

# Becoming part of the conversation



Increasing public works' public perception

# Who we are



**Lael  
Wageneck,  
APR  
Santa Barbara  
County Public  
Works PIO**



**Maurice Chaney  
City of  
Roseville,  
Environmental  
Utilities PIO**



**Julie Hagen,  
CPA, CPFO  
Santa Barbara  
County Public  
Works Deputy  
Director**

# Overview

- The role of Public Works in public safety (Communicating before, during, and after a disaster)
- Creating media interest in major infrastructure projects
- Developing online community ambassadors
- Developing your brand on social media
- Training staff on how to work with the public
- Employee injuries and crisis communications
- Public Records Act tips and tricks

# Strategic communications plans



Public relations is **"a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics."** - Public Relations Society of America



Public relations is **"making friends with the right people so you can get things done. Over beer."** - Lael Wageneck

# Strategic communications plans



**Get their  
attention**



**Educate them**



**Reinforce or  
change  
opinions**



**Inspire  
meaningful  
action**



# R.P.I.E.: The key to a solid strategic communications plan

- Research (situation analysis, research, audience)
- Planning (SMART objectives, strategies)
- Implementation (tactics, key messages, theme)
- Evaluation (assessment of objectives and outcome)



- Helps you align with your values
- Keeps you on track
- Helps you measure success

# Case study: Groundwater program in Roseville



“Our homes were built for good water.”

# Grounded in research



## 2016

- Top-of-mind concerns for water supplies above public education, economic stability, roads and streets, and new development.
- Nearly half of the respondents (48%) are less than accepting while the rest remain “accepting” or “totally accepting.”
- Research revealed that customers wanted to learn more about what we do and what we managed.

## 2019

Participants generally supported the use of groundwater as a water source, but needed clarification on some of the terms used to describe the process, including dispelling the notion that a groundwater aquifer was a manmade structure or a void in the ground.





“If the city were to choose to implement this as a regular water supply, **a strong education effort** would be needed to dispel preconceived notions of groundwater quality, **help residents understand that groundwater is an excellent water supply** and not less superior than surface water, **calm fears** about what the new emergency plan would be, and **provide a clear explanation** regarding distribution”

**2016 stakeholder interviews**

# 2019 focus groups



“...Virtually no one knew what an “aquifer” was. (Many in both groups assumed it was a manmade, physical structure used to storage water underground.)”



Ongoing efforts to educate the public about Roseville's growing groundwater program and dispelling myths associated with groundwater usage

Create public events that provide opportunities for customers to see our groundwater infrastructure, taste groundwater, educate customers on the process of replenishing and extracting groundwater resources, and answer any questions

**Our intention**



**Our outreach toolbox**



# Messaging platform

- Groundwater is part of Roseville's water supply planning
- Groundwater is safe, and natural, and can provide additional water resources for our thriving community
- Use words like "future" – it tests well and is positive



