

Salt Management Strategy (SaMS)

2nd Education and Outreach Workgroup Meeting

January 24, 2019

The second meeting for the Education and Outreach Workgroup (EOWG) for the Salt Management Strategy (SaMS) was held from 9:30 am – 12:00 pm on January 24, 2019, at the Northern Virginia Regional Commission (NVRC) at 3040 Williams Drive, Fairfax, Virginia.

Attendance

Twenty-four (24) individuals, in addition to four Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) staff and one staff member from the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin (ICPRB; DEQ's contractual support), participated in the meeting.

Christina Alexander, City of Fairfax
Emily Bialowas, Izaak Walton League
Michael Bochynski, Clean Water Action
Heidi Bonnaffon, MWCOG
Renee Bourassa, ICPRB*
Sandy Burkholder, Arlington Co. Resident
Emily Burton, Fairfax County
Rosie Clark, Prince William County
Cathy Cogswell, Loudoun Water
Mike Collins, Arlington County
Ali Culhane, Fairfax County Public Schools
Dave Evans, DEQ*†
Maya Fromme, Clean Water Action
Gary Graff, Fairfax County Public Schools
Jean Gralley□

Will Isenberg, DEQ*
Pam Kenel, Loudoun Water
Max Kuker, GKY
Jennifer McCord, VDOT
Corey Miles, NVRC
Susan Miller, Fairfax Water□
Merrily Pierce, McLean Citizens Assoc.
Niffy Saji, Fairfax Water□
Rebecca Shoemaker, DEQ□†
Russ Short, NVTU
Sarah Sivers, DEQ*
David Unger, Prince William County
Kris Unger, Friends of Accotink Creek
Greg Waters, Snow and Ice Management Co. †

*Facilitator

†Participated via teleconference

□ Non-member of EOWG

Meeting Highlights

At this meeting, the workgroup members discussed the communication products envisioned for the SaMS and possible funding sources. Highlights include:

- Review of a draft survey to gauge public awareness and willingness to change behavior. This can be used to inform the communications plan and as a measurement for success. Discussions included potential need for questions that pertain to businesses and possibly a second survey focused on questions targeted to help evaluate the pilot effort.
- A draft pilot outreach campaign that will be implemented in the March/April 2019 timeframe.

- The development of a positive and non-judgmental overarching message and tagline.
- Discussion of the framework for outreach materials to deliver the message and begin to generate awareness on the topic.
- Several funding opportunities were identified as possible options to support implementation of the SaMS. Funding needs should be more defined before exploring options and therefore, additional effort on this item will be paused until after the pilot concludes.
- Subcommittees are being created by DEQ (post meeting) to continue development of follow-up action items (identified below as Action Items 1-5) in time to launch the pilot outreach campaign on March 1st.
- 1-2 volunteers/nominations for 1) presenting an overview of this workgroup's progress and draft recommendations for the SaMS at the next Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) meeting and 2) representing this workgroup on the Steering Committee.

Notes for Other Workgroups / Potential Areas of Overlap:

- Other workgroups may benefit from being involved in the pilot outreach campaign or running a concurrent pilot project.
- Recommend coordinating on possible funding opportunities identified by other workgroups and identifying, collectively, possible funding needs prior to reaching out to those identified.

Follow-up Action Items:*

1. Pilot Outreach Campaign: Revise the [draft document](#) identifying the strategy to conduct a pilot outreach campaign from March 1st thru April 30th.
 - a. Volunteers: Emily Burton (Fairfax County), Corey Miles (NVRC), Merrily Pierce (McLean Citizens Association), Kris Unger (Friends of Accotink Creek)
2. Pilot Survey: Revise the [draft survey](#) to consider organization of questions (most important first, grouping by audience, and possibility of “branching” the survey based upon responses) and adding questions to address another target audience. Consider need for a second survey as follow-up to assist with evaluation. Also, consider the demographics of the target audience (are we speaking to them?).
 - a. Volunteers: Heidi Bonnaffon (MWCOG), Emily Burton (Fairfax County), Mike Collins (Arlington County), Corey Miles (NVRC), Merrily Pierce (McLean Citizens Association, develop questions directed towards businesses);
3. Over-Arching Message: Using the input received for an over-arching message (such as a logo or motto for SaMS) to be short and neutral, come up with a few to test during the pilot period (March 1st – April 30th). Drafts will take into consideration the concerns identified, such as the use of the word “less” (salt) in an over-arching message. The group may also come up with messages that fall under the main message that are more targeted for certain groups, such as homeowners.
 - a. Volunteers: Heidi Bonnaffon (MWCOG), Mike Collins (Arlington County), Kris Unger (Friends of Accotink Creek)
4. Outreach Materials: Revise [content](#) to tailor to suggestions from the workgroup. Incorporate the over-arching message and draft short accompanying text. Decide how many and which designs to include in the pilot.
 - a. Volunteers: Michael Bochyski (Clean Water Action), Mike Collins (Arlington County), Kris Unger (Friends of Accotink Creek)

