

2016-2021

# Strategic Communications Plan *for the* Chesapeake Bay Program



**Chesapeake Bay Program**  
*Science. Restoration. Partnership.*

# Table of Contents

|                                       |    |
|---------------------------------------|----|
| Glossary                              | 3  |
| Introduction                          | 4  |
| Mission and Vision                    | 6  |
| Research and Findings                 | 7  |
| Audiences                             | 14 |
| S.W.O.T. Analysis                     | 15 |
| Measuring Success                     | 16 |
| Goals and Recommendations             | 17 |
| CBP Communications Office Action Plan | 19 |
| Conclusion                            | 31 |

## Appendices

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Appendix A: Online Survey Questions  | 32 |
| Appendix B: Findings from Stakeholder Interviews<br><i>Report from The Hatcher Group</i> | 34 |
| Appendix C: Findings from Online Survey<br><i>Report from The Hatcher Group</i>          | 46 |
| Appendix D: Internal Communications Audit  | 48 |

## Figures

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Figure 1: How well does the Chesapeake Bay Program communicate its work        | 10 |
| Figure 2: Which communications vehicles are used most often to reach audiences | 11 |
| Figure 3: Average views and time on page for different blog posts              | 12 |
| Figure 4: Subscribers to Chesapeake Bay Program newsletters                    | 13 |
| Figure 5: Social media analytics   | 13 |

To provide clarity and consistency throughout this document, the following terms will be defined as follows:

### CBP

Chesapeake Bay Program

### Chesapeake Bay Program partnership

Refers to the signatories of the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*: the six watershed states (Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia), the District of Columbia, the Chesapeake Bay Commission and the Environmental Protection Agency (representing federal agencies).

### Chesapeake Bay Program partners

Refers to all entities under the Chesapeake Bay Program partnership and all other organizations that participate in workgroups, committees and goal teams.

### Chesapeake Bay Program

Refers to all people listed as part of the Chesapeake Bay Program partnership and Chesapeake Bay Program partners.

### CBP Communications Office

Staff employed by the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay to provide communications services for the Chesapeake Bay Program. This staff includes a Communications Director, Web Content Manager, Multimedia Specialist and Communications and Outreach Specialist. The CBP Communications Office also includes a Communications Staffer, employed by Chesapeake Research Consortium. In addition to the CBP Communications Office, the CBP Creative Team includes the Director of Web Development, Content Strategist, Web Designer and Web Developer.

### Communications Workgroup

The Communications Workgroup is a forum for communications and public relations professionals representing members of the Chesapeake Bay Program partners.

# Introduction

## Chesapeake Bay Program

Since 1983, the Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) has led and directed the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. The CBP connects representatives from across the 64,000-square-mile watershed including: federal, state and local governments; academic institutions; nonprofits and non-governmental organizations; and more. The *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*, signed in 2014, guides the work of the CBP. This agreement is a plan for collaboration across political boundaries, and signatories include the seven watershed jurisdictions of Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia, as well as the Chesapeake Bay Commission and the Environmental Protection Agency. For the purposes of this strategic communications plan, the signatories of the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* will be referred to as the CBP partnership.

The agreement established ten goals to advance the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Each goal is linked to a set of outcomes, or time-bound and measurable targets, which will directly contribute to its achievement. Members of the partnership promised to openly and publicly engage watershed citizens in implementing these goals and outcomes.

The Chesapeake Bay Program is organized into goal implementation teams, workgroups, committees and action teams to meet the goals of the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*. Specifically, the goal implementation teams developed management strategies for the outcomes that support the goals of the Watershed Agreement, and each member of the partnership has identified the management strategies they plan to participate in and will use their own resources to implement these restoration and protection activities. CBP partners, including but not limited to, federal agencies, state and local governments, nonprofits, non-governmental institutions and academia, work together through the goal teams, workgroups and committees to collaborate, share information and set goals.

## Chesapeake Bay Program Communications Office

As the voice of the CBP partnership, the CBP Communications Office tells the story of the Chesapeake Bay watershed by communicating the policy, science and data of the CBP and its partners. It does this through media outreach, web- and print-based products, multimedia and collaboration, outreach and engagement with stakeholders around the watershed.

Supported by an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) grant to the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, the CBP Communications Office consists of the Director of Communications, Web Content Manager, Multimedia Specialist and Communications and Outreach Coordinator. The office is also supported by a Chesapeake Research Consortium Staffer and works closely with the CBP Web Team.

## Chesapeake Bay Program Communications Workgroup

The CBP Communications Office coordinates and staffs the Communications Workgroup, a forum for communications and public relations professionals representing CBP partners to discuss Bay-related communications issues, share ideas and resources, and meet communications needs.

Additionally, the Communications Workgroup offers input to the CBP Communications Office in order to help them meet their mission of communicating the policy, science, data and restoration/protection activities of the CBP and its partners. Collaboration within the Communications Workgroup aids that mission through consistent messaging and media coverage, comprehensive branding and promotion, stakeholder outreach, and internal and external coordination among CBP partners.

## Importance of Communicating Strategically

With the advent of the 2014 *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*, even more partners became involved with CBP's work to restore and protect the nation's largest estuary. Organizations and individuals from across the watershed are now working to achieve the goals and outcomes of this landmark agreement, and communications is a key tool through which these goals will be achieved. By collaborating and aligning on essential messaging, we can ensure that partners from the farthest reaches of the watershed are best able to achieve their goals—and communicate their successes.

There are key challenges, however, facing the ability of the CBP to cohesively and effectively communicate its work. The CBP Communications Office recognized a need for the CBP to implement a more strategic approach in its communications efforts, which will allow for more effective communication through new and existing channels, and to better target and adapt to the needs of crucial audiences, such as local governments and underserved communities. By adopting a strategic approach to its communications planning and processes, the CBP Communications Office will maximize staff time and available resources to best meet the needs and priorities of the CBP.

Strategic and effective communication requires extensive planning and deliberate decision-making. An understanding of target audiences is crucial, which motivated the CBP Communications Office to engage an outside firm, The Hatcher Group, to assist with interviewing and surveying key stakeholders, who are familiar with and can provide links to these target audiences. Once the needs of the CBP's audiences are understood, the delineation of strategic, measurable and achievable goals is possible. Next comes the development of tactics and tools that will aid in the attainment of the listed goals, as well as measurable metrics to accurately and transparently track progress. Finally, one of the most important parts of a strategy is the ability to adaptively manage the goals, tools, tactics and metrics, returning to and revising any of the elements of the strategy if necessary, based on observed successes and challenges. All of these elements were considered by the CBP Communications Office in the development of this strategic plan, and can be found throughout the document that follows.

This plan guides the communications efforts of the CBP partnership. As the CBP Communications Office coordinates and staffs the Communications Workgroup and is tasked with providing communications support to the CBP, the findings, goals and recommendations in this plan should be considered by all members of the CBP partnership in developing their communications plans and priorities.

## Mission and Vision

Thoughtful, concise and defined mission and vision statements are the backbone of any strategic plan. These mission and vision statements will drive the work of the CBP Communications Office with the goal of influencing the CBP partnership. The work that the CBP Communications Office does every day supports its mission, with the broader goal of achieving its vision.

### Mission

Our mission is to tell the story of the Chesapeake Bay watershed by communicating and supporting the policy, science, data and restoration/protection activities of the Chesapeake Bay Program and its partners through media outreach, web- and print-based products, high-quality multimedia, an established and consistent brand, targeted messaging, educational resources and collaboration and engagement with our diverse audiences and stakeholders throughout the watershed.

### Vision

By communicating the work of the Chesapeake Bay Program and its partners, the CBP Communications Office will better inform, engage and inspire our stakeholders and the interested public to protect and restore the Chesapeake Bay watershed.



## Research and Findings

In order to create a strategic communications plan that supports both the priorities of the CBP partnership and the goals and outcomes of the 2014 *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*, the CBP Communications Office contracted with The Hatcher Group to assist in outreach, information gathering, research and synthesis efforts.

Working together, The Hatcher Group and the CBP Communications Office identified a list of key stakeholders to consult with to share their feedback regarding CBP communications. The Hatcher Group then conducted three focus groups, 16 one-on-one interviews and an online survey to assess the communications capacity of the CBP Communications Office and identify strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for improvement.

The CBP Communications Office also performed an internal communications audit to determine strengths and weaknesses in order to provide a baseline for the strategic communications plan.

The below findings speak to the work of the CBP Communications Office.

### Focus Group Participants

#### Focus Group #1

| Name          | Title   | Organization                    |
|---------------|---|---------------------------------|
| Greg Barranco | Government Affairs, Partnerships Team Lead                  | Environmental Protection Agency |
| Rich Batiuk   | Associate Director for Science, Analysis and Implementation | Environmental Protection Agency |
| Carin Bisland | Associate Director for Partnerships and Accountability      | Environmental Protection Agency |
| Lucinda Power | Implementation and Evaluation Team Leader                   | Environmental Protection Agency |

#### Focus Group #2

| Name         | Title                              | Organization                    |
|--------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Andrew Der   | Citizens Advisory Committee Member | Andrew T. Der & Associates, LLC |
| Julie Lawson | Citizens Advisory Committee Member | Trash Free Maryland             |

#### Focus Group #3

| Name                    | Title   | Organization  |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Honorable Ruby A. Brabo | Vice Chair, Local Government Advisory Committee       | Supervisor, King George's County, Virginia              |
| Peyton Robinson         | Chair, Sustainable Fisheries Goal Implementation Team | National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration         |
| Kristin Saunders        | Goal Implementation Team Liaison                      | University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science |

## One-on-One Interviewees

| Name              | Title  | Organization  |
|-------------------|--|---|
| Russ Baxter       | Deputy Secretary of Natural Resources for the Chesapeake Bay | State of Virginia   |
| Chris Becraft     | Policy Analyst   | Department of Natural Resources, State of Maryland                  |
| Jana Davis        | Executive Director   | Chesapeake Bay Trust  |
| Nick DiPasquale   | Director, Chesapeake Bay Program                             | Environmental Protection Agency                                     |
| Jim Edwards       | Deputy Director, Chesapeake Bay Program                      | Environmental Protection Agency                                     |
| Margaret Enloe    | (Former CBP Communications Director)<br>Executive Director   | Waterfowl Chesapeake  |
| Kristen Felming   | Division Director, Chesapeake, Coastal and Climate Policy    | Department of Natural Resources, State of Maryland                  |
| Doug Hill         | Executive Director   | County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania                    |
| Leslie Knapp, Jr. | Legal and Policy Counsel                                     | Maryland Association of Counties                                    |
| Larry Land        | Director of Policy Development                               | Virginia Association of Counties                                    |
| Joe Maroon        | Citizens Advisory Committee Member                           | Virginia Environmental Endowment                                    |
| Brianne Nadeau    | Chair, Local Government Advisory Committee                   | District of Columbia Council  |
| Alison Prost      | Executive Director   | Chesapeake Bay Foundation   |
| John Schneider    | Watershed Assessment and Management Section Manager          | Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control, Delaware |
| Ann Swanson       | Executive Director   | Chesapeake Bay Commission   |
| Jennifer Walls    | Principal Planner, Division of Watershed Stewardship         | Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control, Delaware |

“The Chesapeake Bay Program has an opportunity to come together, share information and highlight success.”

—Research Participant



The following strengths, challenges and recommendations are reflective of the one-on-one interviews and focus group sessions and appear as written in the full findings report, which can be found in its entirety in [Appendix B](#).

## Strengths

- Chesapeake Bay Program does a very good job of bringing multiple partnerships together to collaborate and make decisions.
- Excels at keeping a balance and sense of equity among states.
- Communications reach regulators, managers and water quality implementers very well.
- Have sound science, data and tracking progress as a backbone for communications.
- Does a good job of ‘preaching to the choir.’
- Communications staff is top notch, open to ideas, feedback and suggestions.
- Website and newsletters are exceptionally strong.

## Challenges

- Engagement with local government and decision-makers.
- Too many audiences to reach across the watershed.
- Engagement with jurisdictions and citizens in the watershed that are not connected to the Bay.
- Perceived ‘silos’ within the CBP and bureaucratic gridlock.
- Lack of internal communication.
- No clear communication on how CBP works.
- Lack of accessibility hinders public interest.
- No uniform policy that makes outreach sporadic.
- CBP lacks an overall message.
- Minimal communication to minority stakeholders.
- Communication between ‘world of water quality’ and ‘everything else’ is unbalanced.

