



Communications Workgroup August Meeting Minutes

August 4, 2021 | 1:00 to 2:00 p.m.

Participants

Rachel Felver, ACB/CBP (Coordinator)
Marisa Baldine, CRC (Staffer)
Aaron Ferster, EPA-ORD
Amy Pelinsky, UMCES
Anjela Jones, Navy/DOD
Benjamin Bober, NYS DEC
Brent Peterson, DC DOEE
Caroline Donovan, UMCES/IAN
Caitlyn Johnstone, ACB/CBP
Drew Robinson, CCWC
Emily Ramirez, UMCES
Erin Montgomery, NPS/Chesapeake
Conservancy
Jake Solyst, ACB/CBP
Jenn Clarke, City of Richmond

Jessica Fitzpatrick, USGS
Kim Couranz, NOAA
Kristin Saunders, UMCES/CBP
Laura Cattell Noll, LLWG/CBP/ACB
Lisa Caruso, CBF
Michael Bowman, Chesapeake
Conservancy
Michelle DiNicola, PA DEP
Mike Smith, Yes& Agency
Ola-Imani Davis, LGAC/CBP/ACB
Olivia Wisner, CRC-NPS
Phil Miller, DE DNREC
Tali MacArthur, PA Org. for Watersheds and
Rivers
Tom Damm, EPA Region 3

I. Welcome

II. Shared Messaging, (Marisa Baldine, CRC-CBP)

A. Shared messaging for the month of August, focused primarily on National Ice Cream Month and Shark Awareness Day.

B. Access the shared messaging document:

https://www.chesapeakebay.net/channel_files/41865/08_august_comwg_shared_messaging.pdf

III. Social Media Best Practices, (Benjamin Bober, NYS DEC) ([Presentation](#))

A. Bober has worked with the New York Department of Conservation for 16 years and hired his first social media team member in 2020.

B. In 2009, Bober created an NYS DEC Facebook page but it was taken down within 24 hours because government agencies were still deciding if they should be on social media. New York State later mandated that all state agencies needed to be on YouTube, Facebook and Twitter.

1. The approach was not to recreate the website by sharing press releases in a new place but to tell a story.

C. Mantra: Educate. Entertain. Inform. Respond.

1. Things that are more entertaining and funnier tend to get more engagement so there is a balance between informing your audience and adding in fun posts to build your audience.

2. Always be responsive.

a) Even if you don't have an answer to a question, you can tell people that you are contacting an expert and will respond when

you have an answer. This helps followers know that there is a real person behind the account and that you care about them. You will often see the same followers engage more after you answer their question.

- D. Start small and don't overextend by being on too many platforms at one time. You'll know when you're ready to grow.
 - 1. As a one-person team, Bober waited to join Instagram. He focused on growing the audience of NYS DEC's existing social media platforms and testing what worked. After he was successful on those platforms, he started an Instagram account which is currently their fastest growing platform.
- E. Learn what works on each platform. The Facebook audience tends to be much older than the Instagram audience so the tone used for the same information on each platform is very different. Twitter is more government agency driven and is good for posting press releases.
 - 1. For example, on Facebook a hunting post would consist of general language and a picture of someone with a deer. On Instagram, the photo would be a beautiful nature shot.
 - 2. Once you figure out what works, keep using some of those posts to keep your current audience happy but also experiment with different avenues so you can grow your following and content.
- F. Use a social media calendar and track your success.
 - 1. NYS DEC uses a 6-month calendar and creates a monthly report. The report is both to thank staff that helped create content and to send to executives to show the role social media is playing within the agency.
- G. Use analytics to figure out when your audience is online and always post your most important content on the days and times that you know followers are online.
- H. Use the correct hashtags.
 - 1. Research popular hashtags for each platform, a hashtag that is popular on Facebook might not work on Twitter or Instagram.
 - 2. Make sure the hashtag relates to the message and will help you reach relevant audiences.
 - 3. Use hashtags sparingly on Facebook. One per post is a good number.
- I. Look at what other accounts are doing. You can pull inspiration from partners.
 - 1. Bober has reached out and told accounts that he likes what they did and is going to recreate it for NYS DEC. This has been very successful and the original account will often like or repost the content.
- J. Tips for crafting posts:
 - 1. Use seasonal topics and evergreen content.
 - 2. Participate in holidays and national days.
 - a) These can be big social media events and if you can make the connection things that might not seem related can be a great way to tap into the conversation.

