

Casitas Municipal Water District

PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE
Baggerly/Spandrio

September 17, 2020

10:00 a.m.

The meeting will be held via teleconference
To attend the meeting call (888) 788-0099 or (877) 853-5247
Enter Meeting ID 940 3544 7944#

AGENDA

1. Roll call
2. Public comments
3. Board/Management comments
4. Review and discussion of draft Strategic Communications Plan.
5. Review and discussion of draft Fall 2020 Newsletter content.

Right to be heard: Members of the public have a right to address the Board directly on any item of interest to the public which is within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Board. The request to be heard should be made immediately before the Board's consideration of the item. No action shall be taken on any item not appearing on the agenda unless the action is otherwise authorized by subdivision (b) of ¶54954.2 of the Government Code.

If you require special accommodations for attendance at or participation in this meeting, please notify our office in advance (805) 649-2251 ext. 113. (Govt. Code Section 65954.1 and 54954.2(a). Please be advised that members of the Board of Directors of Casitas who are not members of this standing committee may attend the committee meeting referred to above only in the capacity of observers, and may not otherwise take part in the meeting. (Govt. Code Sections 54952.2(c)(6).



Casitas Strategic Communications Workplan



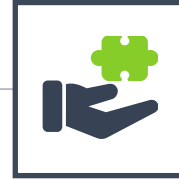
September 2020

Situation Analysis



Challenges

- COVID-19 landscape creates an uncertain economic climate and limits/prevents in-person communication.
- Customer satisfaction with Casitas' services undermines need for additional investment in expanded water supply sources.
- High level of water awareness amongst diverse and vocal customers and news media leads to increased scrutiny of decision-making.



Opportunities

- Longer runway to communicate the value of a diversified water supply portfolio.
- Customers view a reliable water supply as a high priority, providing a strong foundation for communicating the impacts of drought and climate change on the local way of life.
- High degree of trust in Casitas MWD as a responsible public agency can be leveraged in communicating Casitas' expert recommendations for future water security.

Our Objectives



Establish the need for greater investment in the region's future water security.



Elevate Casitas as a forward-looking and responsible partner that makes daily life possible for the thousands of people and hundreds of farms and businesses it serves.

Our Strategies



Educate customers on the long-term risks and vulnerabilities of relying on Lake Casitas alone



Promote individual Casitas projects already underway (i.e. pipeline replacements, Robles Forebay restoration, etc.)



Place into context the value of water conservation vs. a more diversified supply portfolio



Communicate the value of a connection to the SWP in securing the region's water future

The Audiences

Key Audiences

- Casitas retail and wholesale customers
- Casitas employees and vendors
- Neighboring water agencies
- News Media
 - VC Star, Ojai Valley News, Ojai Quarterly, Local TV & Radio
- Community organizations
- Schools
- Local businesses and organizations
- Local agricultural community
- Local NGO's and environmental advocacy organizations
- Local and regional public agencies
- Elected officials and key staff

Key Trigger Dates – September & October



Sept. (Sundays) – Certified Farmers Market

Sept. 1 – Ventura First Fridays

Sept. 3 – Protect Your Groundwater Day

Sept. 14-20 – Pollution Prevention Week

Sept. 27 – World Rivers Day

Sept. 30 – Channel Counties/Water Systems Luncheon

Sept. TBD – Completion of De La Garrigue Bridge

Oct. (Sundays) – Certified Farmers Market

Oct. TBD – Ojai Day

Oct. TBD – New LCRA Director Appointed

Oct. (Friday/Saturday Nights) – Boccali's pumpkin patch and haunted hayrides

Oct. 2 – Ventura First Fridays

Oct. 2-4 – Harvest Festival

Oct. 11-17 – Earth Science Week

Oct. 15 – Global Handwashing Day

Oct. 22 – SCWC Annual Meeting and Dinner

Oct. 24-25 – Ventura Marathon/Lace Up Running Series

Key Trigger Dates – November & December



Nov. (Sundays) – Certified Farmers Market

Nov. 3 – General Election

Nov. 6 – Ventura First Fridays

Nov. 7 – Ventura County Farm Day

Nov. 5-15 – Fall Film Festival

Nov. 30 – Construction Begins on West Ojai Pipeline

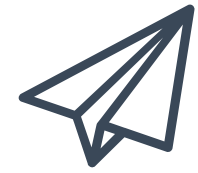
Dec. (Sundays) – Certified Farmers Market

Dec. 1-4 – ACWA Fall Conference 2020

Dec. 4 – Ventura First Fridays

Dec. TBD – State’s Decision on Ventura-Santa Barbara Counties Intertie Application

Tactical Execution – Strategy and Management



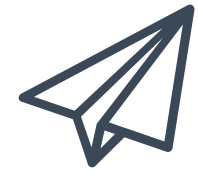
Create & Launch Branded Education Campaign

