

# Changing Boater Behavior: Using a Social Marketing Toolkit to Prevent SAV Damage

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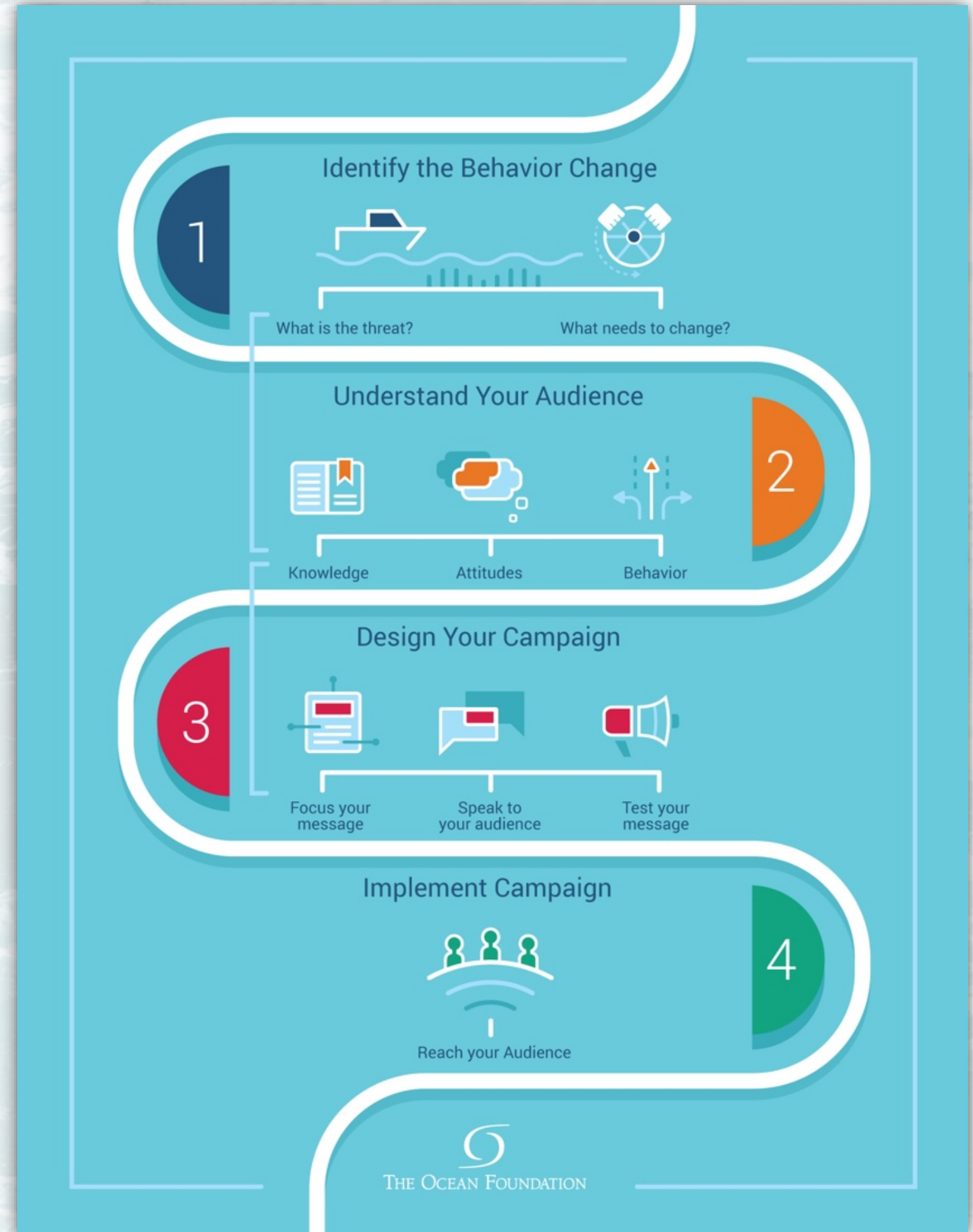
Alyssa Hildt | The Ocean Foundation



# The Toolkit

Developed by The Ocean Foundation in 2016, the toolkit provides a guide for resource managers to use best practices in behavior change theory in order to inspire boaters to operate their boats more carefully around seagrass and/or SAV.