5. Social Media Tool Kit: This material was not presented during the meeting as it was not ready in time. However, the draft includes information that may be useful in the pilot effort. Efforts needed here are (1) reviewing the draft to see what information could be incorporated into the pilot and (2) drafting text to be distributed via email, newsletter, and social media during the pilot effort.
 - a. Volunteers: Michael Bochyski (Clean Water Action), Mike Collins (Arlington County), Emily Burton (Fairfax County), Kris Unger (Friends of Accotink Creek)
6. Request for 1-2 volunteers/nominations for the following (All members):
 - a. Present this workgroup's progress at the next SAC meeting (anticipated for May 2019).
 - b. Serve on the Steering Committee (convened towards the end of the SaMS process).
7. Check with Region of Waterloo (Canada) regarding any educational programs developed for schools as part of their Salting Shift program. (DEQ)

Timeline to complete Action Items Nos. 1-5 is identified below:

- Complete proposed revisions by Feb. 15th
- Coordinate revisions with rest of workgroup on Feb. 15th (18th at the latest)
- Workgroup feedback on revisions due Feb. 22nd
- Make any final revisions by Feb. 28th (enable launch of pilot on March 1st)

*The above identified volunteers are those persons who confirmed their willingness to participate on a subgroup through either a poll or in email correspondence to DEQ prior to finalization of the notes on February 5, 2019.

Meeting Summary

Introductions

The meeting opened with brief introductory remarks from DEQ. Participants then briefly introduced themselves, providing their name and the organization they represent.

DEQ gave a rundown of the overall [timeline](#) for the Salt Management Strategy.

The objectives for this meeting were to discuss action items so that the workgroup can continue to move forward on each action. The workgroup is to focus on what the EOWG's section of the final product will look like.

The [highlights](#) from the previous EOWG meeting include:

- The workgroup is working towards a comprehensive outreach campaign that will include useful materials to generate awareness and promote positive behavioral changes.
- The workgroup will develop a pilot study to test messages and materials. It was recommended that this pilot include a survey to generate a baseline level of awareness and identify motivation to change. The majority of the action items from this first meeting are in support of this pilot.
- A cohesive message among organizations is needed so we are all speaking with one voice.
- A social media toolkit as part of the SaMS will help promote the message and provide examples and templates for that purpose.

The highlights from other SaMS workgroup meetings:

- Pre-storm messaging and providing information on what people can do, such as telework, is important.
- Public expectations need to change to support the recommendations. Therefore, the EOWG needs to consider messages that communicate levels of service and promote a proper level of expectations in the public.
- Consistent, coordinated messages need to be developed.
- Concurrent pilot projects in other groups, like the Water Quality Monitoring and Research workgroup, can be valuable to help gauge changes.

Action Item Presentations

Action Item #1: Review Other Programs (Russ Short/Sarah Sivers)

Mr. Short looked at other salt management programs in the USA and Canada to gain an understanding of what current efforts already exist and what approaches those programs are using. The information he summarized into a [table](#) was provided and can be accessed [here](#). Mr. Short's presentation can be found [here](#).

Elements (both voluntary and mandatory) from other programs include:

- Guidelines for sidewalks and roadways
- Certification programs
- Fliers for BMPs, technology, and education
- Annual training for vendors
- Forms and guidance for equipment calibration and maintenance

DEQ followed-up with some of the programs identified to learn more about measures for success. There were not any clear-cut measures for success, but those contacted feel their program is successful because there is continued interest in the programs (i.e. continued sign-ups for trainings, etc.) and measurable reductions in the amount of salt applied. Measuring public perception of the issue is another way to track progress and has been measured through metrics such as shares on social media and the usage of hashtags. However, links to improvements in water quality have been more difficult to identify/correlate. As many of these programs have been in existence for approximately 10 years, the main take away is this is a long process; it is not going to happen overnight.

