

COG Chesapeake Bay & Water Resources Policy Committee (CBPC) Water Resources Outreach Plan

(as of 3/10/17)

PLAN SUMMARY / CONTENTS

Background – Provides context, as well as to note the evolution of the CBPC’s current outreach efforts.

Overall Outreach Elements – Lists general message points and coordination that would broadly be reflected in all water-related outreach efforts or events (as appropriate).

Water Outreach Plans – 2017: Current Events & Specific Activities – List of current events that CBPC will specifically focus on, and outline of specific work efforts for each event. [This will be an ongoing, evolving work effort](#), so the intention is that this plan will be regularly updated to reflect new activities/resources and when new events and focus areas are added to the CBPC’s planned outreach work.

2017 Annual Events/Dates

1. May 15 – 19: National Infrastructure Week
2. June 4-10: Chesapeake Bay Awareness Week (2nd week in June)
3. June 30: Virginia’s Drinking Water and Wastewater Professionals Day
4. November: Critical Infrastructure Security and Resiliency Month

BACKGROUND

Annual Work Program Elements

- **Overall Goal** – *Continue to protect water quality and public health in a sustainable and affordable manner for the region*
- **A Key Initiative - Communicate Water Resource Successes & Challenges** - Continue to communicate on behalf of the COG region, for example:
 - Impacts and benefits of pollution control efforts in Potomac and local waters
 - Present current and future challenges faced by wastewater/stormwater managers
 - Current water infrastructure needs and opportunities for addressing some needs
 - Potential weather/climate vulnerabilities and the implications for regional water infrastructure
 - [CBPC Policy Principles](#) (R49-2016)

CBPC Activities - Water Quality Forum (**Currently planned for 9/15/17**)

- Communication planning and public education ranked highly as Forum action items.
- COG staff will work with EPA and state staff to identify and pursue development of specific actions over the coming year to address various water issues.

COG Board Resolution – Water Appreciation (R22-2016) (adopted 4/13/16)

- Annual – Drinking Water and Wastewater Professionals Appreciation Day
- Annual – Chesapeake Bay Awareness Week
- <http://www.mwcog.org/uploads/committee-documents/bFxeVI5b20160413152332.pdf>

COG's Role in Regional Bay Restoration Efforts

- COG's membership spans a major portion of the Potomac River watershed – covering the District, suburban Maryland, and Northern Virginia
- COG region represents approximately 30% of the Bay watershed's population
- COG convenes local governments and regional water utilities to address common issues, share best practices, develop regional approaches, and unify messages.
- COG serves as a forum for dialogues with the states and EPA on critical Bay efforts as well as broader water issues.
- COG's member governments and water utilities are responsible for implementing the processes, programs and other management practices that the states and EPA include in their nutrient reduction plans.
- COG fosters partnerships with local universities, consultants, associations of cities and counties, and national water associations to share knowledge and encourage innovation.
- COG has had a long history of active involvement in the Chesapeake Bay Program's activities, from the first Bay Agreement through the current Bay TMDL and Management Strategies, and the upcoming Mid-Point Assessment effort.

OVERALL OUTREACH ELEMENTS

General Message Points (as appropriate)

- Emphasize 'Value of Water'
- Highlight local successes
- Link local efforts to improvements to local waters as well as Potomac and Anacostia Rivers, and the Bay
 - Local governments have a critical role in restoring the Bay
 - Restoration of local waters are essential to restoring Bay health
- Note inherent links (interconnectedness) between all water subsectors (i.e., wastewater, stormwater, drinking water) and need for holistic solutions
- Highlight COG member leadership in innovative processes/practices/programs
- Critical role volunteers have played.
- Emphasize that water sector has directly economic benefits and supports whole economy
- Emphasize the strong jobs benefits of water sector (i.e., local, sustainable, wide range of skills and career development)
- Acknowledge challenges and need for adequate/sustained funding
- Acknowledge that these efforts are ongoing, long-term commitments and financial investments
 - Noting that there is not a "one size fits all" approach to financing local programs.

General Coordination

- Coordinate with CBPC and other COG member governments and water utilities' public information and outreach staff to:
 - Share outreach plans
 - Identify activities to promote
 - Provide input on key messages for the region
 - Help to integrate efforts (i.e., same message, many voices)
 - Others?
- Link local efforts with other applicable groups (as appropriate):
 - Federal (EPA/CBPO) offices
 - State offices (MD and VA)
 - Chesapeake Bay Commission (CBC)
 - Chesapeake Bay Program's Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC)
 - National water organizations (e.g., WEF, NACWA)
 - Others?
- Coordinate with COG's Office of Communications:
 - Integrate with overall COG/Board messaging
 - Utilize COG's social media, Region Forward blog, and website
 - Develop a media toolkit
 - Submit articles to select news sources (e.g., Chesapeake Bay Journal)
 - Other activities?

WATER OUTREACH PLANS – 2016
Current Events & Specific Activities
(revised 3/10/17)

1. May 15 – 19: National Infrastructure Week

2017 Priority/Focus:

- Efforts will be made to opportunistically share and highlight COG member activities.