## Recommendations

- Increase outreach to local government.
- Enhance internal communications across partnership and to all CBP partners.
- Better reach the general public.
- Increase outreach to minority stakeholders.

“Through the Program, we’ve built long-term relationships. We are all in this together. We learn from one another.”

—Research Participant

## Online Survey

A web-based survey was sent to 157 CBP stakeholders, split into three segments: Communicators, Goal Implementation Teams and Committees, and Principals' Staff Committee and states. A total of 62 answers were received, accounting for a 39% response rate. A list of survey questions can be found in [Appendix A](#) and the full report of survey results is found in [Appendix C](#).

Respondents were overall pleased with the CBP communications effort, with three quarters describing it as 'fair' (Figure 1).

### Q7 On a scale of 1 - 5, how well do you think that the Chesapeake Bay Program communicates its work?

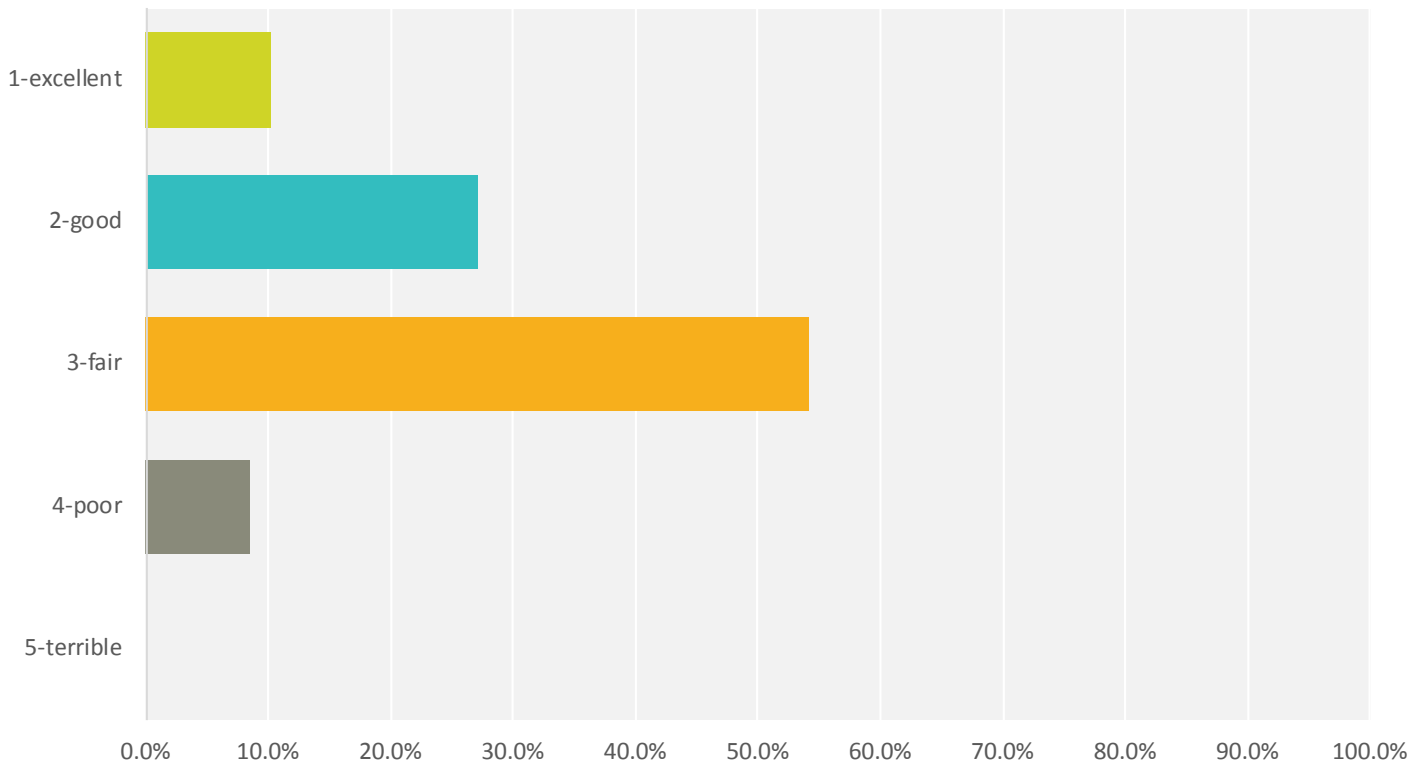


Figure 1: How well does the Chesapeake Bay Program communicate its work?

By far, the most popular communications vehicle is the CBP website, [www.chesapeakebay.net](http://www.chesapeakebay.net), with 85% of respondents using it regularly (62% check it once a week; 32% check it daily). Fewer people utilize the CBP social media sites, with 40% saying they never check them, which includes one third of respondents categorized as “Communicators” (Figure 2).

### Q3 The Chesapeake Bay Program employs many different communications and marketing activities to reach its audiences. Which of these do you use?

Answered: 31 Skipped: 0

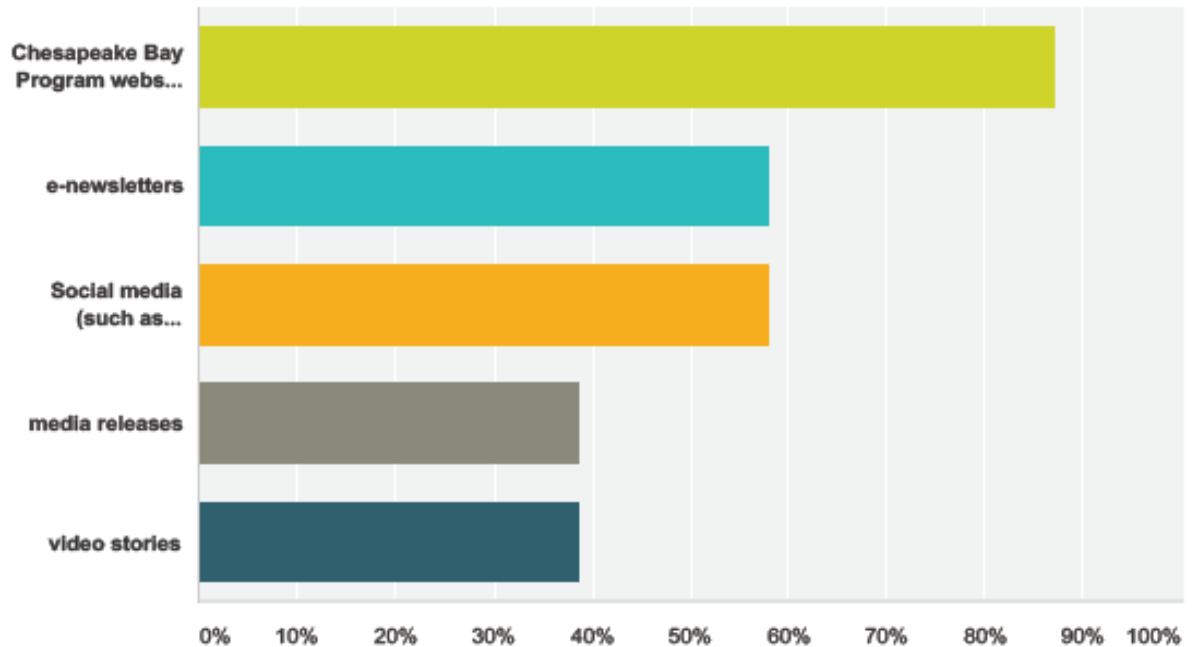


Figure 2: Which CBP communications vehicles are used most often to reach audiences?

Other results from the survey:

- ▶ On a scale of one to five, only five respondents (9%) thought the look and feel of CBP communications materials were less than okay.
- ▶ Very few respondents answered “no” when asked if their communications needs were being met. 17 answered “partially” and 10 answered “yes.”
- ▶ Each survey group identified minority stakeholders as an audience that CBP is not effectively reaching.
- ▶ When given a list of different types of media outlets, regional newspapers (e.g. *The Washington Post*, *The Baltimore Sun*) were identified as being the most important to target for media coverage.
- ▶ Respondents believe the most pressing need for CBP communications over the next five years is reaching local officials, engaging local partners and simplifying key messages.

## Internal Communications Audit

An internal communications audit identified the main products and messages published by the CBP Communications Office, which garnered the most engagement with our audiences and potential opportunities to close communications gaps.

The audit offered key findings and observations for the following communications products issued by the CBP Communications Office:

- Blogs
- Newsletters
- Press Releases
- Print Products
- Social Media
- Video and Photo
- Web Content

Highlights of the audit are listed below; the complete report is found in [Appendix D](#).

### *Blog*

The Bay Blog has become a key resource for individuals looking for news and stories related to the health and restoration of the Chesapeake Bay, but traffic to the blog only accounts for about 7-8% of visits to [www.chesapeakebay.net](http://www.chesapeakebay.net). Figure 3 shows average views and time spent viewing the different types of blog posts produced by the CBP Communications Office.

| Post Type        | 2014       |           | 2015       |           |
|------------------|------------|-----------|------------|-----------|
|                  | Avg. Views | Avg. Time | Avg. Views | Avg. time |
| Feature          | 358        | 2:48      | 582        | 3:06      |
| Photo Essay      | 569        | 3:21      | 346        | 2:52      |
| News Article     | 325        | 2:36      | 300        | 2:36      |
| Currents Article | 175        | 2:40      | 215        | 2:55      |

Figure 3: Average views and time-on-page for different blog posts

### *Newsletters*

The CBP Communications Office currently produces three types of newsletters: Bay News (distributed daily), Bay Brief (distributed weekly) and Chesapeake Currents (distributed monthly). Readership of these newsletters have not grown significantly since launching in 2013, but neither has requests to be unsubscribed (Figure 4).

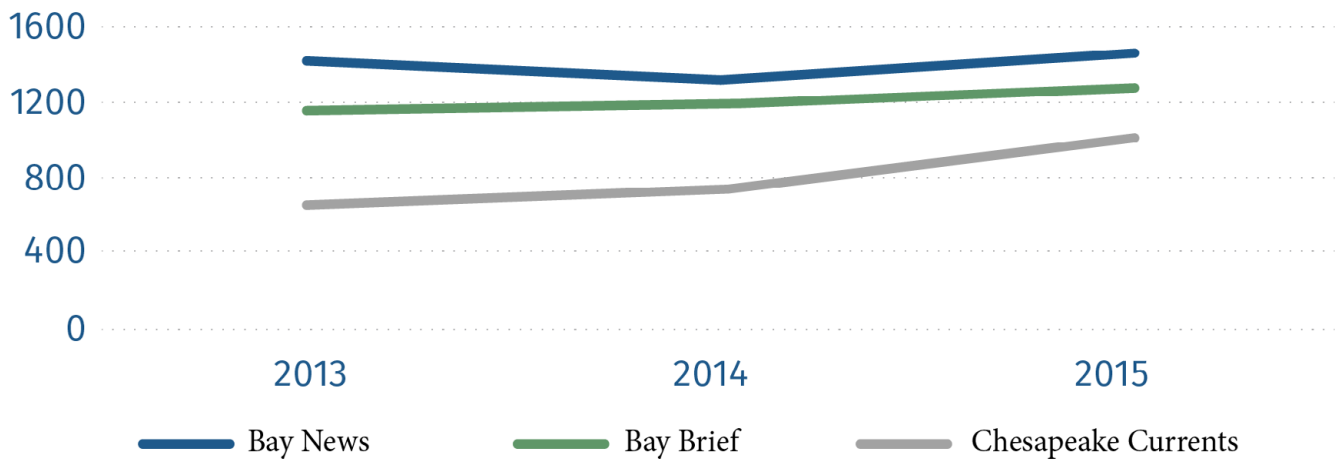


Figure 4: Subscribers to Chesapeake Bay Program newsletters

### Social Media

CBP currently has a social media presence on four platforms: Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest and Twitter. Each of these platforms has a modest following, although growth is steady (Figure 5).

|           | Followers (as of 1/1/2016) | % Growth (since 1/1/2015) | Avg. Monthly Growth | Avg. Engagement |
|-----------|----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Facebook  | 1,901                      | 38%                       | 2.8%                | 2.7%            |
| Twitter   | 7,529                      | 28%                       | 2.8%                | 2.1%            |
| Instagram | 1,040                      | 39%                       | 16%                 | 6.8%            |
| Pinterest | 751                        | 420%                      | 2.8%                | 0.5%            |

Figure 5: Social media analytics

The internal communications audit provided the CBP Communications Office with the opportunity to make the following recommendations for improving its work in the future.