Through a grant from the Chesapeake Bay Trust, The Ocean Foundation partnered with ShoreRivers to pilot the toolkit and test how it works when used by its intended audience.





# Baseline Research

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Before defining a target audience, we conducted research to better understand the status of SAV in the Choptank River and Chesapeake Bay

## Key Questions:

- What is the status of threats to SAV in the Choptank River?
- What efforts have already been made to reduce damage to SAV?
- What are existing behaviors that damage SAV? What are the correct behaviors?



# Baseline Research Results

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By answering these questions, we were able to identify known behaviors around SAV on the waterway as well as what types of boaters may be committing these behaviors.

## 1. Identifying the Behaviors

- How boaters are causing underwater grass damage
  - Running aground while docking, scraping, moving through shallow waterways, etc.

## 2. Decreasing Damage

- Laws
- Current awareness efforts

## 3. Which Boaters to Target

- Recreational vs. Commercial
- Part time vs. Full Time Residences
- Public vs. Private Slip Holders



# Choosing the Target Audience

**A key component of the research was determining what types of boaters would be targeted for the behavior change.**

Larger Audience: All boaters in the Choptank River

- Subgroups:
  - Commercial Boaters
  - Recreational Boaters
    - Fish
    - Crab/Mollusk
    - Other

## Note:

Other potential subgroups could be eliminated based on subgroup size and their ability to cause the majority of damage to SAV in the Choptank River (e.g. part-time residences).

Please complete the following survey to access this premium content.

Question 4 of 10 or fewer:

Do you operate a boat at least once a year on the Chesapeake Bay, and if so, in which region(s)?



Check all answers that apply

- ☐ Eastern Shore-Somerset, Wicomico, Worcester
- ☐ Eastern Shore - Talbot, Dorchester, Caroline
- ☐ Eastern Shore - Kent, Queen Annes
- ☐ Central Region
- ☐ Southern Region



# Assessing the Potential Audience

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To further specify the campaign's audience, we created survey questions that could gather more information on the audience's attitudes, knowledge, and behavior.

## Knowledge

What does our target audience know about SAV? Are they aware of its positive role in the health of the Bay? Are there common misconceptions?