As far as messaging, certain messages worked better than others (i.e. avoid sounding "preachy"), with one program noting they have worked to refine their efforts over a period of time.

A question was raised regarding education programs at schools. DEQ will follow-up with the Region of Waterloo (Canada) regarding their program and whether it includes outreach to schools.

Action Item #2: Pilot Outreach Campaign (Sarah Sivers)

The draft [Pilot Outreach Campaign](#) was discussed (Ms. Sivers' presentation can be found [here](#)). The draft campaign plan outlines the campaign's purpose, background, objectives and measures of success, key messages, key audiences, communication/distribution channels, frequency of communications, timeframe, resources, and contacts. The campaign will explore what messages resonate with people and how willing they are to change their actions.

This is an opportunity to test the message to see how it will resonate with the public. It will develop a

baseline for current knowledge on the subject. DEQ proposed the pilot project start March 1st and run through April 30th.

The Long Branch watershed was proposed as the area for the campaign because it is a relatively homogenous watershed as it is mostly residential (with many commuters); there is a USGS gage located there that was used in the TMDL; and it is within the Accotink Creek TMDL watershed. If Long Branch is chosen, then on the ground outreach efforts will be focused in that area, with the internet outreach effort being more broadly applied. This is due to the nature of the internet as a communication channel and request for workgroup members to support the pilot by spreading the message/information through their affiliation's distribution channels. After discussing the specifics and understanding that the internet outreach efforts will be region wide, the workgroup supported the proposed target area for on the ground outreach efforts. The City of Fairfax commented they want to be included in the groundwork on this part of the project.

The distribution will be conducted through the EOWG member's organizations and networks. It will include newsletters, social media, posters, and a website. There will also be a listening session held in the Long Branch watershed to provide an opportunity for in-person communication.

A comment was received that the pilot should keep two objectives in mind; to test (1) an over-arching message and (2) the communications plan itself. It was further suggested that testing the over-arching message should occur first, before developing supporting materials.

In terms of content of the outreach effort, one member suggested asking participants what type of actions they would be willing to take to reduce their salt usage. Another member noted that it is important to get people to take ownership of the process and not make it sound like DEQ/SaMS has all the answers.

A member commented that the outreach campaign could be made into a template/generic framework for inclusion into the SaMS as a recommendation for conducting outreach activities. In other words, once modified after testing the pilot, the campaign could be fleshed out as a generic region wide campaign for all SaMS outreach methods.

Additional input provided from flipchart on the wall during the break:

- Could we pilot the core message and associated art first before we try to develop materials (2nd year pilot)?
- Use watershed partners to test and hone our message.
- Fairfax County's media outlets are available as outreach channels.

Action Item #3: Preliminary Survey (Corey Miles/Will Isenberg)

A [survey](#) was drafted by workgroup members aimed to collect baseline data to understand current level of awareness and willingness to change behavior. It was created with two audiences in mind, residents and commuters.

The questions include where people live, where they commute, expectations for road conditions and parking lots, behavior regarding salt application, awareness of the impact of salt use, and optional demographic information. The placement and wording of questions were considered to reduce bias as much as possible. The survey, which takes approximately 11 minutes and is hosted on DEQ's Survey Monkey account, will be part of the outreach material distributed during the pilot campaign.

One member recommended adding questions or developing a second survey to target the business audience. It was noted that use of a question to branch in Survey Monkey between businesses vs. residents/commuters could avoid the need to develop a separate survey. Merrily Pierce volunteered to speak with the McLean Chamber of Commerce to develop questions for business respondents.

Another member recommended adding a question asking how a person is affected by a winter storm. It was noted the desire to ensure questions in the survey would be useful to help tailor the outreach efforts and also, to limit the amount of time to complete the survey. It was noted that this question could be a free form question at the end of the survey or it could be included in the listening session.

Since responses are permanently recorded with each page of the survey on Survey Monkey, the workgroup discussed that the organization of the questions should have the most important questions on the first page of the survey, in case the person taking the survey quits after the first page.

Additional input provided from flipchart on the wall during the break:

- Do we have money to invest in the survey process? There are firms that can help increase respondents.
- Audience demographics and diversity needs to be considered when evaluating the questions. Questions to ask are can our questions be read by readers with low literacy and do we need a survey for non-English speaker?
- We should have questions at the beginning of the survey to branch different audiences to different questions.