- Create an official content strategy for the blog.
- Continue to structure blog posts for a general audience.
- Create a style guide for voice, tone and graphics.
- Modernize the suite of newsletters.
- Increase the amount of media-related activity.
- Create products outside of the web.
- Expand library of ‘stock’ images.
- Maintain consistent, accurate and timely messages and graphics.

## Audiences

The Chesapeake Bay Program has many audiences for its communications products. The CBP Communications Office recognizes that while the interested public may not be the primary target of some communications, the intent of all CBP communications products is to eventually reach the interested public through intermediaries. For example, a press release specifically targets the media, with the intention of informing the interested public; while sharing CBP messages with nonprofit organizations across the watershed provides a vehicle for reaching local watershed residents.

Each of the following audiences have the ability to help meet the goals of the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*, either by directly or indirectly influencing the actions and work of the Chesapeake Bay Program.

- Academic and research partners (e.g., University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science, Virginia Institute of Marine Science).
- Chesapeake Bay Program partners.
  - Goal Implementation Team members.
  - Advisory Committees.
  - Workgroup members.
- Communicators.
  - Media.
  - Federal, state, local, academic and nonprofit communications professionals.
- Educators and students.
- Elected and appointed officials and their staffs at the federal, state and local levels.
- Interested public.
- Non-governmental organizations that focus on Chesapeake Bay restoration (e.g., Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, Chesapeake Bay Trust, Chesapeake Bay Funders Network).
- Riverkeeper Associations and other non-traditional monitoring groups—nonprofit organizations that monitor the progress of the Chesapeake Bay watershed restoration and protection and/or participate in clean-up efforts.

## S.W.O.T. Analysis

After reviewing findings from stakeholder interviews, focus group sessions, online surveys and the internal audit, the CBP Communications Office performed a SWOT analysis to determine our strengths and weaknesses, as well as threats and opportunities that impact the work of our team. This SWOT analysis is specific to the work of the CBP Communications Office, but similar strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats should be taken into account across the communications work of the entire CBP partnership.

S (strengths) = What does the CBP Communications Office do well? What are their strengths?

W (weaknesses) = What can we improve? What are the weaknesses of the CBP Communications Office?

O (opportunities) = What opportunities are available to our program? What opportunities can we take advantage of?

T (threats) = What threats can potentially harm our program? What challenges do we need to be aware of?

### Strengths

- CBP is the authoritative source for science, data, policy and analytics for the Chesapeake Bay watershed.
- CBP Communications Office, while small, is dedicated, strong and educated.
- Produce highly-regarded website.
- CBP Communications Office has access to a wealth of resources, namely respected experts.
- Adept at communicating to internal CBP partners.
- Skilled at sharing content and data across our networks.

### Weaknesses

- Insufficient number of staff positions.
- Limited funding.
- Size of watershed—large area to represent and multiple audiences to communicate with.
- Lack of consistent, recognizable brand.
- CBP partners not fully engaged in collaboration on communications; lack of strategic aspects to communications; and independent objectives.

### Opportunities

- Outreach to new audiences (local governments, elected officials, diverse stakeholders, etc.)
- Collaboration past our silos (cross-GIT, workgroups, etc.)
- Work to become more strategic across communications.
- Strengthen relationships with our partners (e.g., focus on Communications Workgroup).
- Develop a recognizable brand.
- Work with our partners to become an extension of the CBP Communications Office.

### Threats

- Funding impacts.
- Communications barriers that make program inaccessible to the public (e.g., federal government restrictions on certain types of messaging).
- Difficult to connect with audiences removed from the Chesapeake Bay.
- Competing interests among our partners.
- Difficult to communicate science and data for interested public understanding.
- Partners prioritize messaging for own organizations, rather than partnership.

## Measuring Success

Measurement and evaluation is a critical part of any strategic communications plan, both to assess a baseline and to track progress. As part of the strategic communications plan, the CBP Communications Office will perform regular checks to monitor the development and efficacy of its efforts.

Goals and recommendations of this strategic communications plan will be reviewed every six months with the Communications Workgroup to assess elements of the plan and their outcomes, and make any adjustments as needed. Particular attention will be paid to any obstacles encountered, any organizational changes or new strategic activities proposed and areas in which other challenges are apparent. The CBP Communications Office will note any progress members of the partnership have made toward meeting the goals and recommendations laid out in this strategic communications plan.

Additionally, the Communications Workgroup and the CBP Communications Office will report to the Management Board on the progress of the strategic communications plan each summer. The CBP Communications Office will report on their progress in meeting these goals through the success measures outlined in the [CBP Communications Office Action Plan](#) (beginning on page 19), as well as the actions noted by members of the partnership during the Communications Workgroup review.





## Goals and Recommendations

Using findings collected from the online surveys, stakeholder interviews, focus groups and the internal communications audit, the CBP Communications Office designed the following goals and recommendations to support the communications needs and priorities of the CBP partnership.

Recommendations support each goal, with the intention of influencing members of the CBP partnership in planning their own communications. The [CBP Strategic Communications Action Plan](#), beginning on page 19, highlights specific activities that the CBP Communications Office will take over the next five years in order to help meet these goals.

### Goal 1: Enhance and strengthen internal communications across the Chesapeake Bay Program

- Recommendation 1: Strengthen participation in and enhance effectiveness of the Communications Workgroup.
- Recommendation 2: Create effective mechanisms to prioritize and share knowledge and updates among Chesapeake Bay Program partners.
- Recommendation 3: Increase collaboration among Chesapeake Bay Program partners in order to ensure messages are coordinated and strategically delivered.
- Recommendation 4: Build upon existing and develop new relationships between Chesapeake Bay Program partners and the CBP Communications Office to better collaborate, coordinate and share information and resources.
- Recommendation 5: Evaluate the need for and use of collaboration tools (e.g., SharePoint) that can enhance internal communications among Chesapeake Bay Program partners.

### Goal 2: Increase outreach and communications efforts that prioritize engagement with local governments, local elected officials and diverse stakeholders.

- Recommendation 1: Advance communication with priority audiences in the Chesapeake Bay watershed (non-CBP partners) to communicate the work of the Chesapeake Bay Program, its partners and the importance of protecting and restoring the Chesapeake Bay watershed.
- Recommendation 2: Develop a network that will facilitate the sharing of information with priority audiences throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed.
- Recommendation 3: Develop targeted strategies and effective communications tools for continual outreach and engagement of local governments and local elected officials.
- Recommendation 4: Develop targeted strategies and communications tools for outreach and engagement of diverse stakeholder groups.

### Goal 3: Expand the interested public's knowledge of the work of the Chesapeake Bay Program, its partners and the importance of protecting and restoring the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Recommendation 1: Grow the media's knowledge of the work of the Chesapeake Bay Program.

Recommendation 2: Increase brand awareness of the Chesapeake Bay Program, including familiarity with and recognition of the name, logo and identity.

Recommendation 3: Enhance and increase messaging that focuses on the connection between local waterways and the Chesapeake Bay to further the public's understanding of the importance of protection and restoration.

Recommendation 4: Identify new opportunities to educate the interested public about the work of the Chesapeake Bay Program, its partners and the importance of protecting/restoring the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Recommendation 5: Strengthen and expand the social media presence of the Chesapeake Bay Program.

Recommendation 6: Evaluate the potential use and effectiveness of web and printed products to inform the public about the importance of protecting and restoring the Chesapeake Bay watershed and the work of the Chesapeake Bay Program and its partners.



# CBP Communications Office Action Plan

The following activities are designed for the CBP Communications Office to meet the goals and recommendations of this strategic communications plan. Each activity has been evaluated carefully to take into account human and financial resources, as well as programs, products or services that may be allocated, ensuring each is specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timely, or SMART.

Short-term activities will begin immediately following the issuance of this plan through the next 14 months (approximately February 2018). Long-term activities refer to the period from February 2018 – July 2021 (although some activities may begin earlier than anticipated).

Each activity contains a measurement of success to evaluate its progress. The CBP Communications Office will perform regular checks to monitor the development and efficacy of its efforts and report on them to the Communications Workgroup and Management Board, as outlined on [page 16](#).

This strategic communications plan is a living document and activities and success measures will be updated over the next five years as the communications plans and priorities of the CBP partnership evolve.

## Goal 1: Enhance and strengthen internal communications across the Chesapeake Bay Program

**Recommendation 1:** Strengthen participation in and enhance effectiveness of the Communications Workgroup.

### Short-Term Activities

- Use Chesapeake Network as the Workgroup's main communications hub.
  - » **Success measure:** 100% of Communications Workgroup members will register for an account on the Chesapeake Network to join the Communications Workgroup site.
- Assign communications liaisons to each Goal Team and Advisory Committee to address needs that arise under the purview of the Communications Workgroup.
  - » **Success measure:** Each Goal Team and Advisory Committee will have a designated point of contact from the Communications Workgroup assigned to them.
- Review Communications Workgroup membership to ensure the correct communications professionals from each member of the CBP partnership are participating.
  - » **Success measure:** Communications Workgroup members from the CBP partnership attending at least 10 out of 12 meetings per year.
- Identify gaps in Communications Workgroup member list and reach out to those federal and state agencies, non-governmental organizations and academic institutions that are not represented for a point of contact. Ask for assistance from CBP Director in encouraging participation from those partners that are inactive.
  - » **Success measure:** At least five new members in the Communications Workgroup from previously unrepresented jurisdictions, nonprofits and academia.

### Short-Term Activities (continued)

- Ask members to submit communications challenges, priorities, needs and updates prior to meeting in order to identify issues to be raised, questions to be answered and activities to be shared.
  - » **Success measure:** Receiving updates from at least five Communications Workgroup members prior to meetings.
- Develop calendar of draft meeting agenda topics to reflect CBP partnership communications events, opportunities, Goal Implementation Team needs and challenges.
  - » **Success measure:** Draft calendar developed at end of each year and updated throughout the year as needed.

### Long-Term Activities

- Develop a suite of standard operating procedures to help the Communications Workgroup operate more efficiently and effectively. Procedures may include the process for reviewing documents, how to raise issues to the group and how to promote activities.
  - » **Success measure:** A set of standard operating procedures will be developed and actively in use by Communications Workgroup members and incorporated into CBP governance document.
- Continue to explore communication needs and priorities of Communications Workgroup members to transform Communications Workgroup into a decision-making body actively collaborating on message development and delivery on behalf of the CBP partnership. Depending on needs and priorities, Communications Workgroup Chair, Vice-Chair, Coordinator and Staffer may investigate collaboration tools and other ideas to foster participation within the group.
  - » **Success measure:** Increase attendance from the 2016 baseline, and then keep steady attendance at Communications Workgroup meetings. Members utilize the group for feedback, questions and review of communications materials, as well as knowledge and resource sharing at least twice a month.

**Recommendation 2:** Create effective mechanisms to prioritize and share knowledge and updates among Chesapeake Bay Program partners.

### Short-Term Activities

- Develop internal CBP newsletter to be sent to CBP partners.
  - » **Success measure:** Click rates for the internal CBP newsletter to see how many people are reading it.
- Develop a strategy to provide Coordinators and Staffers with insight on CBP communications and brainstorm methods in which they can help promote internal communications across the CBP partnership.
  - » **Success measure:** List of ideas from CBP Communications Office, Coordinators and Staffers on how internal communications can be improved across the CBP partnership.