Events:

Specific Messaging Points:

- Highlight how investments in water infrastructure provide support for local infrastructure, local jobs, and local economies
- Link efforts to COG Board priorities (infrastructure, jobs, economic competitiveness, etc.)
- Discuss how services and accomplishments that result from rate increases.
- Acknowledge that rate increases are necessary to sustain this critical infrastructure - given many decades of deferred investment
- Other?

Specific Coordination:

- Regional Water Utilities.

References/Resources:

- <http://infrastructureweek.org/calendar/>

2. June 4–10: Chesapeake Bay Awareness Week

2016 Priority/Focus:

- There will be a concerted effort to actively highlight COG member activities, and to engage other key groups like CBC and EPA/CBPO.
- Member Resolutions supporting the Awareness Week

Events:

- CBP table of Bay-wide events: <http://www.chesapeakebay.net/takeaction/events>
- Local events directly linked to Bay efforts (TBD)

Specific Messaging Points:

- Highlight COG region’s wastewater successes as part of Bay-wide successes:
 - Implementation of wastewater treatment plant upgrades ahead of 2025 schedule
 - In many cases, reducing nitrogen levels/loads now in advance of the 2025 schedule
 - Testing and implementation of state of the art nitrogen reduction technologies
 - Operating at limit of technology levels for phosphorus for several decades
 - Documented improvements water quality in the upper portion of the Potomac River in response to all of these wastewater treatment efforts
 - Utility efforts to address water-energy nexus and build resiliency. [examples: Microgrids, Blue Plains’ biosolids]
 - Metropolitan Washington region’s significant public investment in our wastewater infrastructure has clearly been successful.
- Highlight COG regions’ stormwater successes:
 - Some of the most aggressive MS4 permits in the country are in the metropolitan Washington region.

- Designing and implementing new and innovative practices to achieve nutrient and sediment reductions. Regional best practices sharing via COG workshops and forums. [examples of practices Opti RTC, DC's green roofs, DC Water's green infrastructure project to lessen stormwater flow and CSO events] [examples of workshops: Green streets and stream restoration success stories, TMDL action plans]
- Instituting creative and new funding mechanisms to support challenging implementation schedules and plans. [examples: Water Quality Trading, stormwater utility fees, bonds, P3]
- Partnerships: (e.g., VAMSA/MAMSA; Coordination and conversations with MACo and MDE.)
- Acknowledge how all of this is linked to need for robust Water Infrastructure:
 - Discuss how services and accomplishments have been supported by rate increases.
 - Acknowledge that rate increases are necessary to sustain this critical infrastructure - given many decades of deferred investment.

References/Resources:

- <http://www.chesapeakebay.net/takeaction/events>
- <http://www.mde.state.md.us/programs/Marylander/outreach/Pages/10ThingsYouCanDo.aspx>
- <http://businesses.allianceforthebay.org/>
- <https://allianceforthebay.org/2016/04/chesapeake-business-forum-may-24/>
- <http://www.jefpat.org/patuxentriverrwadein.html>
- <http://bayweek.mpt.org/programs/>
- [City of Falls Church Resolution](#) recognizing Chesapeake Bay Awareness Week.

3. June 30: Virginia's Drinking Water and Wastewater Professionals Day

2017 Priority/Focus:

- There will be a concerted effort to actively highlight COG member activities, and to engage other key groups like local water professional organizations.
- Focus will be on Virginia; but also include the District of Columbia and Maryland events too (to hopefully build support for expanding this concept beyond Virginia next year)
- Efforts will be made to identify at least one compelling VA based event as a platform to generate broader interest and attention to metro Washington actions and messages.

Events:

- Local events directly linked to supporting Drinking Water and Wastewater Professionals Day on June 30th
- Other

Specific Messaging Points:

- Express appreciation for the dedicated work of these professionals (including the 24/7/365 aspects of many jobs)
- Water utility staff are also 'First Responders' for many emergencies.
- Recognize the importance of their work in protecting public health as well as the environment
- Highlight the wide range of jobs and career opportunities that are available, and the diversity of the workforce
- Highlight water jobs as a work force of the future, with a strong career pathway.
- Promote job training programs/opportunities whenever possible
- Recognize that these jobs are part of/support our local communities

Specific Coordination:

- Local governments and water utilities that provide either drinking water and/or wastewater treatment services
- Work with local chapters of national water organizations (e.g., VWEA, CWEA, FWQA, AWWA VA Section, AWWA MD Section)

References/Resources:

- MD EARN Program Operator specific site <http://www.cleanwatercareersmd.org/>
- General EARN program link <http://www.dlr.maryland.gov/earn/earnresources.shtml>
- COG Board Resolution <http://www.mwcog.org/uploads/committee-documents/bFxeVI5b20160413152332.pdf>
- Virginia General Assembly [Resolution](#)
- Prince William County Service Authority [press release](#)

4. November: Critical Infrastructure Security and Resiliency Month

2017 Priority/Focus:

- Focus on various ongoing COG work efforts, e.g., Water Redundancy Study, metropolitan Washington's reservoir system, and results of COG Cooperative Forecast 9.0 (i.e., for assessing design capacity for wastewater and drinking water plants). [Protect Your Pipes](#) campaign.
- Others to be developed

Events:

To be determined.

Specific Messaging Points:

- Water is a fundamental and critical infrastructure sector.
- Highlight the good work that COG is doing to address/advance water security and resiliency matters.