



Communications Workgroup February Minutes

February 3, 2020 | 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Gregg Bortz, Maryland DNR (Chair)

Rachel Felver, ACB (Coordinator)

Marisa Baldine, CRC (Staffer)

Aaron Ferster, ORD/EPA

Adam Bray, ACB

Adam Miller, ACB

Amy Pelinsky, UMCES

Brent Peterson, DC DOEE

Caitlyn Johnstone, ACB/CBP

Caroline Donovan, UMCES/IAN

Cynamon Butler, CBT

Dana Austin, EPA

Emily Ramirez, UMCES

Erin Montgomery, NPS/Chesapeake
Conservancy

Heidi Bonnaffon, WashCOG

Greg Barranco, EPA

Heidi Bonnaffon, MWCOG

Jake Solyst, ACB/CBP

Jay Clark, VA Sea Grant

Jenna Mackley,, ACB

Kelly Donaldson, PA Sea Grant

Kim Couranz, NOAA

Kristin Saunders, UMCES/CBP

Lisa Tossey, MD Sea Grant

Michael Bowman, Chesapeake Conservancy

Michelle DiNicola, PA DEP

Mike Smith, Greensmith PR

Ola-Imani Davis, ACB

Olivia Wisner, CRC

Phil Miller, DE DNRC

Tom Damm, EPA

Will Parson, ACB

I. Welcome

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

III. Member Round Robin

A. Cynamon Butler, Chesapeake Bay Trust (CBT)

1. Marketing & Communications Manager at the CBT
2. CBT decided they will use the language “a black person who was enslaved” instead of “a slave.” Referring to a person as a slave ignores the racial and human aspect of slavery.

B. Gregg Bortz, MD DNR

1. Maryland DNR is also evaluating their current language to be more inclusive and will likely be changing the messaging for the Harriet Tubman National Historical Park.
2. The newsletter will link to the Harriet Tubman Welcome Center Video “[Harriet Tubman: Soldier of Freedom](#)”
3. DNR is a partner of the Maryland Climate Leadership Academy. The [Certified Climate Change Professional® \(CC-P®\) Credential Training Programs](#) Cohort VIII is accepting applications until February 13, 2021. Class runs from Feb 16, 2021 - April 6, 2021.

C. Michelle DiNicola (PA DEP)

1. Pennsylvania released a press release updating their progress on implementing their Phase 3 WIP.

- a) View the press release:
 - <https://www.ahs.dep.pa.gov/NewsRoomPublic/articleviewer.aspx?id=21916&typeid=1>
 - 2. Published an article about eels that has performed well.
 - a) View the blog here:
 - <https://www.dep.pa.gov/OurCommonWealth/Pages/Article.aspx?post=70>
- D. Brent Peterson, DC DOEE
 - 1. D.C. is focusing on the remediation of local waterways especially the Anacostia.
- E. Phil Miller, DE DNREC
 - 1. Chesapeake Bay meeting on 25th.
- F. Aaron Ferster, ORD/EPA
 - 1. Updating green infrastructure web presence and looking to highlight some new research including stormwater management best management practices across the Bay.
- G. Greg Barranco, CBPO/EPA
 - 1. The next Principals' Staff Committee (PSC) meeting is on March 2.
 - a) [The agenda](#) will likely include a follow-up focusing on the Diversity Action Team, Bay Program budget, discussion about climate change with the focus of the new administration and a follow-up to the Conowingo WIP public comment period.
 - b) The next Management Board meeting will be held on February 11.
- H. Tom Damm, EPA Region 3
 - 1. The hearing to confirm the EPA Administrator nominee took place on February 3.
- I. Kim Couranz, NOAA
 - 1. Notice of funding
 - a) [NOAA Chesapeake Bay-Watershed Education and Training Program](#)
 - (1) Closing date is March 1
 - b) [Bycatch Reduction Engineering Program Funding](#)
 - (1) Closing date is April 1
 - c) [Atlantic Salmon Habitat Restoration Partnership Grants](#)
 - (1) Closing date is April 12
 - d) [FY 2021–2023: Broad Agency Announcement](#)
 - 2. Several internship opportunities are available:
 - a) Chesapeake StREAM
 - (1) [Sustainable Fisheries Chesapeake StREAM Internship](#)
 - (2) [GIS Analysis Chesapeake StREAM Internship](#)
 - b) NOAA Internships
 - (1) [Climate Change Indicator Project Internship](#)
 - (2) [Data Visualization Internship](#)
 - (3) [Environmental Literacy Internship](#)
 - (4) [Applying Satellite Derived Data to Coastal Resource Management Internship](#)
- J. Erin Montgomery, NPS/Chesapeake Conservancy