### Short-Term Activities (continued)

- The CBP Communications Director, Web Content Manager, Communications and Outreach Specialist and Communications Staffer will act as liaisons between the CBP Communications Office and each goal team, advisory committee and select workgroups to foster internal communication and provide communications expertise. Some of these liaisons will be the same points of contact as identified in Recommendation #1, to represent both the Communications Workgroup and the CBP Communications Office.
  - » **Success measure:** A point of contact from the CBP Communications Office will be assigned to each goal team, advisory committee and select workgroup.

### Long-Term Activities

- The CBP Communications Office will ask Coordinators and Staffers to support the creation of a toolkit that contains CBP standard operating procedures. The CBP Communications Office will provide communications expertise in the development of this toolkit.
  - » **Success measure:** The creation of a toolkit that contains standard operating procedures for CBP operations (including but not limited to email processes, posting meeting materials, etc.).
- Schedule a brown-bag lunch series, in collaboration with the Coordinators and Staffers, to encourage partners to come and listen to what their colleagues are working on and share information with one another.
  - » **Success measure:** Brown bag lunch series are attracting at least 10 attendees each month.

**Recommendation 3:** Increase collaboration among Chesapeake Bay Program partners in order to ensure messages are coordinated and strategically delivered.

### Short-Term Activities

- Collaborate with Goal Teams, Content Strategist and Indicator Coordinator on updating indicators to identify and deliver a clear and engaging story for the interested public and CBP partners.
  - » **Success measure:** At least two press releases a year will focus on “stories” created from indicators, rather than just releasing when an indicator is updated.
- Work with Coordinators and Staffers to strategically align communications materials arising from work plans and other goal team, workgroup or advisory committee projects with standard CBP messaging so that communications have a unified voice.
  - » **Success measure:** All materials released from goal teams, advisory committees and workgroups will have a similar message and tone.
- Develop standard operating procedures for media releases, social media and other CBP Communications Office products, to ensure consistency.
  - » **Success measure:** CBP Communications Office will develop a toolkit of standard operating procedures for communications products.

### Long-Term Activities

- Create an almanac or enhanced calendar that features meetings, conferences, recurring and notable on-the-ground efforts (water quality monitoring, winter dredge survey, dam removals, etc.) and natural phenomena (fish and bird migrations, etc.) to assist in creating strong visuals and stories that support messages crafted by CBP partners. This tool may eventually be suitable for sharing with the interested public.
  - » **Success measure:** Creation of the almanac/enhanced calendar; will include feedback and buy-in from the Communications Workgroup.
- Work with members of the Communications Workgroup to develop strategic connections around messages released to target audiences.
  - » **Success measure:** CBP Communications Office will bring at least 75% of press releases and major communications products (e.g., Bay Barometer) to the Communications Workgroup for review and to discuss how to strategically target audiences.
- Offer communications training to CBP partners to encourage storytelling, visual literacy and other principles for effective communication. The goal is to engage the partners as an extension of the CBP Communications Office—helping to recognize and pitch stories and potentially produce content.
  - » **Success measure:** Communications training will be offered to CBP partners once a year.

**Recommendation 4:** Build upon existing and develop new relationships between Chesapeake Bay Program partners and the CBP Communications Office to better collaborate, coordinate and share information and resources.

### Short-Term Activities

- To develop new and/or enhance existing working relationships, the CBP Communications Office will set up meetings with the Chair, Vice-Chair, Coordinator and Staffer of each goal team, advisory committee and select workgroups to coordinate, collaborate and understand communications needs, as well as strengthen/encourage participation in the Communications Workgroup.
  - » **Success measure:** Meetings occur between the six goal teams, three advisory committees and select workgroups and the CBP Communications Office. Another measure of success will be increased participation from these groups in the Communications Workgroup.
- To develop new and/or enhance existing working relationships, the CBP Communications Office will meet with members of the CBP partnership to encourage coordination and collaboration on a regular basis.
  - » **Success measure:** At least one meeting occurs with each federal and state member of the CBP partnership and the CBP Communications Office within the first year of the issuance of this plan.

### Long-Term Activities

- CBP Communications Office will regularly engage with goal teams, advisory committees and select workgroups to collaborate and communicate on our shared work.
  - » **Success measure:** The CBP Communications Office will initially meet with each goal team, advisory committee and select workgroups upon the issuance of this plan. Success will be measured by how often these groups reach out to their CBP Communications Office liaison about communications needs before starting major projects that require communications support.
- CBP Communications Office will regularly engage federal and state members of the CBP partnership to collaborate and communicate on our shared work.
  - » **Success measure:** The CBP Communications Office will initially meet with members of the CBP partnership upon the issuance of this plan. Success will be measured by how often these groups reach out to the CBP Communications Office to inform them of planned releases and other communications priorities ahead of time.

**Recommendation 5:** Evaluate the need for and use of collaborations tools (e.g., SharePoint) that can enhance internal communications among Chesapeake Bay Program partners.

### Short-Term Activities

- Work with CBP SharePoint Manager to develop list of ways SharePoint could be used to further internal communications across the partnership.
  - » **Success measure:** Create list of recommendations on how SharePoint might be used to further internal communication across the partnership and share with CBP partners.
- Communications Director and Web Content Manager will serve on the ChesapeakeDecisions Project team to ensure that the development of this tool helps prioritize internal communications.
  - » **Success measure:** Launch of ChesapeakeDecisions.

### Long-Term Activities

- Explore the need for using other collaboration tools to support of the work of the CBP Communications Office. If the need exists, research options for other collaboration tools.
  - » **Success measure:** Report evaluating the need for collaboration tools; including a list of costs and benefits for various collaboration tools.
- Explore the need for using other collaboration tools to enhance internal communications for CBP partners. If the need exists, research options for other collaboration tools.
  - » **Success measure:** Report evaluating the need for collaboration tools; including a list of costs and benefits for various collaboration tools.

## Goal 2: Increase outreach and communications efforts that prioritize engagement with local governments, local elected officials and diverse stakeholders.

**Recommendation 1:** Advance communication with priority audiences in the Chesapeake Bay watershed (non-CBP partners) to communicate work of the Chesapeake Bay Program, its partners and the importance of restoring and protecting the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

### Short-Term Activities

- Identify audiences in the Chesapeake Bay watershed that require enhanced, new or targeted outreach and engagement by the CBP Communications Office. These audiences will be identified in collaboration with advisory committees, workgroups and goal teams. Audiences should include, but are not limited to:
  - Local governments
  - Local elected officials
  - Nonprofits
  - Non-governmental organizations
  - Academic institutions
- » **Success measure:** Identify at least five new groups throughout the watershed that are either directly or indirectly engaged with Chesapeake Bay protection and restoration that the CBP Communications Office has not previously engaged with.
- CBP Communications Office will meet with these newly identified groups, as appropriate, to discuss communications needs and resources, in an effort to build a collaborative relationship.
  - » **Success measure:** Hold meetings with newly identified groups to share information and resources.

### Long-Term Activities

- CBP Communications Office will integrate communications needs and priorities from newly identified groups into messaging and communications, where appropriate.
  - » **Success measure:** At least 50% of CBP messaging will have recommendations from newly identified groups.
- Evaluate potential to offer training to newly identified groups to help build their capacity to function as partners of the CBP Communications Office. Training would help them recognize and pitch stories and potentially produce content for CBP communications.
  - » **Success measure:** Report outlining costs and benefits to offering training to groups that are not CBP partners.

**Recommendation 2:** Develop a network that will facilitate sharing of information with priority audiences throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

### Short-Term Activities

- Building on the relationships developed in Goal 2, Recommendation 1, the CBP Communications Office will work with audiences to develop a list of recommendations on how to better facilitate communication of the work of CBP, its partners and the importance of restoring/protecting the Chesapeake Bay.
  - » **Success measure:** Report listing ways these groups can help CBP Communications Office amplify messages.



### Short-Term Activities (continued)

- Utilize the audiences identified in Goal 2, Recommendation 1 to build a network to share communications throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed. This network is separate from the Communications Workgroup and the Chesapeake Network; it is to be used as another resource in which to spread CBP messaging and educate the interested public on the importance of the restoration/protection of the Chesapeake Bay.
  - » **Success measure:** At least five new groups will agree to be part of our communications network to share information.
- CBP Communications Office will actively make its resources available, including but not limited to photos, videos and blogs to audiences identified in Goal 2, Recommendation 1 to assist with their communication needs.
  - » **Success measure:** Repository of CBP communications resources that can be shared.

### Long-Term Activities

- Develop a communications toolkit to share with communications network in advance of major CBP announcements to assist with messaging to their local audiences. A toolkit may include press releases, talking points, images and social media posts.
  - » **Success measure:** For 75% of CBP announcements, a toolkit is developed to share with communications network, Communications Workgroup and CBP partners.

**Recommendation 3:** Develop targeted strategies and effective communications tools for continual outreach and engagement of local governments and local elected officials.

### Short-Term Activities

- CBP Communications Director will attend relevant meetings with goal teams, advisory committees and select workgroups to stay informed of outreach to local governments and elected officials.
  - » **Success measure:** In the short term, the CBP Communications Director is engaged with on-going efforts to communicate with local governments and elected officials on Phase III Watershed Implementation Plans and the 2017 Mid-Point Assessment.
- In coordination with the Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC), Local Leadership Workgroup, Communications Workgroup and other CBP partners, assist in the development of a communications strategy to increase local government engagement in the Chesapeake Bay watershed protection and restoration.
  - » **Success measure:** Development of a communications strategy and messages, tools and resources that will engage local governments in Chesapeake Bay watershed protection and restoration. **Note:** CBP Communications Director is involved in current efforts led by LGAC to develop a strategic communications strategy to engage local governments.
- In coordination with LGAC, Local Leadership Workgroup, the Enhancing, Partnering and Leadership Goal Team and other CBP partners, assist in the development of a video (or video series) geared at local governments that connect the various goals and outcomes of the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* together.
  - » **Success measure:** Video outlining how the pieces of the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* fit together.

### Long-Term Activities

- Engage with local government associations to collaborate on communications needs and resources and create a network that will assist with CBP efforts in messaging to local governments and local elected officials.
  - » **Success measure:** Local government associations actively share CBP messaging with local governments and elected officials.
- Evaluate the option of holding webinars for local governments and local elected officials to inform and educate this audience about the Chesapeake Bay and CBP related topics.
  - » **Success measure:** Work with LGAC, Local Leadership Workgroup and other CBP partners to gauge interest in these webinars and what subject matter is most important for these groups to know more about.
- The CBP Communications Office will provide expertise and assist LGAC, the Local Leadership Workgroup and other CBP partners as needed to collect local success stories that illustrate the work of local governments and local elected officials and evaluate the need for developing a repository or other venue for improving local government access to this information.
  - » **Success measure:** CBP Communications Office is an active participant in discussions regarding the collection of local success stories and a repository for storing them.

**Recommendation 4:** Develop targeted strategies and effective communications tools for outreach and engagement of diverse stakeholder groups.

### Short-Term Activities

- CBP Communications and Outreach Specialist will attend relevant meetings of the Diversity Workgroup to stay informed of outreach to diverse stakeholder groups throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed.
  - » **Success measure:** CBP Communications and Outreach Specialist is an active participant in meetings of the Diversity Workgroup.
- Assist the Diversity Workgroup with communications activities outlined in the Diversity work plan, as well as with their efforts to engage and communicate with diverse stakeholders throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed.
  - » **Success measure:** Led by the CBP Communications and Outreach Specialist, the CBP Communications Office will be an active participant in efforts of the CBP partnership to engage and communicate with diverse stakeholders throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed.
- The CBP Communications and Outreach Specialist will lead efforts on behalf of the CBP Communications Office to identify existing or new diverse stakeholder groups throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed that would benefit from engagement and communication with the CBP. These efforts will be in collaboration with the Diversity Workgroup.
  - » **Success measure:** Identify at least five new diverse stakeholder groups in which the CBP Communications Office can engage with.

