



Communications Workgroup Biannual In-Person Meeting Minutes

January 11, 2017

Participants

Catherine Krikstan, UMCES (Vice Chair)	Elaine Hinrichs, CRC/STAC
Stephanie Smith, ACB (Coordinator)	Paige Hobaugh, CRC
Joan Smedinghoff, CRC (Staff)	Gina Hunt, MDNR
Rich Batiuk, EPA	Caitlyn Johnstone, ACB
Gregg Bortz, MD DNR	Renee Kelly, CRC/STAC
Jeff Brainard, MD Sea Grant	Deb Klenotic, PA DEP
Kim Couranz, NOAA	Kristi Moore, UMCES
Jody Couser, Chesapeake Conservancy	Krista Parra, DOD
Tom Damm, EPA	Will Parson, ACB
Adrienne Diaczok, MDE	Amy Pelsinsky, UMCES
Caroline Donovan, UMCES	Darius Stanton, CRC
Rachel Felver, ACB	Jennifer Starr, ACB
Mary Gattis, ACB	Peter Turcik, Chesapeake Conservancy
Jennifer Greiner, USFWS	Tom Wenz, EPA
Amy Handen, NPS	

I. Training (Eric Eckl, Water Words that Work)

- Almost everybody uses Facebook (79% of all Internet users, 68% of adults, 53% of adults over 65). People with lower incomes are more likely to use Facebook than those with higher incomes, but rural residents are just as likely to use it as urban and suburban residents.
- Instagram users are young; Pinterest users are 3:1 female; LinkedIn users are 3:1 white collar; and Twitter users are news junkies.
- The top water utilities on social media generally have connections with just .25% to 1% of their customers. Even the most active nonprofits connect to less than 1% of their audience directly, and it's even smaller for government agencies.
- The five social skills: use to reach larger audiences and attract new connections
 - **Hashtags:** users might find your message by searching for a hashtag
 - **Groups:** find your message in a public group
 - **User tags:** message through a mutual connections
 - **Shares/retweets/etc.:** "audience sharing" with other uses
 - **Comments/likes/etc.:** publically react to a message from another user
- The Message Method
 - Begin with behavior
 - Give people "actionable tips"—something they can act on
 - Social media users are most interested in:
 - Updates on any environmental problems that affect people's health and safety
 - Updates on construction, repairs, closures, and other actions you might take that inconvenience the community
 - Tips, offers, and incentives for how people can protect the environment
 - Tips for protecting themselves, family and property
 - Foolproof photos
 - Most shared posts form Facebook: single photos (87%)

- Twitter: 35% likely to retweet with photo
 - Keep in mind
 - Pictures with faces
 - Photos of people doing an activity
 - Before and after photos: effective, efficient relay of information
 - Words that work... and don't
 - Social media is primarily a visual medium. The words that work the best are fewer words.
 - On Facebook, you get 477 characters (about 70 words) before you get the "see more" link. *You get more shares and likes at 40 characters, about six words.*
 - On Twitter, you have a maximum 140 characters (about 20 words). *Most retweets, replies and engagement are tweets between 70 and 100 characters, about 12 words.*
 - Character Count (Chrome extension): highlight and count the number of words in your text.
 - Tempting testimonials
 - Individuals featured in posts, videos, etc. who *are not staff*.
 - Facebook: individuals can rate your page and leave comments on experience with your organizations
 - Review readability: www.read-able.com
 - Readability scores are mathematical expressions of three facts:
 - Long sentences are harder to read than short sentences.
 - Long words are harder to read than short words.
 - Passive sentences are harder to read than active ones.
 - Flesch-Kincaid reading ease: higher score = higher readability
 - 80-100: underserved audiences
 - 60-70: average readers, general public
 - 45-55: white collar professionals elected officials, journalists, business leaders, donors; professionals prefer
 - 30-40: professionals can read
 - Lower than 30: nobody wants to read
- Memes: attractive, visual teaser that links to a landing page for more information
- Algorithms
 - Just because you post it, doesn't mean they see it. Only a portion of those connected to you will see your posts.
 - Social media sites use algorithms to sort information.
 - To reduce clutter in your feed
 - To incentivize organizations to *pay* to reach users.
 - Algorithms change all the time, but basic principles are stable:
 - Posts that get a lot of likes, comments, shares, etc. will get carried further.
 - Algorithms give preferential treatment to users who have a good track record on engagement.
 - If you pay to sponsor your content, you'll get pushed past the algorithm, or further along.
- Campaigns and the "slope"
 - Slope: a model for thinking about a social media campaign
 - Terms to know:

- **Target audience:** clearly defined group of people that you want to reach
 - **Impression:** way to deliver your message, chosen with the audience’s habits in mind
 - **Conversion:** opportunity for your audience to actively respond to your message, and for you to know that they do
 - **Cultivation:** a plan to stay in touch with those who convert
- Slope: Define your target audience > Impressions (very large) > Conversions (relatively small) > Cultivation (Even smaller) > Big steps (Even smaller)
- Beat the algorithm:
 - Use the “social skills”: spend time, imprecise audience targeting, high response rate
 - Use sponsored content and ads: spend money, precise audience targeting, lower response rate
- Using the “social skills” (hashtags, groups, user tags, shares/retweets/etc., comments/likes/etc.)
 - keyhole.co
 - Search groups for keywords related to your target audience (shows number of members)
 - Check out who you “audience swap” with—who do you want to cultivate a relationship with?
 - If you don’t want to spend money, you have to spend time finding these groups, hashtags, pages, etc.
 - You have defined your audience sufficiently when you can make smart choices about which groups to post to, which hashtags to use and who to use to share your messages.
- Using sponsored content and ads: choose keywords, demographic information, etc. related to your target audience.
- Rules of thumb
 - The algorithm passes along your content to about 10% of your connections.
 - It will pass along a small percent of your shares, retweets, etc.
 - About 5% of the people who see your posts will respond.
 - For each \$1 you spend, you will reach 100 people three times.
 - For each \$1, you will get three website visits.
- **Action:** Email Joan if you would like to participate in the webinar version of Part 3 of the workshop.

II. Midpoint Assessment (Rich Batiuk)

- Midpoint Assessment is an unprecedented opportunity to engage with target audience about what we want from them and what they can do.
- Breaking down the TMDL to local, target audiences.
- Challenges
 - “The Bay’s not cleaned up already?” “How long is this going to go on?”
 - “That’s not my problem.”
 - Farmers feel put upon
 - Message: we’re actually seeing some progress
 - “What are you expecting from me?” “What can I do?”
 - Positive but still a challenge

- Bring the message—and the ask—local (township, conservation district, etc.).
 - “You want us to do *more*? We’re already doing a lot”
 - Local officials have a lot of other priorities.
 - Then adding in climate change, Conowingo, accounting for growth, etc.
 - Strong and functioning Communications Workgroup
 - A group to go to for help
 - Experts to look at messages/messaging
- Opportunities
 - Local government need to be involved. Some are, some don’t know they need to be and some don’t want to be, but they need to be involved and engaged.
 - There’s good news and success stories to tell, with the science to back it up.
 - We have momentum, but need to keep it going.
- Upcoming
 - **By end of 2018:** all six states to have Phase III WIPs in place
 - Have you engaged your localities? Are they engaged? How are they going about it?
 - **May 2017:** states, federal partners, cabinet-level secretaries and federal counterparts will meet for two days. They will be presented with the science, info on Conowingo, etc. and divide responsibilities among jurisdictions.
 - **End December 2017:** finalized adjustments to Phase III planning targets
 - Political decisions with science behind them
 - At that point, it’s entirely the states’ responsibility, develop their Phase III WIPs
 - **August 2018:** share Phase III WIPs with public and EPA for review
 - **2018 and beyond:** take info from Midpoint Assessment, engage with locals, make plan for through 2025
- Ask for the Communications Workgroup
 - Get all jurisdictions around the table and work with the Water Quality GIT around messaging
 - Take on Midpoint Assessment as a key priority for the next few years
 - **2017:** communicating within the partnership
 - **2018:** local government, local partners
 - Help Water Quality GIT identify audience, message, messengers

III. [Local Government Engagement Initiative \(Mary Gattis\)](#)

- Everyone was talking about engaging local governments on the Midpoint Assessment and Phase III WIPs, but not coordinating with each other.
- [Local Government Engagement Initiative \(LGEI\)](#)
 - Coordinate and collaborate to help each other
 - Not duplicate efforts or wasting resources
 - Forum to come together and work together on messaging, developing LGE plans
 - Terms
 - **Communication:** one-way information sharing, get messaging out
 - **Engagement:** back and forth communication
- Local government officials don’t know what’s expected of them and planning the next phase is overwhelming. Messaging should address current implementation as well as planning for the next phase.

- Early and *consistent* messaging will get the message further, faster. Problems
- arise when EPA and jurisdiction messages aren't aligned.
- Common Agenda
 - *What needs to be communicated, when, and to whom?* Be cognizant, put yourself in their shoes. Do they need to take an action on it now?
 - *What is the best format for delivery?* Who are the best messengers? Who are local government officials listening to?
 - *Who needs to be engaged? When? Why? What do they need to know to be effective participants?*
 - *What tools/resources are needed/available?*
- Connect with Mary Gattis (mgattis@allianceforthebay.org) and Jennifer Starr (jestarr@allianceforthebay.org) to see who's being engaged in your jurisdiction and/or be added to the list.
- What are the incentives for local governments, since it's the states that have to comply?
 - States can make it a requirement for MS4 permits
 - Economic benefits
 - Ex: Value of fisheries to local community. Implement practices XYZ, will help community keep, reap economic benefits. There's a cost of not protecting, benefit of doing something
 - Ex: Using a HUD community block grant for a tree planting. It can mitigate urban heat island, increase property values and raise tax revenues.
 - What do the jurisdictions need to incentivize local governments? Do you have examples that can be built into case studies that can help local governments plan?

IV. Messaging Activity

- Notes will be uploaded to Chesapeake Network.
- **Action:** If you want to do any of these campaigns, let Joan know. The workgroup can help workshop ideas and the Communications Office and other members can share, retweet, like, etc.

V. Leadership Vote

- The workgroup voted in Catherine Krikstan as the new Chair and Krista Parra as the new Vice Chair.

Next call: February 2, 2017