- **Campaign Name & Tagline:** Brainstorm simple, memorable campaign name and tagline centered on protecting Lake Casitas and ensuring long-term water supply reliability
- **Logo:** Develop campaign logo for use across materials and content to support the campaign
- **Mascot:** Create a mascot and costume to use in conjunction with campaign and outreach efforts
- **Message Platform:** Revise and update message platform to serve as the overarching campaign narrative throughout materials
- Prioritize and manage outreach to Casitas customers, local businesses, elected officials, and other stakeholder groups using the foundational and promotional materials
- Leverage natural trigger dates such as key board votes/decisions, Casitas infrastructure projects, grants, water observances, elections, etc. as opportunities to send out press releases, post to social channels, and otherwise externalize the good work of the District
- Assess opportunities to participate in or host virtual workshops, tele-town halls and other events as opportunities to increase communication/transparency with customers

Ongoing Strategy & Management

- Participate in weekly planning calls to prioritize deliverables, plan for key trigger dates and share insights
- Assess opportunities to partner with local businesses to help amplify

Tactical Execution – Content Development



Customer Outreach Materials

- **Casitas Newsletter:** Develop fall 2020 newsletter featuring stories on the Board's decision to delay the bond measure, when to plant, Lake Casitas update, Robles Forebay restoration
- **Bill Inserts/Postcards:** Leverage monthly bill inserts and regular postcards to deliver timely updates:
 - Fire season safety
 - Conservation reminders and tips
 - Drought status/Lake Casitas level updates

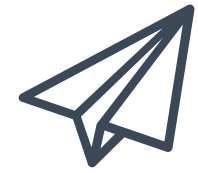
Foundational Materials

- **Fact Sheet Library:** Develop library of visually compelling fact sheets and FAQs to support education campaign:
 - Casitas' water supply overview
 - Conservation Cornerstone
 - 2020 projects at-a-glance
 - The future of Lake Casitas
- **Briefing Deck:** Create overview PowerPoint presentation for use in virtual stakeholder briefings
- **Issue Overview FAQ:** Develop in-depth FAQ overviewing the need for water supply diversification

Promotional/Paid Placements

- **Signage:** Develop promotional signage using campaign brand identity to draw attention/raise awareness of the campaign and need for investment in the region's water future:
 - Digital and print signage for local businesses
 - Mainstreet banners
 - Lawn signs
- **Giveaways:** Develop promotional materials for local stores, restaurants and businesses to use/provide to customers:
 - Facemasks
 - Reusable bags
 - Coasters
 - Hand sanitizer
- **Print Ads:** Use monthly OVN ad placements and occasional VC Star placements:
 - Positive story telling
 - Proactive information (local projects, construction impacts, etc.)
 - Amplify board decisions & votes, where appropriate

Tactical Execution – Social & Digital Outreach



Social Media

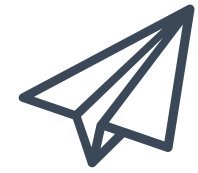
- **Social Content:** Create social cards and cadenced social media presence using Casitas' Facebook page:
 - "Lake Casitas Meter"
 - "Water Wise Wednesdays"
 - Customer testimonials
 - Feature infrastructure improvements/updates
 - Conservation webpage materials/information
- **Networking:** Post placements to Ojai Community Network Facebook Groups and local NextDoor groups
- **Paid:** Consider boosting followers and visibility through paid placements

Digital Content

- **Dedicated Webpage:** Create dedicated webpage within Casitas' website to house campaign information and materials

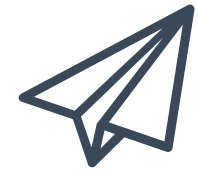
- **Whiteboard Video Series:** Develop series of three whiteboard videos to push out through social media, share during events and embed in outreach materials:
 - Why we need more water and where we can get it
 - Lake Casitas levels over time
 - Proposed project overview
- **PSAs:** Develop PSAs highlighting the ongoing need to conserve and other key messages to run at Lake Casitas Movie Nights and pitch to other local channels
- **Other Digital Resources:** Develop branded digital background to be used when participating in virtual hearings, meetings and events. Develop shareable widget/banner linking back to branded campaign webpage that partners and stakeholders can use on their own websites to show their support.