# Seeing is believing, tasting is groundwater reaffirming

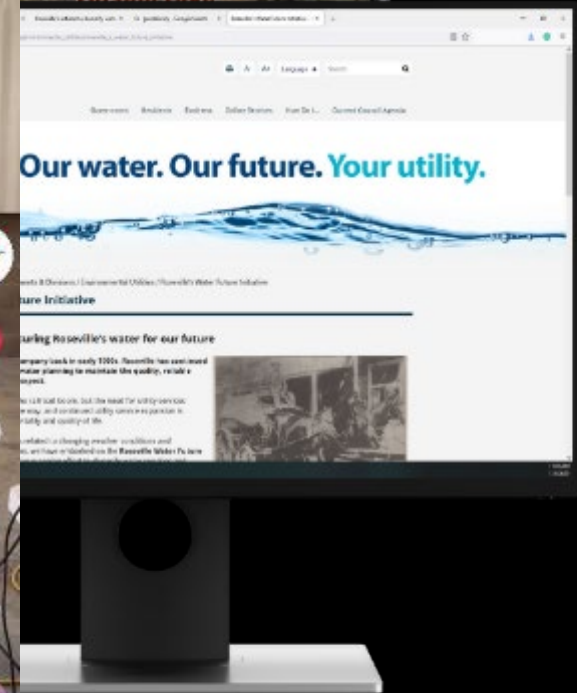
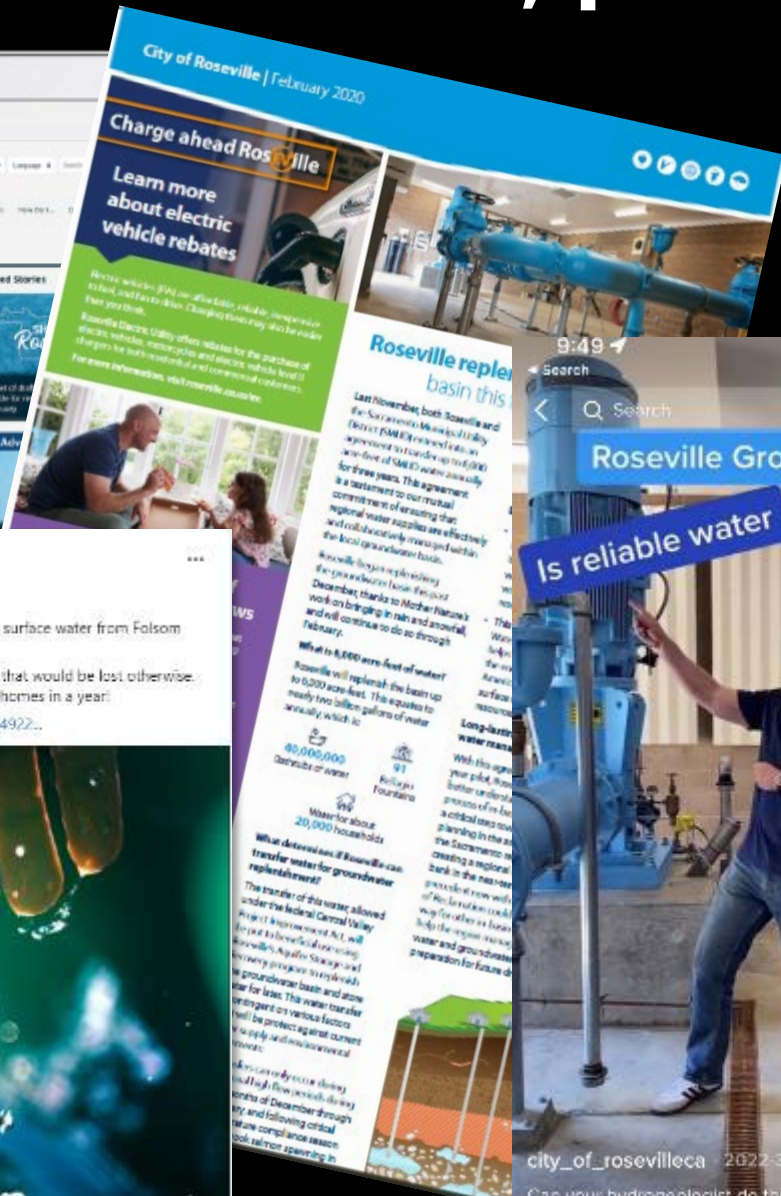
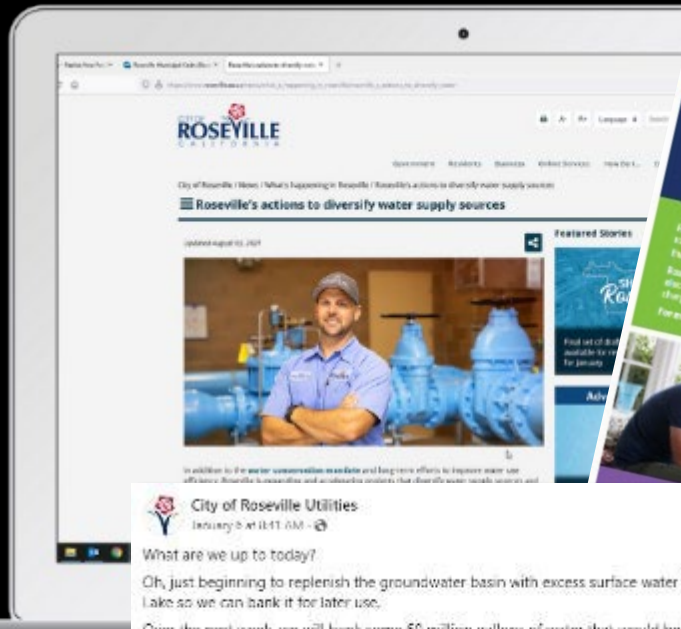


