

Outline of Conowingo Watershed Implementation Plan Communications Strategy

NOTE: This is not the full communications strategy for the Conowingo WIP, but a high-level outline of how it will be structured.

Purpose: Ensure stakeholders understand the Conowingo Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) so they can educate other stakeholders and the interested public and encourage them to provide feedback.

KEY MESSAGES

The key messages are to ensure stakeholders (see Target Audiences below) speak consistently about the value and key aspects of the Conowingo WIP planning process and the overall plan, as well as to help encourage local engagement and participation in the process and support for the WIP.

1. The Conowingo WIP is its own plan, independent of the individual WIPs currently being developed by each Chesapeake Bay watershed jurisdiction (Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia).
2. All seven watershed jurisdictions have come together to collaborate on the development and implementation of the Conowingo WIP.
3. Through careful research, Chesapeake Bay Program partners agreed the best approach to address the issues associated with the Conowingo Dam is to develop a separate and collaborative WIP. It is the most efficient and cost-effective, as the partnership agreed to contribute resources, including funding, technical assistance and in-kind services.
4. The frequency of extreme weather patterns, most notably increased flooding throughout the watershed, is leading to an influx of nutrients and sediment flowing into local waterways, causing a build-up behind the dam faster than originally expected.
5. Studies conducted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Geological Survey have determined that the reservoir behind the Conowingo Dam is almost filled to capacity and will be unable to trap nutrients and sediment and keep them from flowing into the Chesapeake Bay.
6. When the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (Bay TMDL) was put into place in 2010, it was based upon assumptions that conditions of the dam would remain unchanged with respect to trapping nutrients and sediment, and the overall weather conditions would remain steady. The current nutrient reductions for the Susquehanna River, as called for in the Bay TMDL, is no longer sufficient to meet Bay restoration goals.
7. Organizations and individuals across the Chesapeake Bay watershed are encouraged to provide feedback on the draft Conowingo WIP to ensure that the plan is realistic and feasible to implement.
8. The many partners of the Chesapeake Bay Program intend to engage as many organizations as possible – from state agencies to local governments and technical assistance suppliers – to help develop and implement the Conowingo WIP.
9. Chesapeake Bay Program partners agreed that additional pollution loads, as well as the assigned loads each jurisdiction plans to address as part of their Phase III WIP, is needed to achieve the restoration goals of the Chesapeake Bay. Overall, reductions of six million pounds of nitrogen and 260,000 pounds of phosphorous are needed.

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10. The most up-to-date data and research will be used in the planning process to target restoration practices where they'll have the most strategic impact.
11. The actions outlined in the Conowingo WIP should be in place by 2025 and continue to be maintained and effective in the long-term.
12. The approach to funding the Conowingo WIP is unlike any taken before. The jurisdictions and the Environmental Protection Agency are contributing money to hire a third-party to assist in developing a financing strategy to serve the dam long-term. As a result, new financing methods are expected to arise that could help expedite progress toward Bay restoration.
13. The Conowingo WIP will include, as appropriate, the outcomes from Maryland's water quality certification for the dam, a financing strategy, consideration of managing reservoir sediment with innovative and/or beneficial reuse and appropriate timelines.

Risks:

- Lack of understanding.
- Messages not easy to convey.
- Lack of time/resources.
- High political sensitivity.

Audiences:

NOTE: The below audiences may require tailored messaging that will be determined when the Conowingo WIP is being drafted.

- LGAC
- CAC
- State government associations: MaCo, VaCo, MML
- Advocacy organizations: Choose Clean Water, CBF, Alliance, Waterkeepers Chesapeake
- Soil & water conservation districts
- State departments of agriculture
- Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
- Washington Suburban Sanitation Commission
- State departments of recreation and/or natural resources
- State departments of the environment
- Wastewater groups.
- Stormwater groups.
- Utility groups.

Products:

- Webinars.
- Fact sheet(s).
- PowerPoint presentation (generic to be adapted for different audiences).
- Talking points.
- Social media posts.

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- Blog(s).
- FAQ.

Timeline:

NOTE: Dates subject to change and communications products may be added/deleted. Spokespeople to be identified at the May 2019 Conowingo WIP Steering Committee.

- The draft Conowingo WIP is scheduled to be available on October 4, 2019.
- The final Conowingo WIP is scheduled to be available on December 23, 2019.

Date	Activity	Deliverable	Responsible Party
7/8/19	EPA awards cooperative agreement	Press release	EPA Region 3
7/8/19	EPA awards cooperative agreement	Blog	CBP Communications Office
7/8/19	EPA awards cooperative agreement	Social media	CBP Communications Office (potentially other interested parties- CBP Comms office will draft social media posts to share)
8/09/19	Upcoming draft Conowingo WIP	Webinar in advance of PSC approval to ensure feedback from key stakeholders is considered. Webinar will be recorded and posted on Conowingo WIP website.	Conowingo WIP steering committee with support from the CBP Communications Office and PA DEP Communications Office?
10/04/19	Draft Conowingo WIP	Press release?	EPA? CBP Communications Office?
10/04/19	Draft Conowingo WIP	Blog	CBP Communications Office
10/04/19	Draft Conowingo WIP	Social media	CBP Communications Office and other interested parties (CBP Comms Office will draft social media posts to share)
10/04/19	Draft Conowingo WIP	Fact sheet with highlights of what's in the Conowingo WIP and how/when to submit feedback	CBP Communications Office, PA DEP Communications Office
10/04/19	Draft Conowingo WIP	FAQ	CBP Communications Office, PA DEP Communications Office
10/04/19	Draft Conowingo WIP	PowerPoint presentation (same as the below, but generic so folks can adopt as needed for their audiences)	CBP Communications Office, PA DEP Communications Office
10/18/19	Draft Conowingo WIP	Webinar to walk through the Conowingo WIP with interested parties and answer any questions.	Conowingo WIP steering committee with support from the CBP Communications

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		Webinar will be recorded and posted on Conowingo WIP website.	Office and PA DEP Communications Office?
12/23/19	Final Conowingo WIP	Blog	CBP Communications Office
12/23/19	Final Conowingo WIP	Social media	CBP Communications Office and other interested parties (CBP Comms Office will draft social media posts to share)

Potential FAQ (just a few questions off the tops of our head to start):

NOTE: This is a sample of some of the questions we plan to have in a FAQ document. More questions and answers are expected to come from the Conowingo WIP steering committee.

1. What's Exelon doing about the sediment buildup?
 - a. Please contact the Maryland Department of the Environment for any questions related to Exelon.
2. How does the Conowingo WIP relate to what Exelon is doing?
 - a. Please contact the Maryland Department of the Environment for any questions related to Exelon.
3. Isn't dredging a simple solution? Why can't we just do that?
4. Why shouldn't Pennsylvania alone do all of this?