



## Communications Workgroup December Minutes

December 2, 2020 | 1:00 to 2:00 p.m.

- **Participants**

*Gregg Bortz, Maryland DNR (Chair)*  
*Rachel Felver, ACB (Coordinator)*  
*Marisa Baldine, CRC (Staffer)*  
Amy Pelinsky, UMCES  
Brent Peterson, DC DOEE  
Caitlyn Johnstone, Alliance/CBP  
Caroline Donovan, UMCES/IAN  
Cassandra Davis, NY DEC  
Drew Robinson, Choose Clean Water Coalition  
Erin Montgomery, NPS/Chesapeake Conservancy  
Jake Solyst, Alliance/CBP  
Jay Clark, VA Sea Grant  
Jennifer Clarke, City of Richmond  
Kelly Donaldson, PA Sea Grant  
Kim Couranz, NOAA  
Kristin Saunders, UMCES/CBP  
Laura Cattell Noll, Alliance/LLWG  
Lisa Jones, MDE  
Lucy Heller, Alliance

Melinda Shultz, PA Municipal Authorities Association  
Michelle DiNicola, PA DEP  
Mike Smith, Greensmith PR  
Olivia Wisner, CRC  
Phil Miller, DE DNREC  
Rona Kobell, Maryland Sea Grant  
Tali MacArthur, PA Environmental Council  
Tom Damm, EPA Region 3  
Will Parson, Alliance/CBP

**I. Welcome**

**II. Shared Messaging ([Presentation](#))**

- December 21: First day of winter
- December: Holidays
- International Day of People with Disabilities: Dec 3
- World Soil Day: December 5
- International Mountain Day: December 11
- National Maple Syrup Day: December 17
- First Day of Winter: December 21
- Hanukkah: December 10 - 18
- Audubon Christmas Bird Count: December 14 - January 5
- Christmas: December 24 - 25
- Kwanzaa: December 26 - January 1
- New Year's Eve: December 31

### III. Member Round Robin

- Gregg Bortz, Maryland DNR
  - [First Day Hikes](#) were successful in the beginning of 2020. Due to COVID-19 there will not be any guided hikes in 2021 but Maryland DNR is still expecting a large turnout in 2021. Maryland State Parks had a record number of 18 million visitors this year.
- Brent Peterson, DC DOEE
  - Plans to share CBP information on the reduced size of the dead zone.
- Michelle DiNicola, PA DEP
  - Creating thank you messaging for people working on the Phase III WIPs county-wide action plans. Thank you video will be posted in December or January.
- Phil Miller, DE DNREC
  - Creating a new DNREC website.
- Tom Damm, EPA Region 3
  - CBP Office Deputy Director, Jim Edward is retiring at the end of 2020. Bill Jenkins will be the new Acting Deputy Director until the role is filled.
- Kim Couranz, NOAA
  - Working on installing the 5th CBIBS buoy this week. Buoys will stay out on the water and collect data throughout winter.
  - Posted notice of [FY21 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Education and Training grant program](#). Deadline for proposals is March 1st.
  - [Environmental Science Training Center \(ESTC\)](#) is hosting a [workshop series](#) focused on creating virtual field experiences.
- Erin Montgomery, NPS/Chesapeake Conservancy
  - December newsletter will include [archaeological overview](#) and assessment of Werowocomoco.
- Jennifer Clarke, Department of Public Utilities, City of Richmond, Virginia
  - After a recent upgrade to its wastewater treatment plant, the City of Richmond is now capable of treating up to 140 million gallons of combined sewage and stormwater each day. The City of Richmond is currently focusing on communications focused on gray infrastructure.
  - Recently received over one million dollars in funding for an upcoming project and is looking for several positive stream restoration stories. Please email Jennifer Clarke at [Jenn.Clarke@richmondgov.com](mailto:Jenn.Clarke@richmondgov.com).
- Drew Robinson, Choose Clean Water
  - Working on the 2020 annual report.
  - The Clean Water Conference is going virtual in 2021. Conference will take place at the end of May 2021. Public announcement expected later this month.
- Jay Clarke, Virginia Sea Grant
  - Pushing information about the [Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship](#).
- Lucy Heller, Alliance
  - [Disability, Access, and the Outdoors](#) blog was published for National Disability Day.
  - Project presentations from the 2020 Watershed Forum are publicly available on [Youtube](#).
  - Posting a blog this month with results from [Project Clean Stream](#).
  - Gearing up for the 50th anniversary of the ACB in 2021.
- Kristin Saunders, UMCES/CBP
  - Greg Barranco is the lead contact for briefing the Biden transition team. If you

