

Salt Management Strategy (SaMS)

1st Education and Outreach Workgroup Meeting

September 6, 2018

The first meeting for the Education and Outreach Workgroup (EOWG) for the Salt Management Strategy (SaMS) was held from 9:30 am – 12:00 pm on September 6, 2018, at the Northern Virginia Regional Commission (NVRC) at 3040 Williams Drive, Fairfax, Virginia.

Attendance

Sixteen (16) individuals, in addition to two Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) staff and two staff 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
Mike Collins, Arlington County
Will Isenberg, DEQ*
Pam Kenel, Loudoun Water

Max Kuker, GKYⁱ
Jennifer McCord, VDOT
Corey Miles, NVRC
Susan Miller, Fairfax Waterⁱ
Lauren Mollerup, VDOT
Merrily Pierce, McLean Citizens Assoc.
Erfaneh Sharifi, ICPRB*
Russ Short, NVTU
Sarah Sivers, DEQ*
Kris Unger, Friends of Accotink Creek

*Facilitator

ⁱ General Public (Non-Member of EOWG)

Meeting Highlights

At this meeting, the workgroup members focused on identifying the scope of the project, prioritizing the target audience/s, and discussing the desired outcome for this workgroup. The main take-aways from this meeting are:

- The members identified a variety of audiences to target, but they generally agree there is a sequence to spreading the message that may encourage a more positive outcome. The general public, followed closely by elected officials, were identified as the top priority audiences to target at the beginning of this effort.
- Develop an over-arching SaMS message to standardize the voice of multiple parties. Under the “umbrella” of this general message will fall those targeted for specific audiences.
- The outcome desired by this workgroup is a comprehensive education and outreach campaign and a materials / social media toolkit.
- Recommendation to conduct a pilot outreach campaign to test out proposed messages and outreach methods. Use of a survey could assist this effort.

Notes for Other Workgroups / Potential Areas of Overlap:

- A training program around BMP's for winter service providers could be an audience specific product of the EOWG. Information developed by the Traditional BMPs WG can support development of such a training program.
- Identifying behavior alternatives, such as telework, etc. may overlap with the efforts of the Non-Traditional BMPs WG.

Follow-up Action Items:

1. Review and research what other states/organizations have implemented, whether they were successful and the methods they used to measure effectiveness (Volunteer: Russ Short, NVATU; and Emily Bialowas, Izaak Walton League)
2. Draft a pilot campaign to test messaging. (Volunteers: Merrily Pierce, McLean Citizens Association; and Michael Bochynski, CWA)
3. Draft a preliminary survey by January to gauge the baseline public awareness of deicing impacts and actions the public can take to mitigate those impacts. This could be sent out in late winter/early spring. (Volunteer: Corey Miles, NVRC; Mike Collins, Arlington County; and Emily Burton, Fairfax County)
4. Brainstorm overarching message for the SaMS, which will serve as an umbrella for more targeted messages. (Volunteers: Michael Bochynski, CWA; and Kris Unger, Friends of Accotink Creek)
5. Explore funding opportunities. (Volunteer: Pam Kenel, Loudoun Water)

Meeting Summary

Introductions

The meeting opened with brief introductory remarks from DEQ, which including presenting their vision of the roles and expectations of EOWG Workgroup members and the meeting goals, with general agreement from the group. Participants then briefly introduced themselves, providing their name and the organization they represent. Attendants discussed their expectations of the EOWG. Some common themes included using available resources from the EOWG members, having positive messaging that garners public support, and developing audience-specific ideas.

Purpose and Scope

DEQ next provided a brief overview of the purpose and scope of the EOWG as envisioned by DEQ, which the group concurred with a few additional recommendations. Suggestions from the group included adding measures of effectiveness and adding concrete action-items to the plan.

Content Development

DEQ next asked for input on the content concerning audiences to target, topics that were of priority, and the outcome in terms of a final product. The group discussed that the content should identify the impacts that result due to winter salt practices, particularly those impacts that have the widest implications and possibly, garner greater interest for a wider audience, such as impacts to drinking water. It was also mentioned that the economic impacts from these practices may bring the message home to certain audiences. Lastly, it was widely agreed that public safety is a high priority, but overall felt that there is room for improvement in winter salt use due to the group's perception that expectations for clear roads soon after a storm have increased over the years. One member commented that the education and outreach effort might be viewed as occurring along two tracks, one to affect a behavioral

shift by the public and the other to provide technical training to the winter storm maintenance professionals.

The overall message of the SaMS was discussed and the group agreed it should be general and overarching to encourage a consistent and cohesive message. From this general message, messages can stem to targeted audiences. The group recommended the final product to carry this message take two forms, one being a comprehensive media campaign and the other a materials / social media toolkit that includes ready-made materials, such as flyers, organizations can obtain to communicate with the public.

Developing and implementing a pilot project to test the effectiveness of the content was agreed to be an important element to pursue prior to completion of the SaMS document. A pilot project could be started with a homeowners association (HOA). After the pilot project is completed, the effectiveness can be evaluated, and the messaging can be adjusted as appropriate and incorporated into the final SaMS document. It was also suggested that the use of a survey during this timeframe might also help test out possible messages and approaches, establish a baseline in awareness, and allow refinement for the final SaMS document.