### Long-Term Activities

- Work with above-identified diverse stakeholder groups to develop recommendations for communicating with underserved groups and communities throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed about the work of CBP, its partners and the importance of protecting/restoring the Chesapeake Bay watershed.
  - » **Success measure:** Work with diverse stakeholder groups to develop a list of recommendations for communicating to underserved groups and communities across the Chesapeake Bay watershed.
- Integrate communications recommendations from collaboration from above-identified groups into CBP messaging.
  - » **Success measure:** Where applicable, any new CBP communications products will reflect recommendations from above-identified groups in which to better reach underserved communities across the Chesapeake Bay watershed.
- With consultation from above-identified diverse stakeholders and Diversity Workgroup, identify non-English languages most commonly spoken throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Begin offering printed and online materials, where applicable, in these languages.
  - » **Success measure:** The number of printed and online materials CBP offers by 2020.  
**Note:** The CBP Communications Office currently relies on three printed materials (Bay Barometer, Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement and the CBP brochure) and a wealth of online materials for outreach. As specified in Goal 3, Recommendations 2 and 6, the CBP Communications Office will inventory and evaluate the effectiveness of our printed and online materials and ensure they are consistent with the CBP brand. During that process, the option for translation will be explored.

## Goal 3: Expand the interested public’s knowledge of the work of the Chesapeake Bay Program, its partners and the importance of protecting and restoring the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Recommendation 1: Grow the media’s knowledge of the work of the Chesapeake Bay Program.

### Short-Term Activities

- CBP Communications Director and CBP Communications and Outreach Coordinator will work together to identify new and strengthen existing relationships with media contacts.
  - » **Success measure:** The media coverage from CBP-issued press releases will increase each year past the 2016 baseline.
- Schedule trainings to introduce and educate media to CBP tools/resources and how the partnership works.
  - » **Success measure:** Hold two trainings to start with: one to walk through what the CBP partnership is and the other to walk folks through the ChesapeakeStat suite of tools. Create list of other potential trainings that could be held for the media.

### Long-Term Activities

- Evaluate potential of hiring a contractor to engage media and develop new opportunities for outreach.
  - » **Success measure:** Develop report listing positives and negatives of hiring a contractor; research companies that do this type of work and get price quotes.
- Explore the creation of media partnerships to share multimedia content.
  - » **Success measure:** Develop list identifying at least six potential media partners that offer video, such as regional news websites and television stations, and evaluate their interest in the use of polished and raw CBP multimedia content. Identify in-demand subject matter and the content format preferred by media partners.

**Recommendation 2:** Increase brand awareness of the Chesapeake Bay Program, including familiarity with and recognition of the name, logo and identity.

### Short-Term Activities

- Work with a contractor to develop a comprehensive branding strategy that would identify methods in which the CBP Communications Office can raise awareness about the identity of the CBP and the value of our partnership. **Note:** this is about raising awareness of our current brand, not developing a new brand.
  - » **Success measure:** Creation of a comprehensive branding strategy.
- Identify opportunities (conferences, training) in which the CBP Communications Office can present or exhibit to highlight CBP brand and messaging.
  - » **Success measure:** CBP Communications Office will present or exhibit at one major conference each year.

### Long-Term Activities

- Update printed and online materials to reflect recommendations from branding strategy.
  - » **Success measure:** All CBP materials updated with a consistent brand.
- Educate CBP partners about branding strategy and request that they provide assistance and advice to help incorporate it into their work.
  - » **Success measure:** Give presentation on branding strategy at Management Board meeting, for Goal Implementation Team Chairs and for other CBP partners as requested.

**Recommendation 3:** Enhance and increase messaging that focuses on the connection between local waterways and the Chesapeake Bay to further the public's understanding of the importance of restoration and protection.

### Short-Term Activities

- Multimedia Specialist will develop or assist with the development of a video to explain the connection between actions on land, local waterways and the Chesapeake Bay.
  - » **Success measure:** A video or series of videos explaining connection between local waterways and the Chesapeake Bay.

### Short-Term Activities (continued)

- Tailor media releases, whenever possible, to highlight local waterways and connections to the stories we are promoting.
  - » **Success measure:** All media releases will be evaluated to see if quotes from local partners or a reflection of local interests can be incorporated to resonate more with interested public in those areas.

### Long-Term Activities

- Identify a broader variety of local subjects/topics in order to represent all regions in forthcoming stories (including Bay 101, other videos and non-video stories).
  - » **Success measure:** Produce one piece of written or visual content per year to highlight each jurisdiction in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

**Recommendation 4:** Identify new opportunities to educate the public about the work of the Chesapeake Bay Program, its partners and the importance of protecting and restoring the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

### Short-Term Activities

- Engage with Coordinators and Staffers to maintain updated list of CBP partners who would be willing to speak with educational or other groups about their subject matter expertise.
  - » **Success measure:** List showing a subject matter expert for each topic relevant to the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*, which is updated on an annual basis.
- Identify new opportunities throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed where the CBP Communications Office can educate the interested public about the work of the CBP partnership (festivals, events, etc.).
  - » **Success measure:** Attend at least two events around the watershed each year, with one of them being previously unattended by the CBP Communications Office.

### Long-Term Activities

- Assist in developing materials for a Chesapeake Bay “roadshow” to connect with the interested public. This road show would be used at events (conferences, festivals, etc.) to educate the interested public about CBP, its partners and the importance of restoring and protecting the Chesapeake Bay. CBP partners would be encouraged to utilize the ‘road show’ in their own communications networks.
  - » **Success measure:** Communications materials are developed to support the road show. CBP partners, through the Communications Workgroup, are made aware of the road show through a presentation at a monthly meeting.

**Recommendation 5:** Strengthen and expand the social media presence of the Chesapeake Bay Program.

### Short-Term Activities

- Review our current social media strategy and identify any gaps.
  - » **Success measure:** Use the analytics available on each social media platform (including followers, likes, shares, etc.) to continually update and improve our social media strategy.

### Long-Term Activities

- Investigate paid advertising opportunities and evaluate if this would be an effective strategy for CBP to pursue.
  - » **Success measure:** Report detailing costs and benefits associated with advertising on Facebook, Google, etc.
- Enhance use of analytics to develop online content that is useful to the public and meaningful to the CBP.
  - » **Success measure:** Regular tracking of page views, time spent on page, new/returning visitors, etc., to determine web content that should be added, modified or deleted.

**Recommendation 6:** Evaluate the potential use and effectiveness of web and printed products to inform the interested public about the importance of protecting/restoring the Chesapeake Bay watershed and the work of the Chesapeake Bay Program and its partners.

### Short-Term Activities

- In coordination with the CBP Web Team, inventory our current web and printed products to identify communications gaps and evaluate what is or isn't working effectively.
  - » **Success measure:** Inventory of web and printed products, as well as an updated or new suite of materials that will better engage our audiences.
- Work with CBP Web Team to improve and update [www.chesapeakebay.net](http://www.chesapeakebay.net) to showcase content and reach target audiences. Specific attention to be paid to the *About the Bay Program* tab in conjunction with Coordinators and Staffers.
  - » **Success measure:** Online content is updated 40 times per year (this includes updates to existing content or adding new content).

### Long-Term Activities

- Explore use of additional print materials for public awareness and engagement (including PowerPoint slides that can be shared among CBP partners).
  - » **Success measure:** List of options for additional printed materials to engage the interested public.



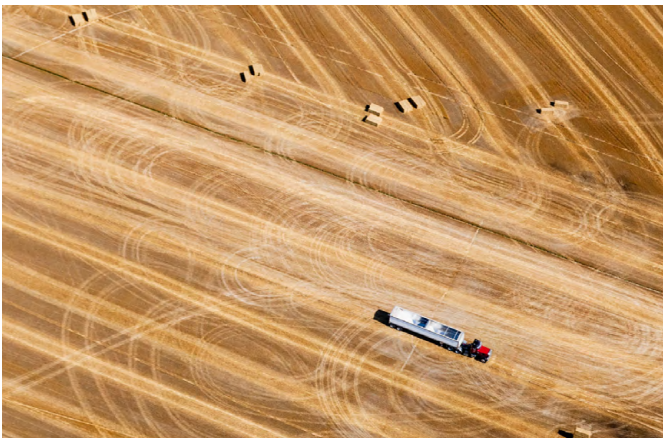
## Conclusion

The intent of the Chesapeake Bay Program Strategic Communications Plan 2016 – 2021 is to lay out the strategic direction of the CBP Communications Office for the next five years. It is also meant to be a guiding document for the larger CBP Communications Workgroup, to align communications efforts and priorities for all of the CBP and its partners.

The three goals of this plan focus on strengthening internal communications among the CBP and its partners; enhancing communications and outreach to new and our existing partners, focusing on two very distinct, but important audiences; and expanding the interested public's knowledge of the work of the CBP and the importance of protecting and restoring the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

The specific activities outlined in the CBP Communications Office Action Plan will serve to meet these goals, using specific measures of success to ensure that progress is being met. In line with the CBP's practice of adaptive management, the CBP Communications Office will 'learn by doing' and redirect our efforts as necessary.

As the voice of the Chesapeake Bay Program, it is the responsibility of the CBP Communications Office to tell the story of the science, data and policies that are working together to drive the protection and restoration of this great estuary.



## Appendix A: Online Survey Questions

The following questions were asked to Chesapeake Bay Program stakeholders in the online survey.

1. First, can you tell us what state your Bay Program related work is based?
  - a. Delaware
  - b. District of Columbia
  - c. Maryland
  - d. New York
  - e. Pennsylvania
  - f. Virginia
  - g. West Virginia
  - h. Bay-wide (no specific state)
  
2. Imagine you are at a casual social event, and someone asked you, “What is the Chesapeake Bay Program?” How do you respond (in one or two sentences)?
  
3. The Chesapeake Bay Program employs many different communications and marketing activities to reach its audiences. Which of these do you use?
  - a. Chesapeake Bay Program website.
  - b. e-Newsletters.
  - c. Social Media.
  - d. Media Releases.
  - e. Video Stories.
  
4. How often do you check Chesapeake Bay Program social media (Facebook, Instagram or Twitter)?
  - a. Daily or multiple times a day.
  - b. About once per week.
  - c. About once per month.
  - d. Only a few times per year.
  - e. Never.
  
5. How often do you check the Chesapeake Bay Program website?
  - a. Daily or multiple times a day.
  - b. About once per week.
  - c. About once per month.
  - d. Only a few times per year.
  - e. Never.
  
6. The Chesapeake Bay Program pursues different types of media coverage. Please rank the following in order of what you think is the most important, from highest to lowest, with one being the highest priority and six being the lowest priority.
  - a. Local TV coverage.
  - b. Local radio coverage.
  - c. Local print media.
  - d. Regional newspapers.
  - e. Online news.
  - f. National coverage.
  
7. On a scale of 1-5, how well do you think the Chesapeake Bay Program communicates about its work?
  - a. Excellent.
  - b. Good.
  - c. Fair.
  - d. Poor.
  - e. Terrible.



8. Please rank how well you think the Chesapeake Bay Program is reaching the following audiences:
  - a. The media.
  - b. Local elected officials.
  - c. People who live in the watershed and can access the Chesapeake Bay.
  - d. People who live in the watershed but cannot access the Chesapeake Bay.
  - e. Millennials (people aged 15 – 35).
  - f. People of color.
  
9. How do you like the “look and feel” of Chesapeake Bay Program materials (logo, color scheme, how materials are put together)?
  - a. They’re beautiful!
  - b. OK
  - c. Needs improvement.
  
10. For those that run a program, are your communications needs being met?
  
11. What do you see as the most pressing communications need for the Chesapeake Bay over the next five years?
  
12. Are there any ways the Chesapeake Bay Program’s communications are falling short? If so, what would you like to see different?
  
13. What do you see as the Chesapeake Bay Program’s biggest challenge over the next five years? And its biggest opportunity?
  
14. Do you think the Chesapeake Bay Program should use paid advertising (for example, sponsoring ads on social media) to advance its work?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No

Excerpt from report by The Hatcher Group.

## Findings from Stakeholder Interviews

### Overview

In order to create a strategic communications plan that supports both the priorities of the Program partnership and the goals and outcomes of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement, the Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) recommended three groups of leaders and stakeholders for The Hatcher Group to consult—either in focus groups or in one on one interviews. The interviews were designed to assess the communications capacity of the organization and identify strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for improvement.

This report synthesizes the feedback and opinions of those interviewed, but does not attribute specific comments to any individuals.