- have information for the Biden transition team you can send essential information to Kristin and she will get it to Greg.
  - The Chesapeake Conservation Partnership just had their annual meeting focused on the nexus of public health and land conservation, particularly focused on DEIJ and how to do more greening and restoration work in urban areas.
- Laura Cattell Noll, Alliance/LLWG
  - Cross outcome watershed educational materials will be shared within the next few months.
- Caroline Donovan, UMCES/IAN
  - The Chesapeake Monitoring Cooperative is publishing a six-year accomplishment report – would like to present at a February/March Communications Workgroup meeting
- Caitlyn Johnstone, Alliance/CBP
  - A DEIJ action team has been put in place to implement the goals of the Principals' Staff Committee DEIJ Action Statement signed in August 2020.
- Tali MacArthur, PA Environmental Council
  - Pennsylvania Organization for Watersheds and Rivers (POWR) is completely redesigning their website with a launch date in 2021.
  - POWR [2021 River of the Year](#) nominations are open.

IV. **Overview of the Sea Grant Program** (*Jay Clarke, VA Sea Grant; Kelly Donaldson, PA Sea Grant; and Rona Kobell, MD Sea Grant*)

- The Sea Grant Program is a federal university partnership that was established by Congress in 1966. It is a partnership between NOAA and university-based systems. Sea Grant has 34 programs across the country in coastal areas or Great Lakes states, Puerto Rico and Guam.
- The Sea Grant Program has four focus areas: healthy coastal ecosystems, sustainable fisheries & aquaculture, resilient communities & economies, environmental literacy & workforce development.
  - Achieve goals through research, extension, education and communications.
  - All Sea Grant programs work on all four of the focus areas but target their work towards regional needs.
  - The Healthy Coastal Ecosystems goal is a big focus area for every Sea Grant program. Each watershed has a different stressor, but by having regional offices Sea Grant is better able to meet those specific needs.
  - Environmental Literacy and Workforce Development
    - Create a diverse workforce trained in marine science, technology, mathematics, law and policy.
    - Training programs and educational materials help build an environmentally literate workforce and ensure the community is prepared to make informed decisions about their local environment.
  - Research
    - Plays a significant role in Sea Grant Program efforts - Sea Grant funded projects focus on some of today's most pressing issues.
    - Current research projects:
      - Study of wastewater treatment plants in central and south-central Pennsylvania.
        - Taking wastewater samples to assess the presence of COVID-19 to identify hotspots (2-3-day turnaround time).
        - Wastewater samples are also used to track pharmaceuticals present in the water, which can help identify locations where people are experiencing high

levels of stress.