Other Comments on Messaging/Products:

- The messages should be of a positive nature.
- There should be a connection to drinking water because it reaches the broadest audience.
- Messages should be tailored to different audiences that fit under the “umbrella” of the overarching message.
- The content should emphasize public safety.
- The final product should include the impacts of deicers.
- Suggestions for behavioral changes (e.g. telework) should be included.
- Actionable items should be included to empower people to make changes (e.g. Contact your elected official, contact your HOA).
- Timing is important when distributing messages. It can be different depending on the intended audience.
- It is important to manage the expectations of the public and highlight the need for balancing expectations.
- The final product should include some bilingual components.
- The messaging should be incorporated into school curriculum.
- A fun character (e.g. Sam the Salt Crystal) could be used to appeal to a wide audience.
- Messaging should first consider raising awareness, and later when recommendations are available, it can promote positive behavior changes.
- Training options should be prepared with audiences in mind.
- Training and or outreach materials can include questions like “what does a clear street look like?”
- Training and outreach methods should consider the barriers to behavior change.

Audiences:

In addition to the audiences listed in the EOWG [flier](#) developed by ICPRB, other target audiences may include Chambers of Commerce, Business Improvement Districts, county staff, federal facilities, universities and commuters.

The workgroup discussed how best to reach these audiences and if there should be a sequence to the effort. It was suggested that a message developed for the general public would likely be suitable for

other audiences, such as elected officials, who were also identified as a priority targeted audience. In regards to a sequence, one member suggested developing the message for elected officials to give them the tools to speak to constituents about the issues. However, the majority of the group agreed that the initial target audience should be the general public to develop a grassroots support of the issue, followed by elected officials as a secondary audience. It was commented by some members that the effort should address the expectations of the general public, which have increased over recent years and drives the level of response provided by other audiences, such as winter storm professionals.

Discussion followed on how best to message and reach elected officials. Members identified a variety of ways to communicate the message to local elected officials, such as through locality staff, get time on the meeting agenda of an association (i.e. Council of Mayors, VA Association of Counties, Northern Virginia Regional Commission, Metropolitan Washington Commission of Governments, water purveyors, etc.) and a news item of a monthly newsletter. One member recommended briefing elected officials prior to any outreach campaign that is planned to occur in their jurisdiction.

Ideas for Outreach:

- Newsletters sent by elected officials
- County websites
- Social media
- Radio
- A resolution, presentation for elected officials
- Insert in quarterly water bill from utilities
- Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District [Green Breakfasts](#)

Measures of Effectiveness:

The group agreed that it was important to establish methods to measure program effectiveness. Suggestions included researching what other states used for proof of concept and developing a pre- and post- survey for the general public aimed to identify the effectiveness of an outreach campaign.

Available Resources:

Funding:

The Water Research Foundation was identified as a possible source of funding to assist with development of tools and campaigns.

Member Resources:

- Graphic designers
- [Fairfax Water comic](#) artist
- Including the survey or messaging as an insert in the quarterly water bills from the water utilities. Several months lead-time will be needed for this option.
- Arlington County Department of Environmental Services offered general public relations resources
- Northern Virginia Regional Commission's and Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments' local government and general public education and outreach programs
- Northern Virginia Trout Unlimited, Clean Water Action, and the Izaak Walton League can help spread messaging
- Clean Water Action can provide A/B message testing (comparing the effectiveness of two different messages) and graphic design

- Connections to universities
- Fairfax County can push out any messages through the Office of Public Affairs and can use Channel 16 to develop a video¹

Meeting Wrap-up:

The 2.5-hour timeframe worked well for the meeting.

A summary of the outcome of the meeting will be listed in the beginning for quick reference. Notes for other SaMS workgroups can also be listed at the beginning of the meeting summary for quick, easy access, including opportunities for overlap among the workgroups.

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:

Purpose and Scope

“Should local weather forecast professionals be informed of this effort to increase communication out to general public?”

Content Development

“Question 6 [of the meeting handout] asks if we need to identify the impacts and benefits of winter salt application. I think that this report should include a 'Citizens' component which will be the main message we want to get out to the "general public". The Twin Lakes' management plan has a 'Citizens' section.”

Additional Thoughts (not a part of the agenda):

“Would like to see a representative of Fairfax County's Office of Public Affairs (OPA) participate in the committee since they administer the messaging program for the county. Could save us time.”

- DEQ shared this with Fairfax County SAC members and received this reply:
“Thank you for the letting us know that about the comment regarding Fairfax County's OPA involvement with SaMS. We work very closely with our PIO and he is aware of this workgroup, I am more than happy to ask him to attend a meeting once we have content available. Until then, I

¹ Provided during the review period for these notes.

can provide information to the team about the content OPA will post on their social media pages.”

“GMU and NOVA are MS4 permitted campuses. Should we have a representative from them to help us target universities?”

“VAMSA may be a good avenue to further push out messaging to local governments.”