### Chesapeake Bay Program Leadership: Focus Groups and Interviews

| Name            | Title   |
|-----------------|---|
| Nick DiPasquale | Director, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency                        |
| Jim Edwards     | Deputy Director, U.S. EPA   |
| Rick Batiuk*    | Associate Director for Science, Analysis and Implementation, U.S. EPA |
| Carin Bisland*  | Associate Director for Partnerships and Accountability, U.S. EPA      |
| Lucinda Power*  | Watershed Implementation Plan Specialist, U.S. EPA                    |
| Greg Barranco*  | Government Affairs, Partnerships Team Lead, U.S. EPA                  |
| Margaret Enloe  | Former CBP Communications Director                                    |

\* interviewed in focus group

### Perception of CBP

Interviewees generally agreed that the purpose of the Bay Program is to protect and restore the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. When asked the first word that comes to mind when they hear “Chesapeake Bay Program,” answers varied between “sound science” to “partnership and collaboration.”

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*“We are like a regional planning office. From the Bay Agreement to TMDL, we are good at bringing the players together.”*

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Some division between CBP as its own entity versus being a part of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) emerged during interviews. Some leadership members thought of themselves as EPA first where others thought of themselves first as CBP, stating they felt the mission was much more focused on guiding and partnership than strictly regulatory, like the EPA can be viewed. There appears to be some internal tension and misunderstanding around this, including how resources are allocated. (See more in “challenges” section.)

## Strengths of CBP

Interviewees generally agreed that the Bay Program does a very good job of bringing multiple partnerships together to collaborate and make decisions. Most felt the Program excelled at keeping a balance and sense of equity amongst states. Interviewees also cited “sound science” and “cutting-edge science” as strengths. Furthermore, interviewees identified the longevity of the partnership and the trust that has built up because of that history as a strength.

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*“We set and measure consistent targets and transcend state lines. The Program is uniquely set up to do that.”*

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Other interviewees felt that an engaged partnership—including academic institutions, workgroups and stakeholder committees— and a shared sense of ownership was a strength.

## Challenges of CBP

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*“We need to link the message to be not just about the Bay, but also about local streams and creeks—in NY, DE and WV especially.”*

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Interviewees cited engagement with local government and decision-makers as a primary challenge, along with engaging jurisdictions and citizens in the watershed that are not near the Bay.

Another challenge that many stakeholders identified was the perceived “silos” that exist within the Program—some felt the organization suffers from gridlock and needs more internal cross-collaboration. Interviewees talked about the “world of water quality” versus “the rest of the office,” meaning that they felt like water quality staff view themselves, and are also viewed, differently.

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*“We have two offices: Partnership and Regulatory. We need to start messaging to the bigger picture—beyond water quality and TMDL—to integrate the entire ecosystem.”*

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A few interviewees also mentioned that they thought the Bay Program may be too bureaucratic—another opinion that was echoed throughout most stakeholder interviews.

One interviewee felt that the biggest challenge was reaching the many people who do not have the Bay as a top priority. (More below.)

## Key Audiences

When asked whom CBP needs to reach, interviewees' consensus was that the Program is currently doing a good job of engaging educated and informed audiences, including the environmental community. Many felt that two key audiences are (and should remain) the watchdog groups and the congressional/regulatory/political world.

Some felt that the general public was a key audience, stating that it is often citizens and grassroots efforts that make politicians take the right steps. Others disagreed and felt that CBP should not be targeting the general public as often.

## Recommendations from stakeholders:

### 1. Increase (a) diversity, (b) better engage local government, and (c) be more targeted:

- a) Interviewees across the board felt that CBP needs to increase outreach to **diverse audiences** to bring in different perspectives and cultural values.

*"We preach to the choir...a white choir."*

*"We need to expand our reach beyond the people that are already doing the right thing. About 1 in 5 people are currently doing what is needed to save the Bay—we need so much more."*

- b) Better engage **local governments** and non-profit groups.

*"We need to more directly engage the locals. We're working with LGAC... having peer-to-peer discussions. But it's challenging: there are 1,800 local governments within the watershed."*

- c) Be **more targeted** with audiences and more issue-specific. Two interviewees cited the launch of the TMDL as a good example of effective communications and targeting.

*“The original TMDL launch went particularly well. We targeted the agriculture industry, the press, NGOs, homebuilders, watermen and even wastewater plants. The [telephone] press conference had four minutes of ‘beeps’ when we started the call... people just kept calling in.”*

Interviewees talked about the need for tailoring messages. Some cited elected officials and decision-makers as an audience that could also be better reached. Others thought CBP needs to do more geographic targeting (i.e. oyster restoration in the Choptank).

*“We tend to be very general and broad in our communications. We need to change that. We need more strategy around who we want to reach. A lot of communications resources are being used to reach the general public through social media or our blog; but maybe we are lacking a strategic level of how to get targeted messages out. For instance- how do we get best management practices out to local governments?”*

*“Where we need help is getting that information localized. So somebody in West Virginia... they don’t care about blue crabs, but what motivates them? Drinking water? We need to tailor the message to those areas.”*

## **2. Enhance internal communications:**

Interviewees felt that CBP needs to arm internal ambassadors and create a comprehensive network of subject matter experts—or an infrastructure—to better reach internal and, ultimately, external audiences.

*“We need to enhance internal partner communications—we have a big problem communicating to them. We missed an opportunity with the recent SAV release because we didn’t get the message out first to our partners, and it was a great message.”*

*“I’m sure there are people who are participating in the Work Groups who have no idea the Work Group is part of the Chesapeake Bay Program. We need to strengthen this internal army.”*

## **Recommended tools**

When asked about specific skills or tools that would be helpful, interviewees provided a range of suggestions:

- Creating a comprehensive communications network or infrastructure: arming local ambassadors with common messages.
- Leveraging success stories / best management practices to local partners.

- Using a tool that is simple and attention catching, e.g. an alert from the Weather Channel. One specific suggestion: using a tweet from the EPA Administrator about an important project or program to grow awareness.
- Possibly using paid advertising on social media if it could be targeted and there is a specific message/action CBP is asking of people, but it might be hard to spend EPA money on advertising.
- Continue using the website as a tool to communicate with audiences.

## Other suggestions

Several interviewees offered additional suggestions, comments or questions regarding the direction of CBP's communications:

- *"We need to be less concerned on branding and more on communicating. How do we get the message out and spur action?"*
- *"We put a lot of information out via our various tools, but we never ask people to do anything. We need to ask for action."*
- *"We need to be more holistic: to balance water quality stories with everything else so that we are telling a story that touches on habitat and fisheries too...that ties it all together."*

## Chesapeake Bay Program Stakeholders: Individual Interviews (states and nonprofits and CAC)

| Name              | Title   |
|-------------------|---|
| Russ Baxter       | Deputy Secretary of Natural Resources for the Chesapeake Bay - VA         |
| Kristen Fleming   | Division Director Chesapeake, Coastal & Climate Policy – MD DNR           |
| Chris Becraft     | Policy Analyst – MD DNR   |
| John Schneider    | Watershed Assessment and Management Section Manager – DE DNREC            |
| Jennifer Walls    | Principal Planner with Div of Watershed Stewardship - DE DNREC            |
| Ann Swanson       | Executive Director, Chesapeake Bay Commission                             |
| Alison Prost      | Executive Director, Chesapeake Bay Foundation                             |
| Leslie Knapp, Jr. | Legal and Policy Counsel, Maryland Association of Counties                |
| Jana Davis        | Executive Director, Chesapeake Bay Trust                                  |
| Brianne Nadeau    | DC Councilwoman, LGAC Chair   |
| Doug Hill         | Executive Director, County Commissioners Association of PA                |
| Joe Maroon        | Virginia Environmental Endowment, member of CAC                           |
| Larry Land        | Virginia Association of Counties, Director of Policy Development          |
| Andrew Der*       | Andrew T, Der & Associates, LLC, Environmental Consulting, CAC member     |
| Julie Lawson*     | Trash Free Maryland, CAC member, appointed by the Mayor of Washington, DC |

\*interviewed in joint session

### Perception of CBP

Interviewees generally agreed that the purpose of the Program is to protect and restore the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. When asked the first word that comes to mind when they hear

“Chesapeake Bay Program,” answers varied between “big” and “bureaucratic” to

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*“Unless you are engrossed in the work, the Chesapeake Bay Program does not seem accessible. It is too bureaucratic.”*

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“complex” and “overwhelming.”

Interviewees cited a lot of “hoops” and redundancies and felt internal CBP and EPA staff could better coordinate.

According to one interviewee: “There are a lot of redundancies and inefficiencies between CBP and [EPA] Region 3. We are repeatedly reporting the same information to both. The two entities need to enhance their internal communications.”

Interviewees also mentioned the need to improve and scale-down meetings, which tend to be “tedious” and now have 25-30 people trying to come to a decision.

One interviewee said that the Chesapeake Bay Program makes connections really well and they “serve as an effective conduit between the federal government and local governments.” A state-based interviewee felt that the Chesapeake Bay Program needs to do a better job of winning support at the Congressional level.

Another interviewee said that the first words he thinks about when he hears Chesapeake Bay Program are “regulatory and controversy.”

## Strengths of CBP

Interviewees generally agreed that the Program does a really good job of bringing together multiple partnerships, especially states, for a common purpose.

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*“The Program is very accomplished in science—we have a well-studied Bay.”*

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Participants felt CBP does an excellent job pulling together the right stakeholders who have signed on, making sure everyone is at the table, working towards the goals of the Bay Agreement and providing layers of accountability. Another interviewee felt that CBP reaches regulators and managers very well.

The other top strength given by many interviewees: sound science and data, especially tracking progress. One interviewee said, “The Chesapeake Bay Program has solid people working with a good foundation.”

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*“Through the Program, we have built long-term relationships. We are all in this together. We learn from each other.”*

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## Challenges of CBP

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*“CBP needs to enhance communications laterally and vertically. Even with this new Agreement, it seems like we can’t understand what other work groups are doing. It is not actively talked about.”*

Many interviewees felt that the Bay Program is too bureaucratic and hard to understand. Some felt it was confusing as to who was actually in charge. Others cited no clear communication on how the Program works and said CBP does not seem accessible, which hinders public

interest. Another interviewee said that outreach can be sporadic and that “there is no sense of a uniform outreach policy in place.”

Improving the diversity of stakeholders was a frequent theme. One interviewee felt CBP should it expand its reach, especially to minority children. “We wonder why we can’t get minorities in our business or to apply for our jobs, but that has to start at an early age. We need to expose these kids early on to connect them with the environment.”

Several interviewees identified silos within the Program as hurdles, and suggest the Bay Program be more holistic.

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*“I’d love to see CBP do a better job of taking a more holistic approach to connect the dots. We need to break down the silos to see the big picture.”*

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Many felt that the Program lacks an overall message. According to one interviewee: “They have good product and event-related messages but without an overall message, we end up with mixed messages.”

Another participant said: “Certain messages are well-communicated but some aren’t. For example, ‘What IS the Bay Program?’”

One interviewee felt that the Bay Program’s biggest challenge is educating, while not crossing the line into advocacy, and doing it in a way that all audiences can understand.

Another interviewee felt that the Bay Program’s biggest challenge is getting Congressional support to get federal funding to aid the necessary work to restore the Bay. Due to high costs of restoration, one interviewee said, “There is resentment over unfunded mandates and even though people want to improve water quality, the high cost raises questions on why and about the science behind the projects.” Another interviewee similarly said, “We all want clean water, but stakeholders are feeling forced to make significant changes without the resources to do it.”

## Key Audiences

There is consensus that the Program is currently doing a good job of reaching everyone “who sits at the table” like the federal and state governments and the environmental community, agricultural community and NGOs.

### Recommendations from stakeholders:

#### 1. Increase outreach to local government:

Interviewees generally felt that CBP needs to better reach **local governments** to get their message out and provide actions, such as networking with local watershed organizations. More specifically, one interviewee felt that county elected officials AND county professional/technical staff need to be key audiences.