Tactical Execution – Partnerships & Events



- **Partnerships:** Partner with local business who can display in-store signage and use/give away campaign materials
 - Promote native vegetation and sensible irrigation with local nurseries and appropriate businesses
 - Promote any rebate campaigns with appropriate businesses
 - Promote the value of conservation
- **Leverage Community Events:** Setup a booth with campaign materials and giveaways and/or host community events as opportunities to increase communication and transparency with customers:
 - Ojai Day
 - Community lake level readings
 - Sunday farmers markets
 - Ojai Chamber Mixers
 - Boccali's pumpkin patch and haunted hayrides
 - Fall film festival
 - Lake Casitas Recreation Area events (water park, movie nights, etc.)
- **Virtual Townhalls & Workshops:** Explore opportunities to participate in or host virtual “workshops” with HOAs, community groups, schools, orgs and other stakeholder groups
- **Virtual Briefings:** Host one-on-one or small group briefings with targeted stakeholders

Tactical Execution – Earned Media



- **Press Releases:** Issue press releases around key trigger dates:
 - Election results (re-introducing the board)
 - Branded campaign milestones
 - 2021 forecast
 - District project completions/project milestones
 - Official drought monitor updates
 - Lake Casitas lake levels
 - Ventura river watershed litigation milestones
 - CWRP updates/public comment period extension
- **Op-eds:** Place bi-monthly op-eds in OVN and VC Star to elevate Casitas' voice as the trusted experts and forward-looking stewards of the region's limited water resources:
 - Yearend review and looking forward
 - Importance of planning for future water security
 - Conservation vs. Expanded Supply
 - "Pipe UP!": Why an Interconnection is Essential for Our Way of Life

Casitas Fall Newsletter 2020 – DRAFT COPY

GM's Corner (Word Count: 340)

Greetings,

I am pleased to bring you this Fall edition of the Casitas Municipal Water District newsletter – providing an update on the work our District is doing to deliver quality service and a more secure water supply. It is our goal to maintain communication with all those we have the privilege to serve. If you have received this newsletter it means you get some of your water from Lake Casitas, either directly from the District or indirectly through another provider.

The District continues to plan for the future – ensuring that the critical services customers rely on remain available despite these uncertain times. Earlier this summer, the District released a public draft of the Comprehensive Water Resources Plan – and we were pleased to receive feedback from the community. As we work to respond to the questions and feedback we received, the District will share an updated draft of the plan in 2021. At that time, we will give the community a chance to weigh in again. We look forward to carrying on this vital conversation about our community's water future, together.

The District continues to monitor state and local guidelines regarding COVID-19. As we all continue to abide by social distancing and mask recommendations, I am encouraged to see our team and the community come together in new ways. Weekly Friday movie nights at Lake Casitas have been a highlight in recent months, and we look forward to continuing the family-friendly fun.

Currently, the Lake Casitas Recreation Area (LCRA) is open to camping, vehicles, boats and walk-ins. The LCRA works with the Ventura County Public Health department to manage the risk of COVID-19 spread and we appreciate your patience as we continue to navigate through this unprecedented time. For more information about the LCRA, including safe camping guidelines and events like the weekly Friday movie nights, please visit www.casitaswater.org/recreation.

We welcome any comments, questions or concerns you may have about our services, so please reach out at 805-649-2251 (ext. 0) or info@casitaswater.com.

Sincerely,

Mike Flood
General Manager, Casitas Municipal Water District

Adjudication Update (Word Count: 142)

The District is actively defending and protecting the District's water rights as part of the ongoing Ventura River Watershed Adjudication process. As this legal process continues, we are committed to keeping our customers and stakeholders informed.

- Those interested in joining the suit have until the **October 30, 2020 deadline** to file and serve a response.
- The next **Status Conference will be November 16, 2020** at 2:00 p.m. at the Los Angeles County Superior Court. For information on making a telephonic appearance, visit <https://courtcall.com/?c=CCHOME>, or call (888) 882-6878.

We know many customers have questions about the proceedings. While we are unable to give specific legal advice, we encourage readers to visit our online resources to learn more. If you are concerned that the adjudication may impact you, you should seek professional legal counsel.

To learn more about the Adjudication process, please visit www.casitaswater.org/for-customers/adjudication-information.

Casitas' Community Survey Results (Word Count: 110)

Earlier this year, the District conducted a Community Survey to better understand our community's attitudes and opinions regarding the District's services and priorities for securing our water future. Your feedback was clear – and we sincerely appreciate those who took the time to participate. A strong majority of respondents listed a secure water supply as the most urgent among a list of local priorities. We also saw a recognition of the need to preserve Lake Casitas, reduce our reliance on the Lake as a source of supply and ensure access to adequate drinking water during future droughts.

To learn more about the results of our Community Survey, visit: [\[link to results\]](#).

Comprehensive Water Resources Plan (Word Count: 181)

This June, the District released a draft of the plan we have been working on to protect our water supply in Lake Casitas and provide recommendations to secure our water future – the Comprehensive Water Resources Plan.

