

Best Management Practices (BMPs) Verification - Communications Strategy

About this strategy

*This BMP Verification Communications Strategy is a supporting component of the Bay Program's cross-jurisdictional basinwide BMP Verification Framework now under review by the Management Board and the Principals' Staff Committee. ****The implementation of this or any communications strategy is dependent on approval, adoption, and implementation of the overall BMP Verification Strategy by Bay Program partners.**** Incorporating a communications component into this process will enable Bay Program partners to have consistent, clear messages both internally and externally as they build toward the public implementation of the jurisdictions' BMP verification programs. Having solid internal understanding and messages will enable partners to more smoothly and consistently communicate about BMP verification with various external audiences and "implementers" across the watershed as the BMP Verification process moves forward. The timeframe for this particular strategy is **focused on the first two years after the framework is approved** by the partnership. **Communications/outreach planning for subsequent periods will need to be undertaken in the future and will need to factor in the success, needs, resources and opportunities established in this initial two-year period.***

Goals

- 1) To build understanding and support for the BMP Verification process as a watershed-wide, partnership effort.
- 2) To ensure consistent public messaging among Bay Program partners about the BMP Verification Framework and its components.
- 3) To manage expectations within the partnership and increase understanding of the implementation of the BMP Verification Framework.

Audience

The primary audience for the initial 2-year period after the framework is approved includes **all those connected with the CBP at all levels and top-level interested parties**. This broad group includes state, local, federal and non-governmental organizations with direct responsibility for implementation of and tracking, verifying, and/or reporting nutrient and sediment pollutant load reducing practices. These people are the critical foundation of information, expertise and support required for successful implementation of broader communications and outreach initiatives. Specifically the audience includes:

- CBP Leadership
 - o Chesapeake Executive Council
 - o Principle Staff Committee (members and alternates)
 - o Management Board (members and alternates)
 - o Communications Workgroup
 - o Advisory Committees
- Goal Implementation Teams – leadership & all members
- Goal Implementation Team Workgroups – leadership & all members
- Communications Workgroup
- Advisory Committees
- Jurisdictional and federal agency leads for various sectors targeted for BMP verification
- Jurisdictional and federal agency staff responsible for implementation
- Primary oversight groups outside CBP (that are not already engaged via the GITs)

Key Messages

1) Accuracy

BMP Verification will:

- a. Help BMP implementers know their investment is in place, working as it should and having the desired/expected impacts.
- b. Show us where best management practices are working, where they are having the greatest impact and where we need to change our course, thus identifying the most effective use of our resources;
 - i. Improve the accuracy of monitoring data, which in turn will improve partners' abilities to track pollution and water quality trends. This will, in turn, give jurisdictions, localities and communities a better understanding of how they are doing on their river and Bay restoration efforts.
- c. Give partners and communities the information needed to address concerns from outside oversight groups that 1) practices are not being reported in a consistent manner and 2) that either not enough or too much credit is being given.

2) Rewarding Efforts

- a. BMP verification will help BMP implementers know their investment is in place, working as it should and having the desired/expected impacts.
- b. The BMP Verification Framework will ensure that jurisdictions, localities, communities, organizations, federal facilities, and even individuals (e.g., farmers, homeowners) implementing pollution reduction practices are receiving credit for their work to make local waters clean.

3) Collaboration

- a. All the watershed jurisdictions are working together: BMP verification is a big project that can help us all meet the goal of clean waters.
- b. Using consistent tracking across the watershed can help partners learn from each other in terms of efficiency of various BMPs and what methods are most effective for meeting water quality standards under the TMDL.
- c. Once the jurisdictions' BMP verification programs are in place, this kind of information-sharing can make water-quality improvement work easier and more accurate.
- d. Ensuring those who pollute the most are asked to reduce the most can only be done by building a complete picture of the pollution reduction practices that have been and are being implemented in local and regional watersheds.
- e. This effort will help localities obtain buy-in from the public for their pollution-reducing programs. When people feel that their actions count, they are more likely to be vested in efforts.

CBP Communications Products & Timeline

See timeline and proposed products and activities on the next page. As the Bay Program partners roll out our BMP verification efforts over time, the Communications Office will use some of its other tools to promote and share information with our audiences. Timing and use will vary by audience and jurisdiction, region and external/social factors. Typically, CBP Communications tools typically include:

- original online news features
- press releases
- editorials
- social media releases and messaging
- photo/video products
- web-based resources
- supporting print materials

Products & Timeline (cont'd)