*“Many local governments don’t think of the Bay Program at all. For some, it’s on their radar, but they don’t know what CBP wants them to do. We need to give them something tangible.”*

*“We’ve seen success with some of our communications efforts when we focus locally—we focus on local tributaries that people can see every day. The Chesapeake Bay Program needs to support local water efforts.”*

*“If I had a crack team of expert communicators, I would deploy them to Pennsylvania and New York to reach those who impact the Bay, but rarely use it as a resource.”*

*“We need to connect the Bay to people locally through messaging and use them consistently. We need to help folks understand what we are doing while shifting away from regulatory language.”*

#### 2. Enhance communications to partners:

Participants felt CBP is missing opportunities by not sending communications, such as press releases, to their internal partners ahead of time. In addition, one interviewee felt that a quarterly call for large-scale stakeholders, such as MACo, to give an outreach status update and focus on timely issues would go a long way.

*“The difference is what plays well in one state may not play well in another. If CBP sends the majority of large-scale releases to its partners ahead of time, we could add to it or tag on to it.”*

*“Sometimes by not involving partners, we are missing the chance to tell people CBP exists. For example, the local NPR here did a story on the*

*increase in SAV and they went to CBF for the only comment on the story! They didn't go to the state either so we missed an opportunity to talk about the great work the Bay Program is doing and the hard work of the states."*

### **3. Better reach the general public:**

Opinions were divided on whether the general public should be a primary audience, but most felt that the Program should better reach everyone in the watershed, the everyday users "who are paying for this."

*"The general public goes to the Chesapeake Bay Foundation rather than the Chesapeake Bay Program for information. The implementers go to CBF. So maybe the public should not be a main audience for CBP—maybe it's too big of an audience to try to do both."*

*"I'm not sure CBP has ever assessed who their key audiences are. What does the general public need to know? CBP is often communicating for the sake of communicating. I'm not sure the general public is really the primary audience for CBP."*

## **Recommended tools**

When asked about specific skills or tools that would be helpful, interviewees provided a range of suggestions:

- Keep using effective tools - especially the website, which was often used daily by respondents, and videos.
- Upload meeting materials and other administrative information on the website earlier for partners.
- Create tangible communications such as videos—showing local waterways such as the Nanticoke and Tangier Sound by helicopter and how they connect to the Bay.
- Leverage success stories / best management practices about local governments to other local governments: *"Highlight what they do well."*
- Better communicate the hard (and successful) work the states are doing.
- Opinions were divided on using paid advertising on social media—many felt it was a great idea but others questioned whether it would be allowed or whether it would be the best use of resources. Many felt that CBP would need to be very careful about wording and messaging so as not to delve into advocacy.

## Other suggestions

Several interviewees offered additional suggestions, comments or questions regarding the direction of CBP's communications:

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*"The Chesapeake Bay Program has an opportunity to come together, share information and highlight success."*

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- *"[The recent SAV message] sounded desperate for success. And I think we can drop the part about how we haven't reached our goal. Don't finish with negativity. Nobody down here in the trenches is going to stop working to restore the Bay."*
- *"CBP should recognize all the work that the states are doing. Don't focus on what we aren't doing. Let people know how hard we are working."*
- *"Every communications project should be focused – based on what they're trying to do. If they are [being focused], they're not communicating that to some of the partners and the GITs. If you are in the CBP world, you get 6-10 emails per day 'we need your input on this!' Better focus and strategy would cut down the 'noise.'"*

## Chesapeake Bay Program Stakeholders: Focus Group (GIT, Federal, LGAC)

| Name               | Title  |
|--------------------|--|
| Kristin Saunders   | GIT Liaison  |
| Peyton Robinson    | Sustainable Fisheries GIT Chair, NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office Director |
| Hon. Ruby A. Brabo | LGAC Vice-Chair, Supervisor, King George County, VA                  |

## Perception of CBP

Interviewees were asked, "When you think of the Chesapeake Bay Program, what is the first word that comes to mind?" For this group of interviewees, answers included: lack of knowledge, bureaucracy, partnership, dysfunction (in a positive way) and complex.

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*"The Chesapeake Bay Program garners resources to implement actions that lead to many outcomes for Bay protection and restoration."*

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One interviewee said that before they became involved with the organization, they thought that the Chesapeake Bay Program staff were activists, but now believes their primary focus is education and awareness.

The other two participants generally agreed about the primary purpose of the Chesapeake Bay Program: to bring state, federal and local resources together to implement the group's Bay restoration goals.

A negative perception voiced by one of the interviewees was: "In the past, the Chesapeake Bay Program was a place of innovation and partnership to share ideas with cutting-edge science and policy. Then it became process-oriented – but they are not implementing or sharing information in a way that it can be distilled to local-level folks who need it."

## Strengths of CBP

Interviewees across the board agreed that the Bay Program does a really good job at the technical and scientific level, such as with modeling and accounting for pollution loads. In addition, interviewees felt that the Bay Program communications office does an excellent job of reaching water quality implementers and regulatory people in the "TMDL World." These interviewees also felt that the Bay Program is good at "preaching to the choir."

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*"We are good at reaching those that are already involved. There is almost a perception that everyone already knows or understands."*

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Interviewees all felt that Bay Program Communications staff is top notch, and open to suggestions, feedback and ideas. All interviewees felt that the website and the newsletter are very strong.

## Challenges of CBP

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*"There is a continuous need to keep up local outreach due to staff turnover."*

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Interviewees felt that the Bay Program does not target local elected officials and rural managers well enough. They felt that more outreach needed to happen in Pennsylvania and New York where the Bay's challenges and problems with pollution start.

## Key Audiences

The interviewees felt that key audiences needed to be local officials and regional managers. Urban areas are important too, but interviewees felt that the Chesapeake Bay Program already does a good job of reaching those areas. This group felt very strongly that the Bay Program should have tailored messages for its different audiences.

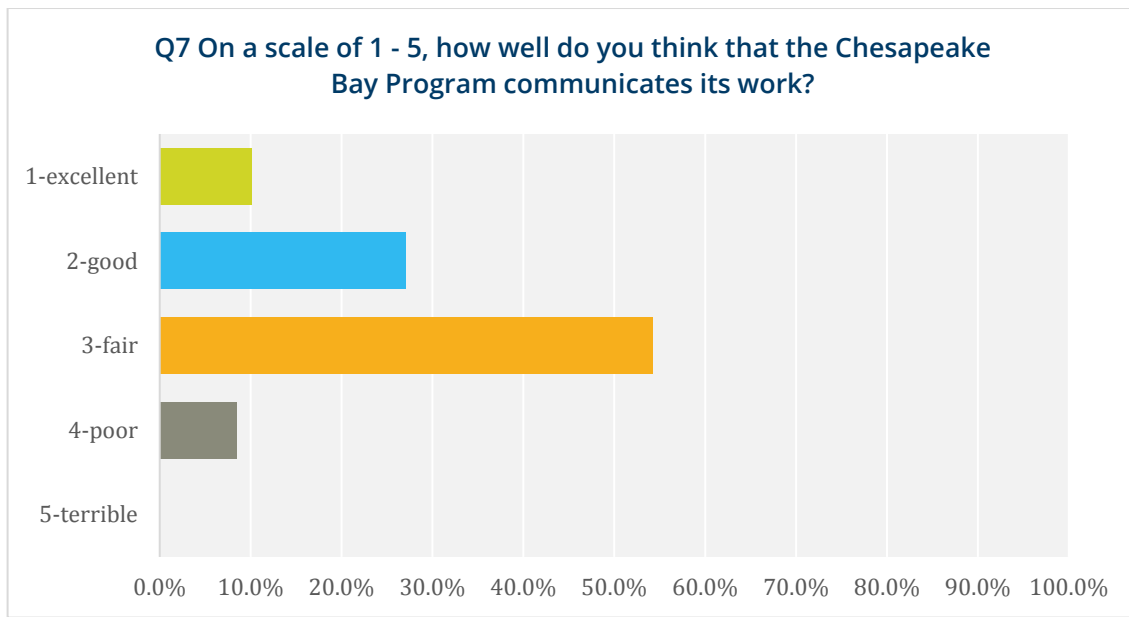
## Appendix C: Findings from Online Survey

Excerpt from report by The Hatcher Group.

### Findings from Online Survey

The Hatcher Group conducted a web-based survey, using Survey Monkey. The survey was sent to a list of 157 Chesapeake Bay Program stakeholders, split into three segments: Communicators (A), Goal Implementation Teams and Committees (B) and Principal Staff Committee and states (C). We received 62 total responses, which account for a 39% response rate.

Overall, respondents were generally pleased with the Bay Program’s communications effort and the communications staff. When asked to rank how well the Bay Program communicates its work, only six respondents selected “excellent,” while more than three quarters described it as “fair” or “good.” Only five selected “poor.” Most respondents believed the current mission of the Bay Program’s communications office was adequate, but 37% suggested it “could use some tweaking.”



The most common way that respondents characterized the Bay Program was as a partnership between federal, state and local governments and nonprofit organizations. However, many respondents felt that there was confusion among the general public about what the Bay Program is and what its responsibilities are.

Eighty-five percent of respondents reported using the Bay Program’s website, with 62% saying they visited the website at least once per week (32% said they visited the

website daily). Fewer respondents utilized social media, with 40% saying they never checked Bay Program social media – including more than one-third of the “Communicators.” On a scale of one to five, only 5 respondents (9%) thought the “look and feel” of Bay Program materials were less than “OK.”

Asked about whether their communications needs are being met, very few respondents answered “no,” but 17 answered “partially” and ten answered “yes.” The comments for this question were insightful:

Each of the three groups of respondents identified people of color as an audience that the Bay Program was not effectively reaching. When given a list of different types of media outlets, respondents listed regional newspapers (like the Washington Post, or Baltimore Sun) as the most important to target for media coverage.

When asked about the most pressing communications need for the Bay Program over the next five years, common answers included reaching local officials, engaging local partners, and simplifying key messages.

The full set of responses can be found in the addendum to this report.

*“Communication with local government is virtually non-existent.”*

*“I am often unclear as to when to engage the communication department.”*

*“I would love to do more work with the Comm team... My concern is that [we might] spread the Comm team too thin.”*

*“I think there should be a stronger relationship between the Advisory Committees and the Communications Office.”*

*“Internal communication could be stronger.”*



## **Chesapeake Bay Program Internal Communications Audit**

Conducted by CBP Communications Office staff  
Results gathered December 2015 through January 2016  
Report finalized March 2016



## Introduction

From December 2015 through January 2016, the Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) Communications Office conducted an internal examination of communications products created over the past several years, including web content, social media, e-newsletters, press releases, multimedia and print products. This audit was conducted by staff members of the Communications Office in order to determine the communications strengths and weaknesses and to provide a baseline for the creation of a Strategic Communications Plan.

The findings in this report identify the main products and messages published by the Communications Office, which products garnered the most engagement with our audience, and potential opportunities to close communications gaps.

### ***Goals of the Communications Audit***

1. Assess the strengths & weaknesses of communications efforts including evaluation for content, messaging, format, and integration with other products.
2. Identify gaps and opportunities for future communications including topics of focus, potential audiences, and improvements in products.
3. Assess current levels of audience engagement and areas for improvement.

### ***Questions Asked***

1. How have we informed the interested public about our work?
2. What were our key messages?
3. Were our graphics coordinated and messages consistent?
4. Who were our key audiences? Did we reach our audiences with the right messages?
5. What communications have been most effective?
6. What media coverage did we receive? Was it effective? What opportunities did we miss?
7. Did we successfully tell our story?
8. Have our communications products made clear connections with the partners and partnership's mission and work?

### ***Tools Used***

1. Google Analytics
2. Flesch-Kincaid readability scoring
4. Interviews and surveys with users or prospective users
5. Analytics offered through social media platforms and MailChimp
6. Observations

## Key Findings and Observations

### Bay Blog

The “Bay Blog” has been in production on CBP’s flagship website, [chesapeakebay.net](http://chesapeakebay.net), since 2006. It started with infrequent updates—only 15 total updates were posted to the blog in all of 2006—and eventually grew into one of the main components of the Communications Office’s efforts. Since 2011, at least 120 updates have been posted to the blog each year, including news posts, feature stories, and photo essays. The Bay Blog has become a key resource for individuals looking for news and stories related to the health and restoration of the Chesapeake Bay. The audience for the Bay Blog is similar to the audience for the site overall, consisting of primarily teachers, students, and members of the interested public.