Action Item #4: Overarching SaMS Message (Kris Unger)

The workgroup members were asked to complete a survey prior to the meeting of possible [overarching messages](#) that accompanied a one-page explanation of the parameters for those draft messages. The draft messages and survey results were presented at the meeting.

The survey indicated (of those that responded) that the two most popular messages among the members were “*Less is Best*” and “*Halt before you Salt.*” However, discussion during the meeting identified concern that *Less is Best* is unclear because how much is “less?”. Also, if the applicator is already applying the correct amount, then less is not necessarily best and the message requires further context. There was general agreement a message of *Less is Best* may work if targeted at residents.

Members discussed the proposed messages and agreed that the overarching message needs to be short, catchy, and neutral (i.e. without judgement). Examples of such messages used by other jurisdictions is “*Salting Shift*” and “*Slippery when Winter.*” This type of message is more like a slogan. Additional messages (such as *Less is Best*) may be developed that are better targeted at one audience or another. It was suggested that a few proposed messages could be added to the survey to gain input on which potential messages resonate best.

New Action (not from previous meeting): Outreach Materials (Jean Gralley)

Jean Gralley is a writer/illustrator and creates comic books and other materials for Fairfax Water on environmental issues. Ms. Gralley is currently working on a STEM book with Fairfax Water on the impacts of salt. She gave a [presentation](#) on a draft framework for outreach materials she proposes for the SaMS. She said that even though the subject is sobering, serious and shocking, the messaging should not be. Her suggested framework to deliver the message is light-hearted and slightly humorous, with light “touches” and small “bite size” bits of information that comes from different points of view.

For example, a tagline “*Salt tastes bad to Mother Nature*” with an accompanying humorous illustration with additional text targeted to the audience, such as those concerned about the environment.

The members really liked her approach and suggested it include more than just environmental issues. It should also include infrastructure, personal property (e.g. cars), drinking water, and public health. It can be hit from these different points of view, but the campaign would still have a uniform look. During conversation, it was noted there are sensitivities to be considered, such as to whom the message is attributed. For the draft, Ms. Gralley proposed DEQ as the project host, however, DEQ noted this was a collaborative effort and it should be the SaMS collectively as the host. Discussion of a possible SaMS logo to clarify that this project is larger than just DEQ could be considered. Further refinement of the proposed message will be based upon the input provided.

Action Item #5: Funding Opportunities (Pam Kenel)

An overview of the potential funding opportunities was identified. One promising source is the Water Research Foundation. There are a couple of options and it was noted that subscribers (which include a couple workgroup members) who apply receive prioritization. A summary of all funding opportunities identified during this meeting are provided below:

Possible funding options as outlined in Ms. Kenel’s [presentation](#) include:

- Water Research Foundation (a member organization that uses its dues to fund various projects)
 - Emergent Opportunities Program
 - Tailored Collaboration Program (funds-matching program)
- Private/Non-profit organizations
 - Penn Foundation
 - Rockefeller Foundation
 - Trust for Public Land
 - Grants tied to Climate Resilience and Sustainability
- Public Agency Research Partners
 - EPA (they have funded workshops in the past)
 - USDA
 - NASA (there is funding for using their datasets)
- Association of State Drinking Water Administrators (ASDWA)
 - May not have funding, but could be a good partner
 - They have a website on [road salt](#)

It was noted that the USEPA might be especially interested because the project is a collaboration between the Safe Drinking Water Act and the Clean Water Act. One member asked about opportunities for USEPA’s Sec. 319 grant funding. DEQ noted that the SaMS is not being developed to meet the 9 key elements required for a plan to be approved by USEPA and thus be eligible for Sec. 319 funding. DEQ had considered this aspect in initial planning for this effort and decided it could limit the SaMS due to the type of information needed for a “9 element” plan. However, it may be possible to subsequently develop a separate document that ties into the SaMS to provide the additional required information to establish Sec. 319 eligibility.

It was recommended prior to proceeding with additional work on this item; that the group identify overall funding needs of the SaMS so that a comprehensive understanding of funding needs is identified prior to reaching out to the funding organizations.

Additional input provided from flipchart on the wall during the break:

- Could we clarify which aspects we are seeking funding for?

