General Manager Bednarski regarding the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's release of the Final Environmental Impact Statement for post-2026 operations of Lake Powell and Lake Mead. Then, three weeks later, the Press Office issued a statement from General Manager Deshmukh regarding Reclamation's release of the Colorado River 2027-2028 Operating Guidelines, the Record of Decision for the Post-2026 Colorado River Operations Final Environmental Impact Statement and the August 24-month study. The Press Office also coordinated interviews between Bill Hasencamp and CNN, the LA Times, LAist (KPCC), CalMatters, KNX, ABC7, KCAL, and Spectrum regarding these Colorado River actions.

Federal legislative staff provided updates to congressional staff on the release of the record of decision on future operations of the Colorado River and implications for Metropolitan.

State Water Project

Media Services worked with the CA Department of Water Resources to create a video of General Manager Deshmukh for their social media series, Making Water Work.

The Press Office issued a statement from General Manager Deshmukh regarding the State Water Board's release of a new draft update of the Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan.

Creative Design assisted Bay-Delta Initiatives with the creation of information material on the Delta Islands for the Ad Hoc Committee on Delta Islands.

Conservation

With July being Smart Irrigation Month, the Media Services team partnered with Water Resource Management's Water Efficiency team to spotlight Metropolitan's rebates for water-efficient devices, including smart controllers and soil moisture sensors, through a social media video.

The Press Office held a media event at the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena to celebrate the milestone of 4,000 trees planted through Metropolitan's Turf Replacement Program. The event, which was well-covered by the media, also raised awareness about AB 1572, which prohibits using potable water to irrigate most nonfunctional turf at non-residential properties beginning next year, by highlighting Caltech's turf replacement project. At the event, the Media Services team created a social media video about the tree rebate milestone featuring members of the Water Efficiency team.

Protect public health, the regional economy, and Metropolitan's assets

Federal Legislative Activities

The Washington, DC Legislative staff are closely monitoring the FY 2027 appropriations process. This process will not be completed before FY 2026 ends on September 30, and Congress is developing a continuing resolution funding the government at FY 2026 levels until mid-December.

State Legislative Activities

The month of August brings the end of the 2025-26 Legislative Session, as attention shifts to the Governor who has until the end of September to sign any remaining bills.

All Metropolitan supported bills that made it to the floor successfully passed out of the Legislature and are on the Governor's desk, including SB 872, establishing a fund for subsidence and Delta levee repairs, AB 1894 balancing imported water deliveries for groundwater replenishment in the face of invasive mussel infestation and AB 2739 and SB 1125, two companion bills that set up and fund a program framework for low income rate assistance.

In related news, the Legislature released its final spending plan for the climate bond allocations this year, which included $30 million to address State Water Project subsidence and another $30 million for repairs of Delta levees. Long-term funding for subsidence continues to be a Metropolitan priority that we will continue to pursue in the coming years.

Lastly, the Governor identified wildfire liability as a top policy priority to address before leaving office. The Governor and Legislature negotiated bill language that initially was expected to emerge in the final days of session, but ended up being pulled back and did not move forward. The proposal was intended to reduce electric utility costs when paying out wildfire liability claims, while ensuring compensation is prioritized for the victims. Of concern was a provision that would limit recoverable public infrastructure damages to diminution in value. While this proposal did not cross the finish line during the regular session, there is speculation that the issue could be resolved through a special session later this year.

Pure Water Southern California

Community Relations staff continued engagement efforts to raise awareness of the proposed Pure Water Southern California program. At the Innovation Center, staff hosted tours for TreePeople, Torrance Public Works, Leadership Carson, WateReuse LA, and staff and interns from Senator Ben Allen's district office.

Staff collaborated with the Education Team to host students participating in DaVinci Camp at the Innovation Center and Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts' Bixby Marshlands. They also served on a career panel for Pacoima Beautiful's Agua University program and provided a tour for Metropolitan interns and Employee Resource Group scholarship recipients.

Staff hosted a table and two tours of the Innovation Center during Clean N' Green Fest, an event hosted by the Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts and the city of Carson. Staff also presented and hosted a table at Carson's Help Shape Carson's Future event.