- Multi-faceted outreach
- Storytelling
- Humanizing your organization
- Changing perceptions (blind taste test)

**If a picture is worth a thousand words, then  
is a video worth a million**



# Oversaturate: Create once, publish everywhere





# New wave of public opinion research shows efficacy in communication program

## Focus groups

- Few mention groundwater as a water source
- When prompted: They think this system is **“fantastic,” “awesome,” “wonderful,” and “really cool”**. They appreciate underground storage as efficient, evaporation-proof, good use of space, and effective.

## Statistically-valid web survey

- Acceptance of groundwater as a drinking water supply is now at 81 percent!
- Customers are willing to pay for more reliability in their water service



# Now what? Adjust and carry on

## Continued ongoing outreach



- Relaunch our water reliability paid media campaign with research insights in mind – key messages, look and feel
- Exploit opportunities where we can gain media exposure or third-party endorsements
- Launch a citizen's water academy in quarter four of 2023 to build advocacy in the community



# Case study: The Santa Barbara County ReSource Center





# Santa Barbara County ReSource Center and SB1383

## State methane reduction mandates (SB 1383)

### SBC ReSource Center

- Recovers recyclable materials, transforms organics into landscape nutrients, and creates renewable energy.
- Largest capital project in County history - \$150M

### Campaigns goals

- Increase support for ReSource Center (focus of negative articles)
- Educate the public on SB 1383
- Reputation management
  - County as leader in methane reduction



# Santa Barbara County ReSource Center and SB1383

## Rate increase campaign

- Keep it simple
- Focus on the positive outcome
- Provide an outlet for feedback

## Research

- Primary Qualitative
  - Phone and email discussions with ratepayers
  - News article and social media review
- Secondary Quantitative
  - Advertising, eblast, pageview analytics

# Santa Barbara County ReSource Center and SB1383

## Planning

- To increase attention, increase click rates and page views by 25% during summer
- Increase action towards recycling with a rate of two facility tours/week by end of winter 2021
- Increase positive earned media stories by 50% by December 21

# Santa Barbara County ReSource Center and SB1383

## Tactics

- Digital and print ads, enhanced website, videos, photos, monthly newsletter/e-blast (16K subscribers)
- Ads, tours, presentations inviting the public to tour
- Media tours, interviews, presentations, photos

## Messaging

- Different messages for different areas
- Canned messages in coordination with other wastesheds/waste haulers

## Budget: ~\$8000 for a \$150M project

- Print - \$4K
- Digital Ads - \$3K
- Mailchimp - \$700





**Generating media interest**



# Generating media Interest

Exclusives



# Media reporting before and after

## Vendor Picked in Gas-for-Trash Scheme

Anaerobic Digester Gets Nod as Conversion Technology for Tajiguas Landfill Project

By Jonathan Lind  
March 02, 2016 10:48am



**Voices** | By Michael S. Brown | Mon Dec 05, 2016 | 4:30pm

## Dump the Dirty MRF

Imminent wrongheaded actions for Tajiguas Landfill will be costly and old tech.

**News** | By Tyler Hayden | Fri Dec 02, 2016 | 9:54am

## City Considers Major Tajiguas Landfill Deal, Warts and All

Final vote on 20-year, \$9-million-a-year contract set for Tuesday.