Ideas/Concerns Lightning Round

- The message/campaign should help manage public expectations. What a clear road looks like, what is the expected level of service, etc.
- The key goal of the outreach and education effort is to promote awareness and spur positive behavior changes.
- A focus group could be utilized to test the communications plan and draft messages/materials.
- A two-tiered pilot system for the messages and the campaign could create a stronger outreach strategy.
- The literacy level and language of the campaign is important. It should reach as broad number of people as possible.
- Some suggestions for a final product in the campaign toolkit included: YouTube video, a PowerPoint presentation, a press release, and using local news media to spread the word.
- The pilot campaign should be constructed with a larger comprehensive communications plan in mind as a final SaMS recommendation.
- Serious consideration should be given to where the campaign is promoted. If it is promoted from many of the organizations involved, it may have a heavy environmental bias. It should be pushed from a neutral source (i.e. find more non-environmental distribution channels).
- The final outreach campaign should include cohesive messages but also be in a form that SaMS partners can implement autonomously.
- The pilot campaign is geared towards a residential community, but it may need to be adapted for an urban or rural area.
- It was clarified that the on the ground outreach campaign is to be focused on the Long Branch community, but the survey will be a regional-wide effort.
- A conduit for the public to communicate back to the SaMS group is needed. They can share stories, suggestions, etc.
- Build in a feedback mechanism for improvement (i.e. an evaluation component) into the final campaign. This can be developed from the pilot.
- The ultimate home for the campaign is something that needs to be looked at in the future. It may not always be housed on DEQ's website.
- A follow-up survey to see if public perception or actions change might be beneficial.
- Clarification is needed on exactly what funding is needed and why.

Meeting Wrap-up:

It was recommended that subcommittees be created to complete the tasks in time to launch the pilot outreach campaign on March 1st. In the interest of time and a desire by the members to have a clearer idea as to what work is needed for each subcommittee, DEQ committed to follow-up after the meeting with a request for volunteers. It was noted that there would be short turnaround times to meet the deadline. Also, it was requested that if there were any major concerns, for those to be voiced now or in the next week so that concerns could be taken into consideration by each subcommittee. While the work that comes out of the subcommittees will be run by the entire workgroup prior to finalization, there will be a short window for review and comment and minimal time to address final comments. Therefore, major issues need to be identified now to facilitate meeting the deadline.

It was noted that further work on funding opportunities is best pursued after the pilot effort concludes as this effort will be helpful in a grant application. Also, understanding the efforts from other workgroups will be beneficial to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the opportunities and funding

needs. Michael Bochynski noted Clean Water Action currently has funding available from Fairfax Water for printing costs to support the pilot effort.

DEQ requested volunteers for the 3rd Stakeholder Advisory Committee that will be held after the 2nd round of workgroup meetings (expected sometime in May) to report on this workgroup's efforts at that meeting. DEQ plans to create a template for the presentation to make it easier for the workgroup volunteers to prepare for the meeting. The follow-up meeting survey will include a question for members to volunteer.

DEQ also requested nominations/volunteers for 1 to 2 members to serve on the Steering Committee. At a minimum, the Steering Committee will review the draft SaMS document to help ensure recommendations from the workgroup are being accurately represented in the final document. The follow-up meeting survey will include a question for members to nominate/volunteer for this committee.

The next set of workgroup meetings will be held in the July-September timeframe. It is anticipated to focus on results from the pilot and identify materials and recommendations that will form the section of the SaMS document from this workgroup (i.e., the education and outreach campaign and materials).

Handouts from the meeting are available on the SaMS Meeting Materials [website](#).

All information, questions, additional resources, etc. should be emailed to Sarah Sivers (sarah.sivers@deq.virginia.gov) and Will Isenberg (william.isenberg@deq.virginia.gov) to reduce email traffic among EOWG members.

Meeting notes were prepared and submitted by the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin.

Additional Feedback Contributed to the Follow Up Survey:

A survey was shared with workgroup members following the meeting to capture any additional thoughts members may have had following the meeting. Feedback is arranged below based on the sections of the agenda. Only sections where additional thoughts were provided are included:

Wrap up and Next Steps

"Education & Outreach: great start on the AWARENESS campaign for general public (i.e. homeowners). As time goes on we'll want to develop a concurrent EDUCATION campaign for business owners, those charged with de-icing properties. ("Education" being different from "Awareness" as it'll be more in-depth, with practical application guidelines.) I was impressed with the "Smart About Salt" program conducted in Ontario, particularly their training manuals and certification for contractors, believe New Hampshire has similar training and certification programs. Not sure where we are in being able to introduce the idea "safe salting limits" in Virginia but a BASIC education program for contractors would be a necessary start to developing openness to guidelines."