## Attitude

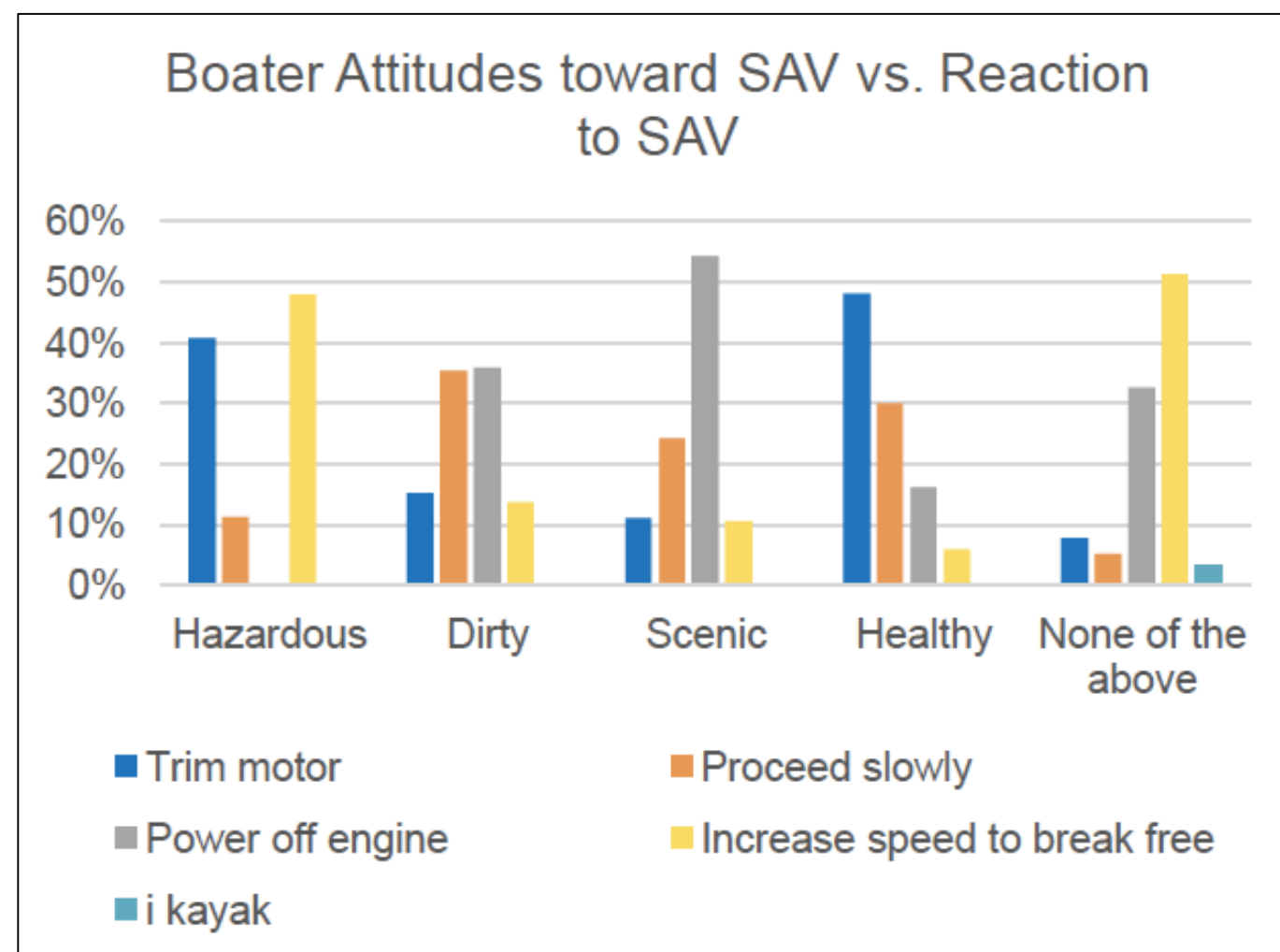
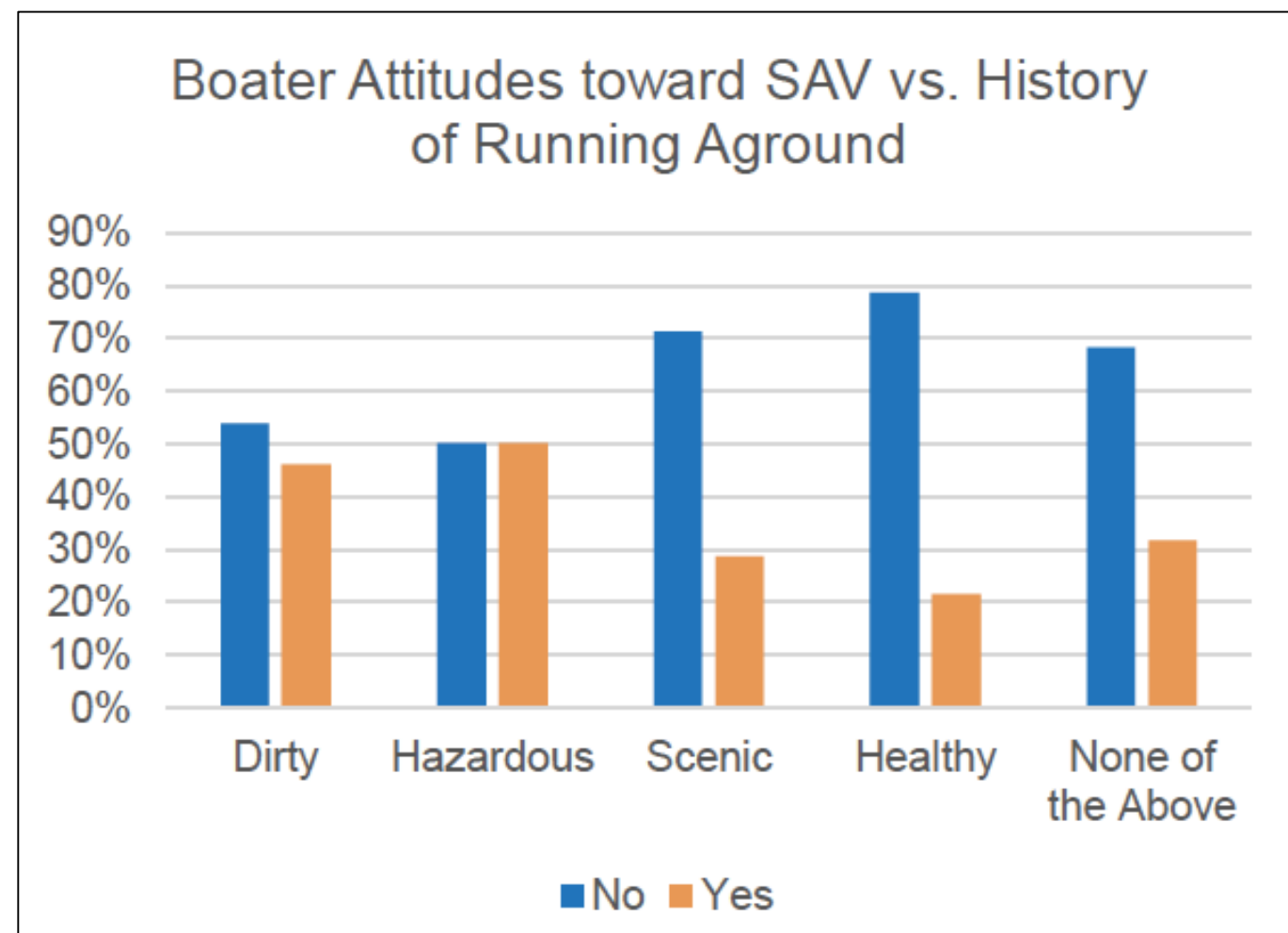
What is the attitude of our target audience towards SAV? Is it positive? Negative? What sort of emotions do they attribute towards SAV?