Staff participated in the three-day One Water Leadership Institute on Community-Centered Planning to learn about approaches for incorporating community perspectives into water infrastructure planning and engagement.

Creative Design worked with HR recruitment to develop a new flyer advertising a co-op internship opportunity for Pure Water Southern California. The team also updated Pure Water program materials for future outreach activities.

The Press Office coordinated interviews with staff and tours of Pure Water with Spectrum News and CalMatters regarding Pure Water as a potential local supply that could help reduce pressure on the Colorado River.

Metropolitan's Infrastructure

Member Services and Public Outreach staff welcomed San Fernando Councilmember Solorio to the Weymouth Water Treatment Plant and Michael J. McGuire Water Quality Laboratory for an overview of Metropolitan's operations and water quality work. Chair Ortega led the laboratory tour, emphasizing the connection between water and public health and discussing Metropolitan's priorities with the Councilwoman.

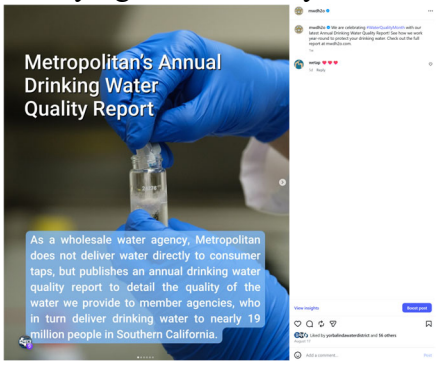
(1) Water Quality Section Manager Rochelle, Councilmember Solorio; (2) Weymouth Plant Manager Riley, Treatment Plant Section Manager Collins, Councilmember Solorio, Chair Ortega, Interim Weymouth Plant Manager Niehus; (3) Group touring Weymouth.

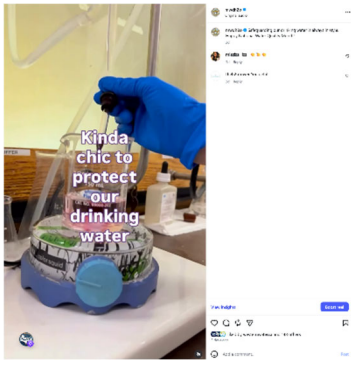
Member Services and Public Outreach worked with Treatment and Water Quality to organize the dedication of the ozone facility at the Joseph Jensen Water Treatment Plant for former Director Ina Roth. Representatives from Beverly Hills and members of the Roth family joined Metropolitan in honoring Roth's legacy and her longstanding commitment to advancing water quality. The Press Office issued a press release announcing the naming.

Assistant General Manager Chapman, Chair Ortega, members of the Roth family, Director Fellow, Beverly Hills Public Works Director Shana Epstein, General Manager Deshmukh, and retired MWD Director of Water Quality Michael McGuire.

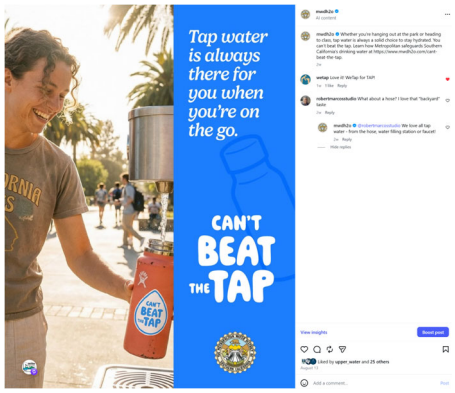
Creative Design supported Engineering with the design of the Project Labor Agreement Annual Report and filmed and edited a profile video about one of the transitional workers who have benefited from the PLA.

Media Services produced two social media posts for National Water Quality Month in August. One featured the Annual Drinking Water Quality Report, while the other showcased clips of Water Quality staff carrying out their daily work, both in the lab and out in the field.





Metropolitan's Can't Beat the Tap campaign launched on social media on August 13, directing the public to the full campaign hosted on mwdh2o.com. The effort encourages member agencies to help amplify the message, which serves as a reminder to Southern Californians of the benefits of tap water.