**News** | By Tyler Hayden | Thu Feb 11, 2016 | 12:00am

## Landfill Project a Waste of Energy?

Enviros voice grave concerns over the \$110 million proposal.



**Briefs** | By Nick Welsh | Thu Jul 30, 2016 | 12:00am

## Landfill Deal: Something Stinks

Not all members of Santa Barbara County Council were thrilled to learn that the public-private partnership they've controversially entered into six years ago to build a \$100 million, state-of-the-art recycling operation at the Tajiguas landfill had moved to a vote.



**About Us** | By Indy Staff | Wed Jul 28, 2021 | 10:46pm

## Jean Yamamura Is All About Trash

Here's why our reporter's career is so fascinating with waste management.



**Cover Story** | By Jean Yamamura | Wed Jul 28, 2020 | 5:07am

## Waste Not, Want Not: Grand Tajiguas Project Turns Proverb into Reality

Making trash is easy, dealing with it is not.



**Environment** | By Jean Yamamura | Fri Jul 16, 2021 | 5:22pm

## Tajiguas Landfill Officially Opens Recycling, Methane-Energy Plant

Santa Barbara County officials celebrate turning trash into black gold.

## Tajiguas Landfill Offers a Window Into ReSource Center's Waste Reduction Efforts

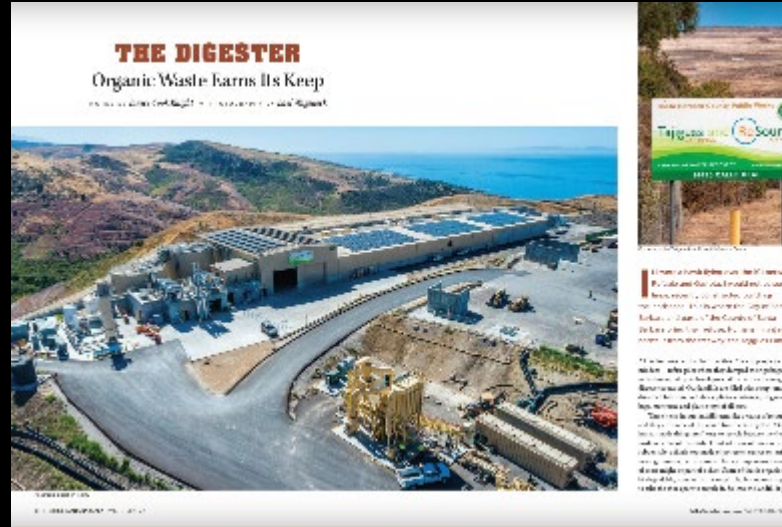
Guided tour as part of Santa Barbara's Creek Week shows the process that trash goes through and the focus on reducing, reusing and recycling.





# Generating media interest

Pitching different angles





# Design

The image shows two vertical posters side-by-side. The left poster is white with a light blue border. It features the word "Reduce" in a blue circle at the top, followed by the question "What's the future of your trash in 2021?". Below this is the ReSource Center logo and another instance of the question. At the bottom is an icon of a person with a shovel and the website "LESSISMORE.ORG". The right poster is white with a light blue border. It features the question "What's the future of your trash in 2021?" at the top, followed by an icon of a person with a shovel, the ReSource Center logo, a sun and clouds icon, and the website "LESS IS MORE .ORG".

**Reduce**  
What's the future of your trash in 2021?

What's the future of your trash in 2021?

LESSISMORE.ORG

What's the future of your trash in 2021?

LESS IS MORE .ORG

The poster is white with a light blue border. It features the ReSource Center logo at the top, which includes the text "Santa Barbara County Public Works" and "REDEFINING WASTE RECOVERY". Below the logo is a green box with the text "KEEPS THE EXISTING THREE BIN SYSTEM AND MAKES IT BETTER." and an icon of a trash bin. To the right of this is a green box with a checkmark icon and the text "DIVERTS 60% OF YOUR HOUSEHOLD TRASH CAN FROM THE LANDFILL MOSTLY BY PULLING OUT ORGANICS AND WET PAPER.". Below this is a blue box with the text "YOUR RECYCLABLES WILL BE MORE EFFECTIVELY PROCESSED." and a recycling symbol with a dollar sign. At the bottom are logos for the City of Santa Barbara and the Public Works Department, along with the text "TO LEARN MORE, VISIT LessIsMore.org".