## Behavior

How does our target audience behave around SAV? Have they damaged it before? How do they operate their boat when they see SAV? Do they do the correct thing? The wrong thing?

<https://surveys.google.com/create/preview?survey=2dk7gph66d5alghv2573cher4q>





# Establishing our Target Audience

## Attitude Matters

More than 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of boaters surveyed self-reported having run aground on SAV in the past.

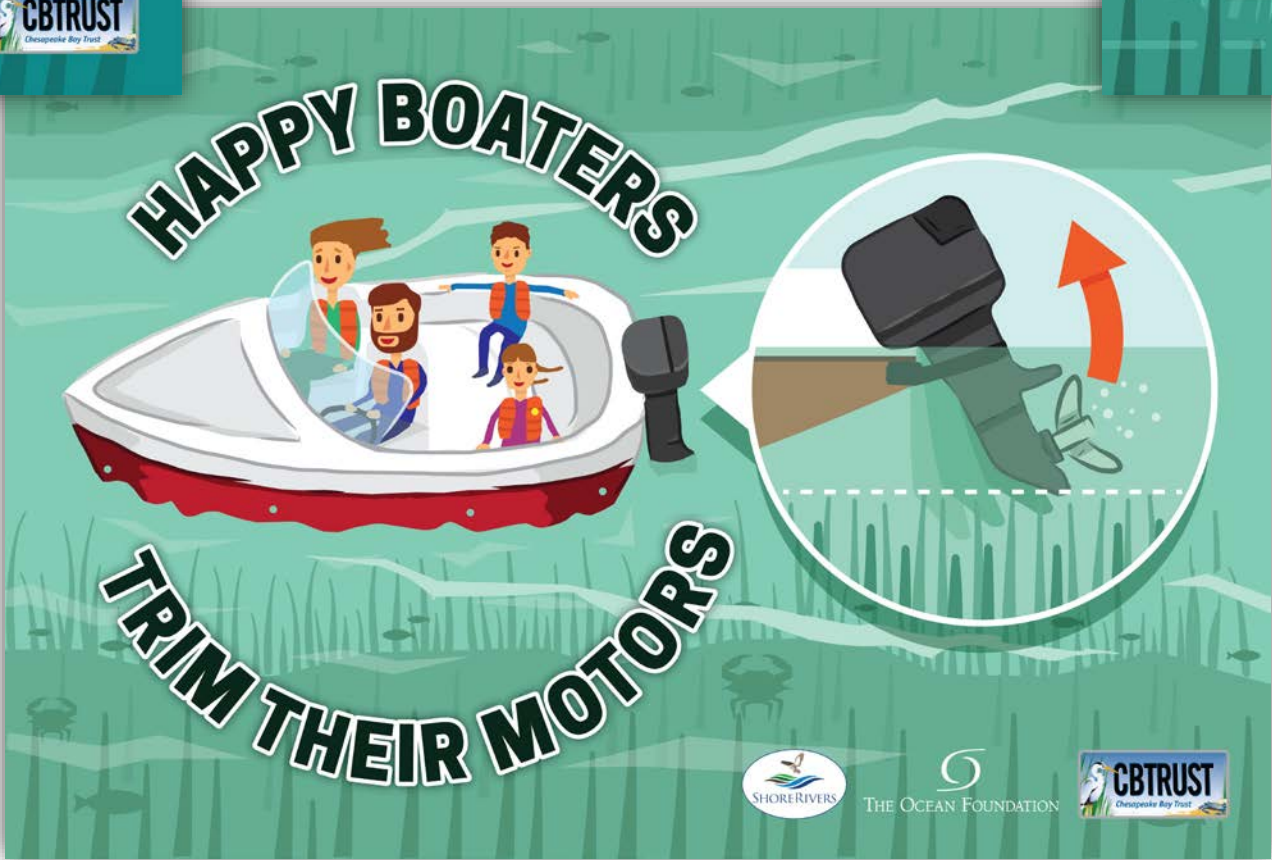
A number of boaters also reported “revving their motor to break free” when they came upon SAV – the exact behavior we want to prevent

**Knowledge** of the boater was **not a predictor** of their behavior

**Attitude** of the boater **correlated well** with behavior, with those who considered SAV to be “healthy” having the best behavior and those who considered SAV to be “dirty” or “hazardous” as having the worst behavior