1. Chesapeake Conservancy is entering a philanthropic agreement with the National Park System. A press release will be published soon.
 2. Chesapeake Trails newsletter was published on February 3. Contact Erin at emontgomery@chesapeakeconservancy.org if you would like to join the email distribution list.
- K. Olivia Wisner, CRC
1. Earth Force created a new Distance Learning Supplement to the Meaningful Watershed Education Experience (MWEE).
 - a) The document can be accessed here:
https://d18lev1ok5leia.cloudfront.net/baybackpack/2020-Curriculum-Guide_NOAA-version_24JAN21.pdf
 - b) Learn more about MWEE here:
<https://www.baybackpack.com/mwee/what-is-a-mwee>
- L. Heidi Bonnaffon, WashCOG
1. Interested in hearing what everyone is planning for Earth Day and Chesapeake Bay Awareness Week.
 - a) Shared messaging for both Earth Day and Chesapeake Bay Awareness Week will be discussed in the March Communications Workgroup meeting.
- M. Adam Bray, CAC/ACB
1. The first Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting of 2021 will be held on February 25-26. The meeting will focus on climate change. CAC is welcoming seven new members; this might be the most new members to ever join at one time.
- N. Ola-Imani Davis, LGAC/ACB
1. The next Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC) meeting will take place from March 18-19.
 2. LGAC is looking into a few new projects in the second quarter of the year.
- O. Jay Clark, VA Sea Grant
1. Focusing on resilience communications at the moment.
 2. Recently received a grant from Go Virginia to focus on resilience test areas.
 - a) This will explore ideas around things like sea level rise and economic indicators.
 3. Coastal and Estuarine Research Federation Design Competition is focusing on Hampton, Virginia.
 - a) Learn more about the competition:
<https://cerfcompetition.vaseagrant.org/>
- P. Kelly Donaldson, PA Sea Grant
1. Currently hiring for 3 positions
 - a) [Education Lead](#)
 - b) [Coastal Outreach Specialist for the Susquehanna River Basin](#)
 - c) [Coastal Outreach Specialist for the Delaware River Basin](#)
 2. PA Sea Grant funded research to collect samples from wastewater treatment plants to help local governments plan for and respond to COVID-19.

3. The Sea Grant Water Resources Visioning Team hosted a webinar, "COVID-19 In The Water Environment." The webinar shared information about the state of science regarding COVID-19 in the water environment and some innovative Sea Grant research and outreach projects in this area.

- a) A recording of the webinar can be found here:

- <http://nsglc.olemiss.edu/news/#29th>

Q. Lisa Tossey, MD Sea Grant

1. [Chesapeake Quarterly](#) issue on microplastics was published on February 1.
2. A virtual issue of Chesapeake Quarterly will be published in the third week of February focusing on Black history and maritime trades.

- a) This will be a very multimedia rich edition of Chesapeake Quarterly.

R. Amy Pelinsky, UMCES

1. [Environmental Management for Sustainability](#) professional certificate course announced at the University of Maryland.