(1) Example: For National Coffee Day, Bober used this day to talk about reusable mugs and other ways to make more sustainable choices when purchasing coffee that benefit the environment.

3. Use weekly themes like #WildlifeWednesday and #ForestFriday.
 4. Highlight your staff with staff profiles.
 - a) It is really important for NYS DEC to show the faces of the people that are out across the state doing all of the environmental fieldwork.
- K. As a one-person team, Bober created a social media coordinators group with other staff at NYS DEC. Every month they check in to see if anyone is doing any interesting work that could be featured on social media.
1. It started small but now they get so much from staff that it really helps fill in the calendar.
 2. Lands and Forest Representative created a “Game of Cones” Instagram game. There was a main post for the page and then the game was posted in Instagram stories. She used a tablecloth as a backdrop which created a nice background for the posts but the last slide showed the edge of the table, her dog, and her feet on a chair because she had been standing on a chair to take the picture. It was a great informative game and then the last photo added a human element.
- L. Great images will help you stand out from all of the other profiles on social media. Sometimes you need to craft your content around the image.
1. NYS DEC has photography on staff but they also crowdsource images from followers.
 - a) When Bober sees a great photograph or video he will reach out to the account owner and ask if he can reuse the photo with credit. People appreciate getting their photographs on a large account so it creates a good relationship. NYS DEC has a group of 20 to 30 photographers that will submit content weekly.
 - b) NYS DEC has also hosted contests for holidays and then uses the images on social media while providing credit to the original photographer.
 - (1) If you have a great photo submitted in a contest you can also have a “caption this” contest.
 - c) Breaks in your content schedule and news releases can be the perfect time to fill in with fun content like a photography competition.
 - d) Fun posts with song lyrics or memes are really the top ways to expand your audience and keep them entertained so when you publish press releases and important news, they are more likely to see it. Humor is one of the top ways NYS DEC is growing their Instagram account.

2. You can have amazing written content but if you don't have a strong image to accompany the content then it probably won't have a good engagement rate.
- M. Live social media broadcasts
1. Before the pandemic, NYS DEC was hosting one or two live broadcasts in a year. During the pandemic, all of the in-person events were canceled so NYS DEC decided to host a Facebook live every day for Earth Week. People from the social media coordinators group volunteered to show the work they were doing in different parts of the state.
 2. NYS DEC has now hosted close to 200 live broadcasts since the pandemic started in 2020.
 - a) These live broadcasts have covered a variety of content including video footage of people in the field, live question and answer sessions and simple nature videos like a sunrise or sunset.
 - b) Live broadcasts have been some of the top posts for both Facebook and Instagram.
- N. Boosting posts on Facebook.
1. Facebook has started to push pages to pay for engagement. In the past, NYS DEC Facebook posts would get between 70,000 to 100,000 organic views on Facebook. Now, NYS DEC Facebook posts get between 20,000 and 30,000 organic views. This seems to be the trend for many different agencies.
- O. Follow NYS DEC on social media:
1. Twitter: <https://twitter.com/NYSDEC>
 2. Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/nysdec/>
 3. Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/NYSDEC>
- P. Access Communications Workgroup social media resources
1. Shared messaging documents can be accessed here:
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1qV5lvw2o07jKjn65deEO67MpJFoU0DE2?usp=sharing>
 2. Hashtags can be found here:
<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1IGh7RPSCglUwRhGCwVPMssNR2L0cuDDO4n7NZ3bLOsc/edit?usp=sharing>
 3. Chesapeake Bay Program photos are accessible on Flickr:
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/chesbayprogram>
 4. See what other workgroup members are posting on Twitter with the Communications Workgroup list:
<https://twitter.com/i/lists/756570442207551488>

Next meeting: October 6, 2021, 9:00 am - 12:00 pm