Date	Proposed Products	Lead(s)
Upon approval of Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal letter or similar from PSC Chair to all PSC, MB, Advisory Committees, GIT, Workgroup chairs, and GIT and workgroup coordinators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CBP Leadership (suggest PSC Chair or similar)
1 st & 2 nd Quarters after approval of Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Print Materials to be developed: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> BMP Verification Framework Exec Summary – print, public-friendly Rack card, one-pager or similar that addresses frequently asked questions Other tbd as needed Presentations to be developed: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Overview of BMP verification Detail of BMP verification <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each of these will have slides that can be tailored to fit audience in terms of source/sector “Road Show” plan – schedule of events, speakers, publications, articles/authors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CBP Communications Office, Leadership & BMP Verification Committee 
3 rd & 4 th Quarters after approval of Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin 1 year “Road show” to promote, engage, inform including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CBP Sponsored webinars – using above presentations In-person presentations for targeted audiences/jurisdictions across watershed Presentations/Panels at professional events/conferences Articles in professional/agency publications Additional CBP Products for potential development in support of road show <ul style="list-style-type: none"> BMP Verification webpage(s) Videos/New Stories – specific content TBD based on audience/intended use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CBP BMP Verification Committee, Leadership and other BMP Experts  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CBP Communications Office and Web Team
5 th – 6 th Quarters after approval of Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of Targeted Outreach Strategies – plans for reaching and engaging next levels of audiences beyond those defined here including more local source sectors and practice implementers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> See p. 4 “About Partner Outreach” and p. 5 “Needs Assessment Template” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jurisdiction/federal staff – CBP Communications Office to offer support when needed/requested; CBP Communications Workgroup members to be closely involved in work in their jurisdiction

Additional information/context for this BMP Verification Communications Strategy

Background

Watershed jurisdictions and local stakeholders have expressed concern over how the Chesapeake Bay Program will credit these BMPs in a consistent and transparent manner under the Bay’s “pollution diet,” or Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL). Alongside this chorus of calls for expanded tracking and reporting of BMPs are expressions of the need for a strengthened verification of the installation and maintenance of these practices and for partners to expand beyond the sources watershed jurisdictions have traditionally relied upon (the U.S. Department of Agriculture, state agricultural departments and environmental agencies, and county conservation districts). Given the increasing importance that accounting for BMPs is taking on within the Bay Program—Chesapeake Bay TMDL reasonable assurance, two-year milestones, offsets, tradable credits—partners are working on a framework whereby we can expand the tracking, verification, and reporting of BMPs and improve our confidence in the outcomes of those practices.

Definitions:

- “Communications” is defined as the dissemination and promotion of information related to BMP Verification for the purpose of increasing *awareness and understanding*.
- “Outreach”, a component of this Communications Strategy, is defined as the proactive employment of specific strategies, techniques and tools by which to *increase active participation* in BMP Verification.

Assumptions:

This Communications plan assumes the following:

- CBP Leadership and/or jurisdictions have provided clarity as to who is responsible for implementing outreach initiatives.
- Resources (ie: personnel, monies, grant funds for outsourcing of outreach) will be available to implement outreach strategies.
- Watershed jurisdictions *will be* active participants in the creation and implementation of any further communications and/or outreach planning for their region and their target audiences.
- Each jurisdiction’s leadership, managers and critical agency staff have bought into the BMP verification framework and are educated about using it. This support will be critical to any kind of roll out to broader audiences.
- Before any broad, targeted active outreach initiatives launch:
 - o Whomever or whichever agency, organization or group leading any given initiative will have a solid understanding of audience needs or will conduct research to determine needs – *See the Needs Assessment Template provided at end of this document*.
 - o The requisite tools for reporting/tracking BMP Implementation and agency-based support structures needed by local implementers are fully functional.

About Partner Outreach

Outreach, which actively engages audiences in participation on BMP Verification rather than solely providing information, can be done in many ways and is, in fact, already being done in the jurisdictions by state agencies, non-profit or other organizations. A full understanding of work already underway is needed before any new initiatives are launched. *Should CBP partners wish to enhance their Outreach efforts, CBP Communications offers our “Needs Assessment Template” as a starting point for beginning strategic outreach work.*

Communications/Outreach - Needs Assessment Template

DESCRIPTION - Describe what you are seeking to do.

AUDIENCE

Define your audience or proposed audience? Who are the stakeholders you'd like to engage?

- Core audience:
 - Examples:
- Other audiences:
 - Examples:

How did you determine these are the 'right' people?

AUDIENCE NEEDS

What are your audience's needs?

How will outreach efforts meet those needs?

List any specific outreach strategies or communications products that you imagine will be required to meet them?

ORGANIZATIONAL NEEDS

Why should our organization (or agency or group) pursue this outreach effort? What do we hope to gain?

MEASURING SUCCESS

What are goals (quantifiable or other) for this outreach effort?

How will you know you have been successful? What are the criteria for success?

RESOURCES

Will this be a one-time effort, or will it be ongoing and require maintenance?

What kind of resources (e.g., staff, time, people) are needed to:

- 1) Develop/Create
- 2) Disseminate
- 3) Maintain
- 4) Ensure success

Describe your ideal project timeline.

RESEARCH

List similar projects that you know to exist and that could be used as resources in development of your efforts.