The product of extensive study, research and public input, the plan assesses our community's water supply suitability to meet immediate and future needs. The plan found that, without action, Lake Casitas could be almost dry in the next 6 years if faced with continued drought conditions and higher temperatures. To address the projected short and long-term need for

more water, the plan outlines a forward-looking approach to developing a more sustainable, secure and diversified water supply portfolio.

Planning for our region's water future is our responsibility, but it is also a conversation with our community. The public comment period concluded on August 24, and the District is grateful that so many voiced their opinions. We will be amending the plan to take the community's feedback into account and will be releasing an updated draft in 2021.

For more information on the plan, please visit: www.casitaswater.org/your-water/casitas-water-security.

Employee Spotlight (Word Count: 132)

In late August, the District bid a bittersweet farewell to a valued member of our team and a true public servant. Carol Belser retired after 11 years as the Park Services Manager, overseeing the Lake Casitas Recreation Area (LCRA).

Carol has been instrumental in improving the experience of visitors to the LCRA. As Park Services Manager, Carol partnered with state and federal government agencies to expand the LCRA, remove invasive species that threaten lake ecology and can damage water supply infrastructure, and fought hard to secure peace officer status for the Park Rangers who are stewards of this local treasure.

Carol's tenure has been a credit to our community. Her leadership will be missed, and we offer her our most sincere appreciation for her work and best wishes for a well-deserved retirement.

Your District at Work: Project Updates (Word Count: 321)

WILDFIRE RESILIENCY PROJECTS

Rice Canyon Bridge – The District partnered with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Ojai Valley Land Conservancy to rebuild this foot bridge – which crosses over the Robles Diversion Canal – after it had burned down in the 2017 Thomas Fire. The new bridge provides safe access to the Los Padres National Forest for hikers, mountain bikers, equestrians and wildlife.

De La Garrigue Bridge – The District has completed its work to replace the old wooden vehicular bridge that crosses over the Robles-Casitas Canal in Oak View with a pre-engineered steel bridge.

Both projects have made these bridges far stronger and more resilient to future wildfires.

ROBLES FISH SCREEN PROJECT

Since 2003, the District has been working to protect the endangered Southern California Steelhead (steelhead trout). The District installed a state-of-the-art Fish Passage Facility and has reduced its water supply diversions to provide for instream flows that mimic natural storms.

Our ongoing improvements at the Robles Diversion and Fish Passage Facility have reached a new stage. Fish screen testing is underway, and the upgraded fish screens and equipment will improve the efficiency of the District's diversions to Lake Casitas while protecting the endangered Southern California Steelhead.

Learn more about diversions here: www.casitaswater.org/your-water/learn-about-diversions

OJAI WATER SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS

Since the acquisition of the Ojai Water System from the Golden State Water Company in 2017, the District has worked hard to upgrade the system. By addressing aged infrastructure in need of rehabilitation and replacement, customers will benefit from increased reliability and water delivery.

The District has now completed main replacement projects on Sunset, Ventura, Emily and Canada Streets. These projects replaced old and undersized pipelines, upgrade fire hydrants, and replace valves and service lines.

COMING SOON!

On November 30, the District will begin construction on the West Ojai Pipeline replacement project. Construction is expected to take four months and will cause some disruption to traffic while we work to upgrade vital infrastructure.

Put Down New Roots! (Word Count:179)

As we enter the fall, now is the ideal time to plant drought-resistant, native plants in your garden. Native plants can help give you a drought-resilient, beautiful garden, with less maintenance and watering. And by planting now, your garden will have the time to grow lush and mature before it heats up again next year. Throughout the District, landscaping water usage represents over 50% of residential water needs, and transitioning to native species ensures that our precious water resources are used as efficiently as possible.

Here are six top tips for a water-efficient landscape:

1. Ask your local nursery for suggestions on native plant species to best meet your landscape needs

2. Install efficient, low volume irrigation systems throughout your yard
3. Group plants with similar water needs
4. Use drought-tolerant plants in sunny, dry and windy areas
5. Planting trees can lower surrounding air and soil temperatures – helping to reduce plant and soil moisture loss
6. Use a thick layer of mulch to ensure soil moisture retention

For more information on native plants and drought-tolerant landscaping, visit:
www.casitaswater.org/landscape.

Lake Casitas Level Update (Word Count: 45)

As of September 7, Lake Casitas held approximately 99,000 acre feet of water, which is about 42% of its total capacity.

**An acre foot is defined as the volume of water necessary to cover one acre of surface area to a depth of one foot.*

Your District Board of Directors (Word Count: 48)

Brian Brennan, Director – Division 1

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- Email: bbrennan@casitaswater.com

Pete Kaiser, Director – Division 3

- Phone: (805) 649-3318
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Angelo Spandrio, Director – Division 4

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Russ Baggerly, Director – Division 5

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Connect with Us! (Word Count: 5)

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