Partner with interested parties and the communities we serve

Legislative Services
Legislative Services organized a legislative briefing with Assembly Member Jeff Gonzalez (R-Indio). Legislation and Communications Committee Chair Lewitt, Director Paule, General Manager Deshmukh, Assistant General Manager Zinke, and Executive Legislative Representative Jay Jefferson II participated. The briefing included updates on Colorado River negotiations and an overview of state legislation and funding opportunities for control of invasive mussels.

Metropolitan sponsored and Legislative Services staff attended the Gateway Cities Regional Chambers' State of the Nation luncheon featuring Representative Linda Sánchez (D-CA-38).

Metropolitan sponsored and Legislative Services staff participated in the 20th Annual Building Industry Association of Southern California Water Conference. Chair Ortega, General Manager Deshmukh, and Colorado River Resources Manager Bill Hasencamp contributed perspectives on regional water challenges and opportunities, emphasizing collaborative efforts toward a resilient regional water future.

Legislative Services staff participated in 57 webinars, meetings, and events with community groups, business organizations, and trade associations on Metropolitan programs and activities.

Media Services and Creative Design
Creative Design supported the office of Sustainability, Resilience and Innovation with website text and creation of new flyers for "Pitchfest," an upcoming innovation partnering event with water agencies and universities.

The Press Office issued a press release on Santa Ana Deputy Public Works Director Cesar E. Barrera being seated as the City of Santa Ana's new representative on the board of directors.

Member Services and Public Outreach

Member Services and Public Outreach hosted employees of the Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts at the Weymouth Water Treatment Plant as part of their annual staff education trip. The visit featured an overview of operations at the administration building and a tour of the Michael J. McGuire Water Quality Laboratory, providing an opportunity to learn more about Metropolitan facilities that may eventually receive water from Pure Water Southern California.

Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts staff at the McGuire Water Quality Lab.

Community Partnering Program

The Community Partnering Program sponsored one water education and conservation partnership this period. Friends of the LA River hosted their 5th Annual River Fest at the Los Angeles State Historic Park, an arts, education, and community resource festival to celebrate the revitalization of the LA River and its significance to Los Angeles communities. The event featured water education workshops and interactive exhibits and activities from over 50 community organizations, environmental groups, public agencies, and artists. Staff hosted an in-person BeWaterWise water conservation and educational resource booth.

Inspection Trips Program
The Inspection Trips Team hosted more than 25-member agency inspection trip coordinators for an annual planning meeting to review updates for the FY 2026-2027 trip season. Assistant General Manager Zinke welcomed the group, and Colorado River Resources Manager Hasencamp and Bay-Delta Science and Regulatory Strategy Manager Martin spoke about current Colorado River and State Water Project issues. Assistant Ethics Officer Shope also reviewed ethics considerations related to inspection trips. Earlier in the month, the Inspection Trips Team traveled to Gene Camp and met with the Guest Services Team to coordinate on upcoming trips. Inspection Trip Managers continued to plan for the first trips of the new season, which begins in September. The Creative Design Team created a large suite of new materials and templates to be used in the new season.

Construction Outreach
The Community Relations team continued proactive communications and coordination to support operational activities, system maintenance, and upcoming construction projects. Staff worked with local agencies, residents, partner organizations, and internal project teams regarding planned activities at Garvey Reservoir, Sepulveda Feeder, and Lake Mathews. In preparation for an upcoming shutdown, staff performed a site visit to the Santa Monica Feeder.

Staff collaborated with Legislative Services on outreach to elected officials related to the Sepulveda Feeder Rehabilitation.

Staff remained responsive to community needs, addressing residents' questions. Staff also supported internal coordination by providing an overview of community outreach at the Annual Shutdown Meeting.

Community Relations in the Palo Verde Valley
The Community Relations Program Manager is actively engaged with farmers, residents, and local stakeholders to strengthen long-term relationships. Staff continues to highlight Metropolitan's commitment to the region and promote available grant funding opportunities for residents, small business owners, and municipalities. Staff represented Metropolitan at multiple community-focused meetings throughout the Palo Verde Valley, including the Community Improvement Fund and the Palo Verde Irrigation District board meeting.

The Community Enhancement Collaborative approved its third round of grants with three grants totaling just under $300,000, bringing the total amount awarded to approximately $1.4 million. The grants support local projects, small businesses, and community-driven improvements across the valley.