2. Please use the social media prompts below to help share this announcement:

- a) Interested in environmental management and sustainability? @UMCES has just launched a professional certificate program to help people all over the world affect positive change by communicating and using data more effectively. Learn more about the program:

- <https://www.edx.org/professional-certificate/usmx-environmental-management-for-sustainability>

- b) Get a certificate in environmental management and sustainability with @UMCES new online edX certificate program. Learn to communicate science effectively and efficiently: <https://www.edx.org/professional-certificate/usmx-environmental-management-for-sustainability>

- c) Communicating and using data effectively is essential to helping the public understand the impact and reasoning for scientific studies. Learn all the how-tos with @UMCES new online certificate:

- <https://www.edx.org/professional-certificate/usmx-environmental-management-for-sustainability>

3. A new study that analyzed 20 years' worth of data showed that wastewater treatment plants are making a difference in water quality in the Choptank River.

- a) View the article: <https://www.umces.edu/news/study-finds-some-water-quality-improvements-in-choptank-river>

4. Join the Environmental Insights newsletter from UMCES to get updates.

- a) Link to join the newsletter: <https://www.umces.edu/environmental-insights-newsletter>

S. Adam Miller, ACB

1. The Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay is running a 50 stories campaign to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the organization.

- a) One of the most recent articles features ACB board member Dennis Chestnut. The article talks about his experience growing up near the Anacostia River and how that experience shaped his life.

(1) View the article: <https://www.allianceforthebay.org/2021/01/50-stories-dennis-chestnut-his-love-for-the-anacostia-river/>

T. Michael Bowman, Chesapeake Conservancy

1. Two weeks ago, the second season of Chesapeake Conservancy's podcast, Chesapeake Conversations was released. Season one premiered during the pandemic in 2020.

a) The podcast can be found here:

<https://www.chesapeakeconservancy.org/chesapeake-conversations-podcast/>

U. Mike Smith, GreenSmith PR

1. Two new articles will be published soon to promote the [Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund](#).

a) One article will focus on farming streambank work and logperch initiatives.

b) The second article will focus on the Anacostia River mussels and water quality initiatives.

V. Kristin Saunders, UMCES/CBP

1. The Management Board has a subcommittee led by Sean Corson from NOAA, Christine Conn from Maryland DNR and Bill Jenkins from EPA. to look at the attainability of the Bay Program's goals and outcomes in preparation for the May Strategy Review System Meeting. There will likely be communications and messaging that comes out of this work that the Communications Workgroup members might be asked to be involved in.

2. The Diversity Action Team will brief the PSC in late February. The team is working towards a number of things that will help build an implementation strategy for how to operationalize DEIJ. A big part of this process will be the in-progress communications and outreach strategy.

3. The Management Board will be presented with new information about land use options and evaluations at the next meeting. Some communications discussions might come out of this meeting.

W. Rachel Felver, CBP/ACB

1. Accepting applications for a summer multimedia internship. This is primarily a photography-based position with opportunities for writing and video depending on the candidate. Some travel throughout the watershed is expected.

a) View the job posting: <https://www.allianceforthebay.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/CBP-MM-Intern-Summer-2021-FINAL.pdf>

(1) The deadline to apply is March 5

(2) Contact Will Parson at wparson@chesapeakebay.net with any questions.

2. Official Bay Barometer content was sent to the workgroup for review on February 5.

a) Please respond to Rachel directly – rfelver@chesapeakebay.net – by 5PM on Friday, February 19 with any questions or edits.