**ReSource CENTER**  
Santa Barbara County Public Works  
REDEFINING WASTE RECOVERY

KEEPS THE EXISTING THREE BIN SYSTEM AND MAKES IT BETTER.

DIVERTS 60% OF YOUR HOUSEHOLD TRASH CAN FROM THE LANDFILL MOSTLY BY PULLING OUT ORGANICS AND WET PAPER.

YOUR RECYCLABLES WILL BE MORE EFFECTIVELY PROCESSED.

TO LEARN MORE, VISIT [LessIsMore.org](http://LessIsMore.org)

- Clean design
- Plain language
- Questions
- Icons
- Limited color palette

# Public ambassadors

Distrust is the default - Nearly 6 in 10 say their default tendency is to distrust something until they see evidence it is trustworthy

50% of people see government and media as divisive forces

People are more likely to trust you when they believe your actions align with values and principles they deem to be acceptable.

Group tours create ambassadors that spread your message with increased trust





# Crisis Communications and Emergencies

- What is the problem?
- Is the problem ongoing/has it been solved?
- What resources are being used to address the problem?
- How will the agency prevent the problem from occurring in the future?



# Speaking to the media

- Focus on positives
- PREP
  - Point
  - Reason
  - Example
  - Point
- It's ok to say "I don't know" and to ask to repeat an answer.
- Be personable





# Crisis Communications and Emergencies



**Get their attention**

**Photo of flooding, fire, damaged road**



**Educate them**

**Rain is coming, roads are damaged, etc.**



**Reinforce/change opinions**

**Be prepared, know safe driving rules, etc.**



**Inspire meaningful action**

**Get sandbags, drive safe, create plan, etc.**



# Crisis Communications and Emergencies

**Get their  
attention**



**Educate them**



**Reinforce/change  
opinions**



**Inspire meaningful  
action**







# Crisis Communications and Emergencies

**Get their attention**



**Educate them**



**Reinforce/change opinions**



**Inspire meaningful action**

Home › Departments › Public Works › Water Resources › Flood Control › Emergency Storm Res

## Emergency Beach Operations

Urban environments are a patchwork of human interaction with natural systems we serve, including floodway protection and environmental stewardship. The S facilities to prevent minor storm problems from becoming major flood problems

- We remove material from basins to reduce the potential for debris damage
- We deliver suitable sediment that increases beach width and minimizes er

