

Goal Implementation Team 4 – Maintaining Healthy Watersheds

Communications Strategy Workgroup

Workshop

C. Burr Artz Library, Frederick, MD

September 14, 2011 ~ 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Workshop Objective: To draft recommendations for effective and strategic communications activities which will support the needs of CBP partners and contribute to the GIT4 goal of maintaining local watersheds at optimal health across a range of landscape contexts.

Participants:

Todd Janeski (VCU Center for Environmental Studies)

Diane Wilson (PA Dept of Environmental Protection)

Carrie Decker (MD Dept Natural Resources)

Laura Dlugolecki (EPA Healthy Watershed Initiative)

Mike Fritz (CPB)

Anna Stuart Burnett (CBP)

Donnelle Keech (facilitating, The Nature Conservancy)

Recommendations of the Communications Strategy Workgroup

Build technical basis for accountability metrics as critical foundation for maintaining healthy watersheds.

State agencies and local governments require new or redirected funding and new incentives to implement widespread, effective healthy watershed protection programs and policies. We don't anticipate this change until the Bay Program adopts performance accountability metrics for healthy watershed protection, establishing HW as a prominent and essential component of Bay recovery efforts.

We believe that the communications actions recommended below will build support and acceptance of a HW approach throughout the leadership and the partners in the Bay Program. However, we do not foresee that communications activities will make significant or sustained progress toward maintaining healthy watersheds without a firm foundation within the Bay Program measuring and accountability framework. Therefore, we strongly recommend that the GIT4 maintain its focus on developing the scientific and technical basis for HW performance accountability metrics.

Undertake communications actions that are realistic, feasible and build effective support for maintaining healthy watersheds as a critical component of Bay recovery.

1. Actively promote HW as the essential complement to restoration and load reduction among leadership of federal and state agencies within the CBP.

NEXT STEPS/NOTES

- ☐ Support/compliment ongoing intra- and inter-agency outreach by EPA's HW Team by providing HW key messages and themes¹

¹ See recommendation #6, below.

2. Present the case for healthy watersheds as an essential compliment to restoration and load reduction to all three CBP Advisory Committees (Local Government, Citizens, Science and Technical²) and to the Chesapeake Bay Commission.

NEXT STEPS/NOTES

- ☐ Prepare presentation, using existing materials (EPA, others) and incorporating HW key messages and themes³. (Anna Stuart Burnett)
- ☐ Compile summaries of partner states' antidegradation policies and programs, including mapping of designated high quality waters and available status tracking information (e.g., 303(d)/305(b) reporting data) – incorporate this information into CBP communications on HW (presentations and ChesStat)
- ☐ Make contact with Committees and get the designated HW spokesperson (Mark Bryer?) on the agenda for upcoming meetings. (Mike Fritz)
 - Think beyond the one-time presentation – want to open a dialogue to engage these committees in spreading the word about HW, and get feedback to GIT4 over time.
 - Consider if a communications package or piece might be warranted as “leave behind” when we meet with these committees

3. Collaborate with existing education and outreach programs under the Chesapeake Bay Program to include information about “Healthy Watersheds” in their curricula and materials.

NEXT STEPS/NOTES

- ☐ Contact leaders of CBP education committees; gather information about what content and formats would be most useful to incorporate into their programs. (Donnelle Keech, with guidance from Mike Fritz)

4. Work with organizers of the annual Chesapeake Bay Forum to deliver HW information to participants.

NEXT STEPS/NOTES

- ☐ Meet informally with organizers to at upcoming 2011 Forum to pitch idea, learn more about next steps needed. (Mike Fritz and Donnelle Keech (others attending?))
 - We chose this Forum because it is a large annual gathering of a large number of the most active “doers” in the Bay community. There may be other meetings that we could consider for GIT4 participation, but we recommend that this remain a targeted and thoughtful strategy, not a rush to participate in multiple meetings each year.

5. Produce a “toolkit” to deliver current information about ecological services and economic benefits of healthy watershed protection to field practitioners working with local governments.

² Pitch already delivered to STAC, ongoing engagement

³ See recommendation #6, below.

NEXT STEPS/NOTES

- ☐ Seek input and feedback from the target audience – start by convening informal focus group at Chesapeake Forum Sept 30 – Oct 1 (Mike Fritz and Donnelle Keech)
- Idea is to provide annotated citations and case studies (not raw data, but still pretty technical) which watershed specialists, land trusts, watershed groups, Riverkeepers, etc. can use to build their messages, support their communications with local governments.
- Work already completed by Laura D. forms the basis for this content.
- Recommended focus on ecological services and economic benefits is KEY –a generic tool kit is *not* the recommended action, and if the need is not perceived among target groups, this idea should be dropped

6. Develop HW key messages and themes, to infuse consistent and effective language into activities 1 and 2, above.

NEXT STEPS/NOTES

- ☐ TBD -- Consult with communications professionals (Margaret Enloe, Eric Eckl, others?) and other who have HW messages out in the field already (i.e. Rivanna River Basin Commission) for advice on how to proceed
- Rely upon materials already available from EPA HW Initiative
- Anticipate a small group process