# Designing the Campaign

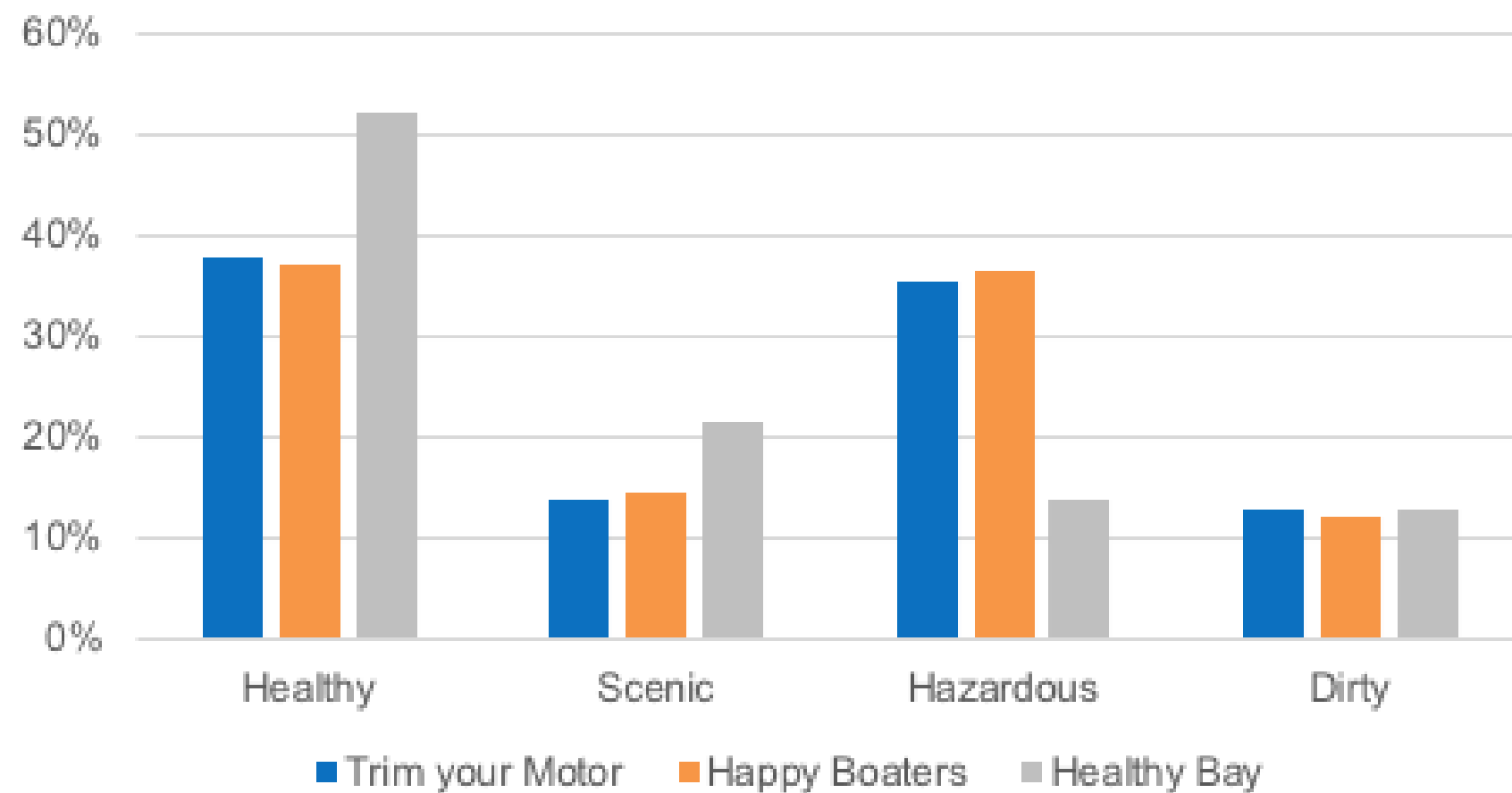


# Choosing the winning design

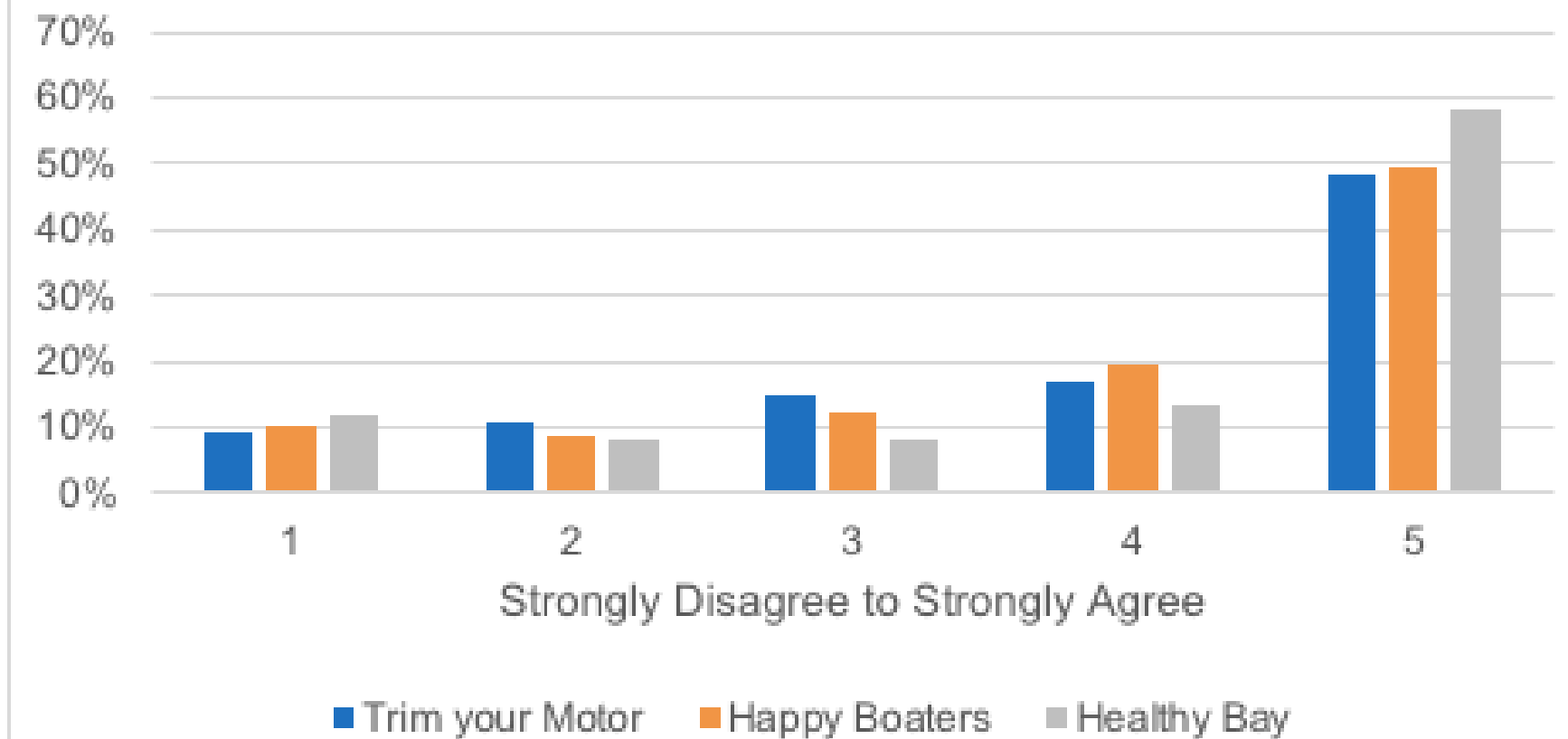
And again... Attitude Matters!!



Which word best describes SAV?



Rank how important it is to be aware of your motor in shallow waters.



# Full Implementation Plan

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Four-tiered implementation plan based on funding availability and project partners

## **Pilot**

ShoreRivers and The Ocean Foundation will post signs at one marina and use intercept surveys and observational studies to monitor the effectiveness of the message.

## **Tier 3**

Adds AB testing by monitoring boater behavior at a second marina that does not have signs posted

## **Tier 2**

Selects additional marina pairs throughout the Choptank River for AB testing and runs the campaign message in newspaper, radio, and social media outlets

## **Tier 1**

Large-scale implementation throughout the Chesapeake Bay with additional outreach to the target population at local events



# Current Implementation

## Mini-Grant Pilot (Summer 2018)

ShoreRivers and The Ocean Foundation posted signs at Easton Point Marina and used intercept surveys/observational studies as well as SAV Surveys to monitor the effectiveness of the message.

## Large-Scale Pilot (Summer 2019)

Building off of lessons learned at Easton Point Marina, the campaign went into its second implementation year in which signs and other outreach materials were tested at Safe Harbor Oxford Marina. Funding allowed groups to explore further options to survey and collect information, such as Facebook surveys, surveying at local events, etc.

## Next Steps: A/B Testing and Beyond (Summer 2020)

The program will conduct A/B testing at two marinas with further outreach materials tested, including newspaper and radio ads dependent on funding.



# Close-up on Tier 1

Large-scale implementation throughout the State of Maryland

## Monitoring

ShoreRivers and The Ocean Foundation will work with further groups to study the behavior of the target population in different areas of the Bay, including intercept surveys, observational studies, and drone footage of SAV beds.

## AB testing

Behavior will be monitored at marinas with and without signs posted to evaluate the effectiveness of the campaign message.



## Outreach

The implementation team will attend local events to communicate directly with the target population and provide educational materials and fun handouts.

## Ad Placement

The campaign message will be spread to recreational boaters through ads placed in newspaper, radio, and social media outlets.





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# Thank You

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