We follow environmental regulations to manage and protect wildlife and be



# Crisis Communications and Emergencies

Get their attention



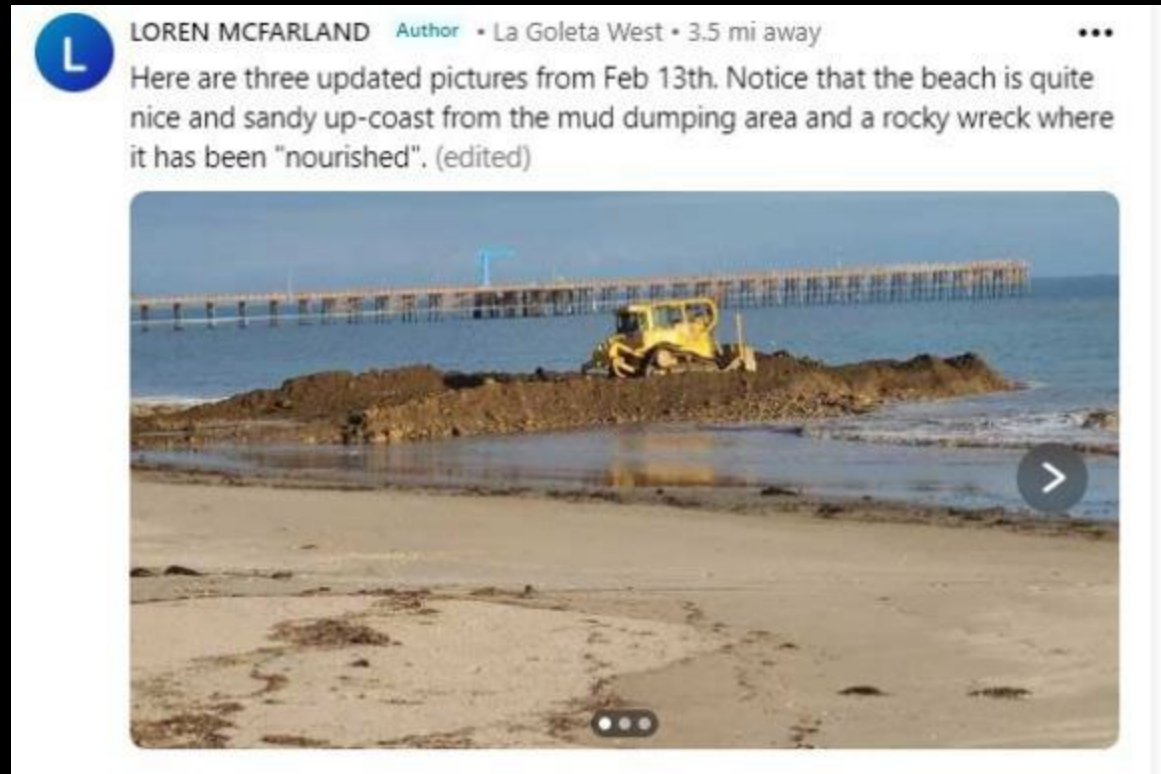
Educate them



Reinforce/change opinions



Inspire meaningful action





# Crisis Communications and Emergencies

Get their attention



Educate them



Reinforce/change opinions



Inspire meaningful action

**T** Tiadashi (danny) molina • South of Hollister • 1.1 mi away  
Pretty sure the storms eroded the beach away and they are fixing it - I don't know this as fact just making a guess based on the heavy rains and what looked like the US army corps of engineers there as well as lots of truck hauling in dirt/rocks?  
3w Like Reply Share 6

**C** Carol Dixon • El Camino - San Simeon • 1.3 mi away  
I guess none of you have lived here long enough to remember this being done before many times. It used to be common when we actually had winters with rain. They do it because it works to restore the beach. You can't just leave it the way it was after the big storm.  
3w Like Reply Share 2

**M** Marc Ingrosso • South of Hollister • 1.2 mi away  
Carol they want to make something out of nothing, because they 'feel' the debris is causing issues. For whatever reason they refuse to believe or comprehend the benefits stated by the environmental review  
3w Like Reply Share 2





# Crisis Communications and Emergencies

**Get their attention**



**Educate them**



**Reinforce/change opinions**



**Inspire meaningful action**



sbcountypublicworks Water conservation is a way of life in Santa Barbara County. Even when it's wet and raining, and the lake is nearly full, we still need to protect our water supplies for when it's not. The US Bureau of Reclamation scheduled a release from Bradbury Dam today from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. to allow for incoming flows. Each of the dam's spillway gates will be raised to allow for outflow into the Santa Ynez R. Max releases will be ~4,100 cubic feet per second. Learn more about water conservation at [waterwisesb.org](http://waterwisesb.org) Bureau of Reclamation @bureau\_of\_reclamation

2w



98 views

FEBRUARY 8



# Public Records Act Requests

- League of Cities Guide to the Public Records Act
- Parallels Toolbox – Duplicate Finder
- Delete emails that do not include information relevant to the conduct of the public's business.
- Practice good communications etiquette: Remember that off-handed remarks and jokes are not exempt, and anything that can be made public can appear in the media

THANK YOU!

Questions?