IV. Overview of the CMC six-year achievement report draft *(Caroline Donovan, UMCES)*

- A. The CMC is in its final year of its first grant cycle. The achievement report will show what has been accomplished during this initial grant cycle.
- B. The CMC is a partnership between the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay (ACB), the Izaak Walton League of America (IWLA), Dickinson College's Alliance for Aquatic Resource Monitoring (ALLARM) and the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science (UMCES).
- C. The eight-page report will be provided as a PDF and print copies will be provided in the future.
- D. The report is targeting people that already know of the CMC and want an update on what has been accomplished, mainly partners and volunteers.
- E. Cover page describes mission, vision and team as well as some statistics. There is a focus on collaboration and partnerships across the watershed.
- F. One of the biggest outcomes has been the [Chesapeake Data Explorer](#) which is a database showing all of the data points collected by monitoring organizations.
- G. The second page of the accomplishment report shows a timeline with highlights from the entire six years. It is a double page spread with a summary of each year. The timeline highlights how the CMC was started, what was done in each year, including when the CMC started training volunteers, the release of the Chesapeake Data Explorer, the switch to virtual training in 2020, and certification programs and the Hack The Bay event.
- H. The report uses in-depth stories to show some of the bigger programs that have come out of the Stream Team.
 1. The Stream Team is a new community-based volunteer monitoring program in Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania has historically had monitoring for things like shale gas but when CMC started, they realized they wanted to have volunteer monitors testing water quality throughout the area. This is a project that started because of the CMC agreement with the Chesapeake Bay Program.
- I. Chesapeake Data Explorer is a phenomenal database. It has downloadable data from around the watershed that everyone can use in tandem with monitoring efforts being completed by federal and state agencies.
- J. The report highlights the influence throughout the watershed and partnership with state agencies. The Chesapeake Bay Program is a partner of the CMC, but state agencies have also been an integral part. The report talks about how the CMC worked with individual states to look at what type of monitoring and data they need.
 1. It also shows how the CMC data was used for the local WIP process.
- K. An MOU was signed by all the watershed jurisdictions in 2018. The MOU formalized the states accepting volunteer monitoring data.
- L. Final page of the report thanks all the partners, volunteers and people who have helped over the years.
- M. Final touches on the report are currently being implemented. Please email Caroline at cdonovan@umces.edu if you have any ideas for the report. The report will be disseminated in the beginning of March. The report will be posted on social media and in the CMC newsletter. The report will also be highlighted in some of the CBP workgroup announcements.

1. Join the CMC newsletter: <https://chesapeakemonitoringcoop.us13.list-manage.com/subscribe/post?u=5179786e92bb911cb0e2466f4&id=8c6e75266c>

V. 2020 CBP Website Analytics (Presentation) (Jake Solyst, CBP)

- A. This presentation will provide an overview of the CBP website analytics from 2020. This will look at which website pages received the most traffic and which pages received fewer views than previous years. This helps the CBP team know where the audience is entering the CBP website. Any page could be someone's first impression of the Bay Program and the content on the website.
- B. In 2019, the CBP website received 3,165,068 views. In 2020, the CBP website received 2,296,025 views.
 1. Certain educational pages that were usually, and still are getting, a ton of traffic from students seemed to have fewer views in 2020. Pages like air pollution and watershed tend to get a lot of traffic from students and teachers but this year received fewer views. This might be related to COVID-19 and teachers using different teaching methods and projects than what they normally use.
 2. Another hypothesis is that CBP's website ranking might have changed in Google which is leading to fewer views.
- C. Percentage of views
 1. Looking at the percentage of views for each of the topic on the header of the CBP website.
 - a) The only difference in this analysis is that the Field Guide which is part of the Discover the Chesapeake section is listed as its own topic because it received so much traffic.
 - b) This breakdown is a good representation of what interests our audience has. Hopefully this gives Communication Workgroup members some indication of what their audience might also be interested in.
 2. Our blog is there at twelve percent, as a communications team we focus a lot on our blog because that is what we are continuously adding to. A lot of the other sections we aren't frequently adding new information. This shows that even though the CBP communications team is not actively adding new information to all of the sections, those pages are still bringing in a lot of traffic to the website. This is a good reminder for the communications team to always review those pages and make sure they are up to date and accessible.
 3. Discover the Chesapeake
 - a) This is a deep dive into a breakdown of the Discover the Chesapeake section of the CBP website.
 - b) This helps the communications team draw conclusions about what people are interested in, wildlife is one of the most important. The CBP Field Guide is responsible for 65 percent of the traffic for the Discover the Chesapeake section of the website. There are over 350 creatures listed in the Field Guide. This includes entries on algae, birds, fish, insects, invertebrates, mammals, reptiles & amphibians, and plants & trees. Viewers can also search creatures by habitats including: aquatic reefs &

pilings, beaches & tidal flats, forests & uplands, marshes & wetlands, open & shallow water, and streams & rivers.