- Extension
  - Extension is the most versatile of all the roles; the work is completely dependent on program and location.
  - The Sea Grant program was modeled after the land grant program. The land grant program is often referred to as the “boots on the ground” so Sea Grant staff like to say they are the “hip waders in the water.”
- Education
  - K-12 activities and adult programming are implemented to extend coastal and water literacy.
- Pennsylvania Sea Grant has been working in Lake Erie, Susquehanna and Delaware river basins for over 20 years.
  - Responsible for K-12 educational programming in Erie and Chester.
  - Plans to hire three new staff in 2021. One education manager and one extension staff in Erie and one extension staff member in Chester.
  - Kelly Donaldson is currently working on launching a new website for the Pennsylvania Sea Grant program with improved accessibility.
- Maryland Sea Grant (*Rona Kobell, MD Sea Grant*)
  - The communications program at Maryland Sea Grant has a staff of four people.
  - [Chesapeake Quarterly](#) is the Maryland Sea Grant magazine. The magazine has temporarily been moved online due to COVID-19. The team also creates blog content based on the magazine.
  - MD Sea Grant offers student fellowships which are an excellent opportunity for students to gain professional writing experience. Many of the students write blogs for the website.
  - During quarantine the team created a “[Shuck at Home](#)” series.
    - Lisa Tossey (MD Sea Grant Communications Manager) coordinated the series.
    - Oyster sales in Maryland plummeted at the beginning of the pandemic because of restaurant closures. MD Sea Grant created this series to teach people how to shuck oysters at home in an effort to educate the community and increase oyster sales.
  - [Backyard ecology](#) was another quarantine project created by MD Sea Grant.
    - The team directed members of their staff, as well as partners and community members to send in video clips and pictures of wildlife in their neighborhoods. The Sea Grant team used this footage to create mini stories and educational clips for Facebook and Instagram.
  - Give and receive grants
    - Maryland Sea Grant continues to make progress on the [Recirculating Aquaculture Salmon Network \(RAS-N\)](#) grant. The purpose of this grant is to explore opportunities for salmon aquaculture on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. For this project Maryland Sea Grant has partnered with Maine Sea Grant, which is currently studying salmon aquaculture at their facility and will share advice based on their project.
    - [Received SEAS Island Alliance grant](#) - UMCES and the Maryland Sea Grant College have been awarded a \$2.5 million grant from the National Science Foundation to help grow the number and diversity of students who are interested in and eventually seek careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics fields. This grant is part of the \$10 million, eight-institution SEAS Islands Alliance that will engage underrepresented minority students from the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and Guam in

- marine and environmental sciences by illuminating a full career pathway, from middle school to graduate school and job placement.
  - Maryland Sea grant is currently working with Kelsey Brooks (UMD Extension, Regional Watershed Restoration Specialist) and Morgan State students on the following:
    - Created educational films including one about [Smithville](#), a community on Maryland's Eastern Shore.
    - Working to create a science communications research internship for Morgan State students. Students will work with the journalism school, UMD Extension stormwater projects, Bay cleanup projects and MD Sea Grant initiatives.
  - Continuing to work on diversity both within the Sea Grant Program and among university partners.
- Jay Clarke (VA Sea Grant)
  - Virginia Sea Grant is hosted by the Virginia Institute of Marine Science and partners with seven universities.
  - Virginia Sea Grant provides [fellowship opportunities](#) and recruits for national level fellowships.
  - Staff is interested in working in the resiliency space and using multi-disciplinary team science to address issues like sea level rise and the economic development/workforce development that comes along with those projects.
  - Works with extension programs but also hosts four university extension programs at their school to which VA Sea Grant helps provide funding for.
    - Extension programs focus on education, culture, seafood safety and coastal policy.
  - Staff includes a digital storyteller and science writer that create stories about the region and creates story packets with university students.
  - Provides support for the extension programs when they are working on projects with Sea Grant funding.

**V. CBP Fish Consumption Advisory Project** (*Caitlyn Johnstone, Chesapeake Bay Program*)

- Caitlyn Johnstone, CBP's Outreach Specialist, shared a video focusing on safe fish consumption, filmed with Rivera Tapas, a local Maryland restaurant.
- In January, Caitlyn will provide an overview of a recently completed joint project with the Diversity and Toxics Workgroups to improve communications to communities at high-risk for toxic contaminants.
- [https://www.chesapeakebay.net/who/group/toxic\\_contaminants\\_workgroup](https://www.chesapeakebay.net/who/group/toxic_contaminants_workgroup)

**Next meeting:** January 6, 2021 at 1PM