

ITEM: 3

2021 Dr. Teng-Chung Wu Pollution Prevention Award – Presentation of Award to California Association of Sanitation Agencies

DISCUSSION

This item is the presentation of the 2021 Dr. Teng-Chung Wu Pollution Prevention Award to the California Association of Sanitation Agencies (CASA) for spearheading efforts to pass California legislation (AB 818) this past October that will require all packaging for diaper wipes, cleaning wipes, and cosmetic wipes to display “Do Not Flush” warnings clearly. The legislation also requires wipes manufacturers to educate the public on the impacts of flushing wipes improperly.

This is great news for the environment because, unlike toilet paper, wipes don't break down in water. They remain largely intact as they pass through sewer pipes, which can cause costly clogs, equipment malfunctions, and sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs) that can adversely impact beneficial uses. In [May 2020](#) and [August 2021](#), we reported to the Board that wipes-related SSOs increased during the pandemic while the overall number of SSOs decreased, likely caused by the desire to disinfect surfaces and exacerbated by the toilet paper shortage. In addition to preventing SSOs, the legislation also helps prevent microplastics pollution. Nearly all wipes contain plastic and shed fibers that wastewater treatment plants are not designed to remove.

This pollution prevention success is the result of a three-year effort among representatives from wastewater and product stewardship groups and wipes manufacturers. CASA drafted the original bill and led efforts to ensure its passage. CASA continues to collaborate with wipes manufacturers through the Responsible Flushing Alliance formed to comply with the public education component of the new legislation. CASA also continues to advocate for similar legislation nationwide and continues to work with wipes manufacturers on other types of "flushable" wipes not covered by AB 818, putting pressure on the industry to meet more stringent international flushability standards as opposed to less stringent voluntary industry standards.

The Board established the Dr. Teng-Chung Wu Pollution Prevention Award in 2007 to honor the legacy of Dr. Wu, who worked for many years at the Board and was a pollution prevention advocate long before it became popular. He believed the best way to keep the Bay clean was to keep pollutants from getting into wastewater, instead of constructing expensive treatment works to remove them. The annual award in his name recognizes innovation, effectiveness, and collaboration in pollution prevention.

APPENDIX

A. Past Pollution Prevention Award Recipients

Appendix A
Past Pollution Prevention Award Recipients

Past Pollution Prevention Award Recipients

Year	Recipient	Achievement
2007	Bay Area Pollution Prevention Group	Mercury reduction education
2007	East Bay Municipal Utility District	Collaboration with local groups
2008	San Francisco Public Utilities Commission	"Fats, Oils, and Grease to Fuel" program
2009	Bay Area Pollution Prevention Group	"No Drugs Down the Drain" campaign
2010	Wastewater Treatment Agencies of Marin County	Collaborative public education program
2011	Millbrae Water Pollution Prevention Program	Outstanding public outreach
2012	Alameda County	Safe Drug Disposal Ordinance
2012	Thomas Barron	Lifetime achievement in pollution prevention
2013	City of Palo Alto	Research and outreach efforts on contaminants of emerging concern
2014	Phil Bobel	Lifetime achievement in pollution prevention
2015	Central Contra Costa Sanitary District	Leading a campaign against flushing disposable wipes
2016	City of San Jose	Innovative outreach campaigns
2017	Melody LaBella and Karin North	Numerous projects to reduce wastewater pollution
2018	Ann Joseph	Promoting integrated pest management in retail
2019	Geoff Brosseau	Reducing stormwater pollution throughout California
2020	City of Berkeley	Single Use Foodware and Litter Reduction Ordinance