- (1) Each Field Guide entry can drive a ton of traffic. This is a reminder that wildlife can be a powerful gateway into the Bay Program's work. People that might just be interested in a particular critter can be hooked as a Bay Program supporter. The hope is that people use the Field Guide and it leads them to more CBP content that discusses the issues in the Chesapeake and what CBP is doing as an organization.

D. Top Performing Pages

1. 23% of traffic to the [Field Guide](#)
 - a) 2019
 - (1) Black rat snake: 35,213
 - b) 2020
 - (1) Eastern garter snake: 55, 975
 - (2) Black rat snake: 45,501
 - (3) Northern snakehead: 18,917
 - c) One of the most intriguing things that happened in 2019 and 2020, was that the snake entries in the Field Guide were some of the most popular pages. If the CBP communications team had to list the top priorities as an organization, the eastern garter snake would not be listed but that page received almost 56,000 views in 2020. This is a great example of knowing which pages are driving a lot of traffic helps the team know which pages to keep updated and to think about how people might be driven to explore the CBP website.
 - (1) If you have seen a similar trend with your website where a small part of your website is driving a significant amount of traffic, contact Jake at jsolyst@chesapeakebay.net to discuss how you have changed your website to benefit from the success of that webpage.
2. 13% of traffic to the [Discover the Chesapeake](#) pages
 - a) The watershed page is definitely an academic resource page and it received almost 20,000 less views in 2020 than in 2019.
 - b) 2019
 - (1) Washershed: 55,706
 - c) 2020
 - (1) Watershed: 34,059
 - d) Have any other member of the workgroup seen a decrease or increase in page views from 2019 and 2020?
3. 12% of traffic to the [Learn the Issues](#) pages
 - a) Similar view ratios as similar pages. Pages had slightly less views than previous years. This section also included many educational resources.
4. 12% of traffic to the [CBP blogs](#)

- a) The CBP team is always adding to the blog but there are some pages from previous years that are still driving more traffic than recently produced materials.
 - (1) One of the most popular articles on the CBP website is “Are there sharks in the Chesapeake Bay?”
 - (a) Views dropped from 23,740 in 2019, to 14,599 in 2020.
 - 5. 2% of traffic to the [State of the Bay](#) pages
 - a) Shows a significant drop in views on pages that are frequently used by educators and students.
- E. Blog
 - 1. In 2020, CBP published 139 blogs.
 - 2. The CBP team keeps track of the types of articles published which can vary by length, topic and style.
 - 3. The performance of a blog post can change depending on many factors including how it was promoted on social media, the photos used, and the title used.
 - a) The CBP team has learned which things to look at so we can try to find out how to do better.
 - 4. Most viewed
 - a) The wildlife and optimistic success stories do well. Sometimes history does well. In 2020, “Three Chesapeake beaches reflect the history of desegregation in the United States” was the second most popular article. The entire CBP team was proud of that article, it performed well when it was published and continued to do well throughout the year.
 - 5. Average page views: Topic
 - a) Wildlife is always popular and did the best in terms of page views.
 - b) CBP updates aren’t as popular but seem to reach the people that need to see these updates.
 - 6. Average page views: Content
 - a) This is a list of how articles are organized on our website.
 - (1) List, restoration spotlight, creature feature, photo of the week, photo essay, feature and news
 - b) List blog posts are normally popular.
- F. Jake would love to get emails from anyone with insights from your 2020 website analytics especially involving pages that are designed for teachers and students. Is there anything that you track that
 - 1. Please contact Jake at jsolyst@chesapeakebay.net with any questions about the presentation.

VI. Next meeting: March 3, 2021 at 1 PM