An increase in blog posts has not necessarily lead to an increase in blog traffic, however. Google Analytics data only spans back to the start of 2012, but since that time, overall traffic to the blog has seen only a moderate increase (Fig. 1).



*Fig. 1: Monthly average pageviews to the Chesapeake Bay Program blog from 2012 to early 2016.*

In context within traffic to the entire CBP flagship site, traffic to the blog continually accounts for just seven to eight percent of overall site visits. In 2015, the average page views on a blog post hovered around 350 views—although certain types of articles, including feature stories and list posts, saw more traffic than others, such as heavily news-based articles.

This information is key for two reasons: first, the first reaction of some partners when hoping to promote certain news stories maybe be to “put it on the blog,” when in fact, another avenue may garner more viewership. Second, if the blog is to continue as the primary avenue by which these news stories are shared, additional steps should be taken to improve viewership and visits to the site.

Overall, the key messages found in the blog posts are either directly related to partner work or can connect to partner work in some fashion. The main subjects covered by blog posts include the latest science, Chesapeake Bay health, and the work of CBP and its partners. A handful of articles were only tenuously related to watershed health and restoration, indicating that there is some room for improvement.

Although multiple staff members contribute their writing to the blog, posts have an overall consistent voice, tone, and style. This consistency is due in part to the Web Content Manager’s role overseeing edits on all blog posts, to ensure they are written in a similar style. All posts

include at least one graphic, and any captions or image credits are written and styled in a consistent manner.

Analytics for each blog post are listed in an editorial calendar, allowing for frequent review of what stories and messages are best-performing on the blog, and which are falling behind. In 2014 and 2015, “good news” stories show improving health and successful restoration in the watershed performed well, as did stories that highlight “life on the Bay” and animals and plants. Conversely, stories that covered policy or scientific reports tended to perform poorly.

“Highly engaging” blog posts are considered by the Communications Office to be those that perform best both in viewership and time spent on page. If hundreds of people visit the blog post but only spend a few seconds on the page, they are obviously not engaging with the post. However, if a large number of people visit the post and spend several minutes reading it, we can assume they are engaged by the content. When looking at both viewership and time on page, feature stories consistently outperform other types of blog posts (Table 1). Features include posts like Restoration Spotlights, From the Fields, By the Numbers, general feature posts, and list posts. Photo essays are also top-performing blog posts. News articles and “Currents” articles, which are posts written by leaders in the watershed restoration effort to accompany our monthly e-newsletter, tend to perform worse in viewership, but maintain respectable time-on-page numbers.

| Post Type               | 2014       |           | 2015       |           |
|-------------------------|------------|-----------|------------|-----------|
|                         | Avg. Views | Avg. Time | Avg. Views | Avg. Time |
| <b>Feature</b>          | 358        | 2:48      | 582        | 3:06      |
| <b>Photo Essay</b>      | 569        | 3:21      | 346        | 2:52      |
| <b>News Article</b>     | 325        | 2:36      | 300        | 2:36      |
| <b>Currents Article</b> | 175        | 2:40      | 215        | 2:55      |

*Table 1: Average views and time-on-page for different blog posts on ChesapeakeBay.net in 2014 and 2015.*

Although many of our articles focus on complex scientific topics, every effort is made to keep the readability scores as low as possible. Each blog post is run through a readability calculator at read-able.com to determine the grade level of understanding for that post. On average, our blog posts are around a 12 or 13 grade level, which is high for a “general public” audience but is appropriate for our intended audience of the “interested public.” Posts that score lower on the readability scale—or rather, represent a lower grade level—tend to be the feature stories, which have higher readership.

**Newsletters**

The Communications Office currently manages three electronic newsletters: Bay News (distributed daily), Bay Brief (distributed weekly), and Chesapeake Currents (distributed monthly). MailChimp, a newsletter service, is used to send out the newsletters.

Bay News contains a list of Chesapeake Bay-related news stories from the previous day, and consists of only headlines and links to news stories. Bay Brief is a “Bay insiders” newsletter, containing new research, job postings, and conferences that may be relevant to environmental professionals. Chesapeake Currents is a monthly review of new content posted to the Bay Program website, and includes a featured article that is typically written by a leader in the watershed restoration effort.

Each of these newsletters was created in mid-2013. Since that time, subscriptions have not increased dramatically, but neither has the rate of unsubscribes (Fig. 2). It appears that the newsletters have a small but devoted following, although their lack of growth could indicate that the newsletters are not as relevant an avenue for reaching our target audiences.

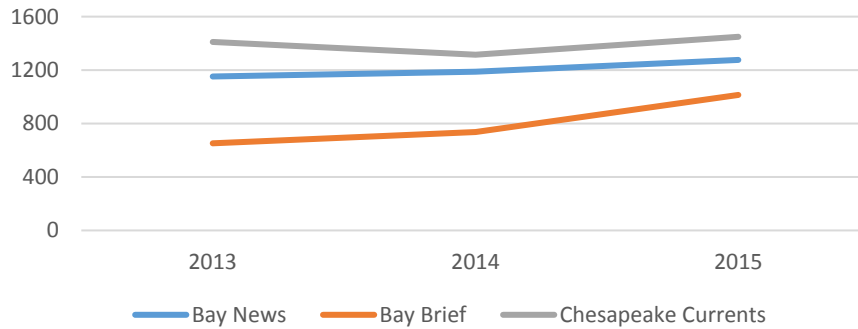


Fig. 2: Subscribers to Chesapeake Bay Program e-newsletters from 2013 through 2015.

Each newsletter also has consistently high open and click rates, indicating that our audience is opening the emails when they receive them and is interested enough in the content to click at least one link included in the newsletter. Based on “industry averages” provided by MailChimp, the open and click rates for all our newsletters exceed the expected rates (Table 2).

|  | Bay News | Bay Brief | Chesapeake Currents |
|--|----------|-----------|---------------------|
| <b>Open Rate (Industry Avg.: 21.19%)</b> | 34.07%   | 28.27%    | 31.24%              |
| <b>Click Rate (Industry Avg.: 2.3%)</b>  | 16.14%   | 8.77%     | 8.14%               |

Table 2: Average open and click rates for each of the electronic newsletters produced by the Chesapeake Bay Program Communications Office.

Overall, Chesapeake Currents has the highest number of subscribers, but Bay News has the highest open and click rate. For Bay Brief, job posts and the “What We’re Reading” section tends to perform well, and for Chesapeake Currents, the “Critter of the Month” and top news stories from the Bay Blog tend to perform well. However, the newsletters tend to be text-heavy and may benefit from a redesign that decreases the amount of text.

Since 2013, the templates and graphics used in each newsletter have generally remained the same, although the Communications Office is currently looking into updating the design to align with the brand elements of the flagship website. The newsletters also serve as key avenues for sharing partner news, events, and job postings.

**Press Releases**

Since 2011, the Chesapeake Bay Program has released eight to 12 media releases per year. These releases are typically focused on partner news, watershed health, and updates to our scientific indicators. When released, media releases are posted in the “Press Center” on the CBP website, as well as distributed to key members of the media. Many releases have an accompanying media briefing or press event to which members of the press are invited.

Obviously, the primary audience for these releases are members of the media and other communications professionals. According to Google Analytics results for the Press Center page, visits to each press release average less than 70 page views. “Good news” stories and commonly-understood threats, such as invasive species, tend to perform well. Top press releases since 2012 include a release on invasive catfish, new public access sites, National Fish and Wildlife Federation grants, and reductions in pollution.

|   | <b>Release Date</b> | <b>Page Views</b> | <b>Time on Page</b> |
|---|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| <a href="#">Invasive blue and flathead catfish threat to Bay ecosystems</a>                                 | Mar. 2, 2012        | 1,188             | 3:59                |
| <a href="#">36 new public access sites opened along Chesapeake rivers and streams</a>                       | May 22, 2014        | 759               | 3:35                |
| <a href="#">More than \$9 million in NFWF grants awarded</a>  | Aug. 27, 2012       | 599               | 3:38                |
| <a href="#">Bay Program partners continue progress to stem the flow of pollutants to rivers and the Bay</a> | Apr. 30, 2013       | 410               | 3:11                |
| <a href="#">2014 CBSAC Report on blue crab management</a>   | July 2, 2014        | 364               | 4:47                |
| <a href="#">CBP invites groups to participate in management strategy development</a>                        | Sept. 16, 2014      | 392               | 4:04                |

Table 3: Top all-time CBP press releases for page views and time on page.

The lack of growth in visitors to the press center coincides with a lack of growth in the Bay Program media list, which is a list of key media contacts to which press releases and media advisories are distributed. Improved management of the media list, as well as improved personal relations with members of the press, will help boost coverage when the Communications Office publishes a media release.

Typically, coverage of media releases averages from four to eight articles per release. This average rate of media coverage has also plateaued in recent years, and could benefit from improved media relations. While all our releases are directly related to partner work, our partners would surely appreciate improved media coverage of their efforts.

### **Print Products**

Since 2012, the Communications Office has relied almost exclusively on the annual *Bay Barometer* report—which is not necessarily a public-friendly document—as its primary print publication. Other printed products include printed versions of the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*, postcards for each of the Watershed Agreement goals, and a general brochure describing CBP’s work.

In years prior to 2012, the Communications Office had several printed outreach resources, including a list of public access sites, educational resources about the Bay ecosystem, and a coloring book. At times, individuals contact the office for additional copies of these resources, although they are no longer in print. Opportunity exists to not only re-print these previously printed materials, but to create additional print outreach products for use at conferences and events, or for sending to area schools to aid in their environmental curriculum.

The Communications Office is often contacted by individuals both within and outside of the partnership for materials they can bring to events they are attending or hosting. By expanding

our suite of printed products, we would be better able to meet their needs, and to reach a broader audience with our messaging.

Finally, while many of these printed products are well-designed on their own, the use of a variety of graphic designers and the lack of an overarching style guide have led to less consistent coordination of graphics and branding. Due to the Communication Office’s small staff size, it’s often necessary to go to outside designers; however, the creation of an overarching brand and style guide would help keep a cohesive feel in all printed products, regardless of if design is kept in- or out-of-house.

**Social Media**

In 2015, the Communications Office finalized a social media strategy for the Bay Program, which lays out the goals and best practices for CBP’s social media efforts. In this strategy, the goals of our social media efforts are as follows:

- Build an audience and strengthen brand awareness,
- Engage users with our content and our mission,
- Drive traffic to our site, and
- Gain recognition as an expert and authority on the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed.

Currently, CBP has a presence on four social media platforms: Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and Instagram. The responsibilities associated with these platforms are spread out between various members of the staff; however, the Web Content Manager acts to oversee the voice, tone, and content that is being posted and tracks analytics related to these social media efforts.

While CBP has a modest following on its social media platforms (Table 3) and is continually growing, there is always room for improvement. Trying different methods to gain followers and boost engagement could bring interaction with the CBP brand on social media even higher.

|                  | <b>Followers (as of 1/1/2016)</b> | <b>% Growth (since 1/1/2015)</b> | <b>Avg. Monthly Growth</b> | <b>Avg. Engagement</b> |
|------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Facebook</b>  | 1901                              | 38%                              | 2.8%                       | 2.7%                   |
| <b>Twitter</b>   | 7529                              | 28%                              | 2.1%                       | 2.1%                   |
| <b>Instagram</b> | 1040                              | 39%                              | 16%                        | 6.8%                   |
| <b>Pinterest</b> | 751                               | 420%                             | 2.8%                       | 0.5%                   |

*Table 4: 2015 analytics for the Chesapeake Bay Program’s social media efforts.*

Of all of CBP’s social media platforms, Pinterest is the least in line with the social media goals outlined in the strategy, as evidenced by the low average engagement rate on posts. In fact, the posts with the highest engagement rates are consistently Chesapeake-themed recipes, which, while of interest to our audience, do not exemplify the partnership’s work nor strengthen awareness of our brand.

For the remaining platforms, analytics are helpful in teasing out which content performs well and which does not perform as well. For Facebook, analytics have shown that “good news” stories that show a personal side to the watershed perform well, as do wildlife-related posts. On Twitter, our audience prefers facts, how to’s and tips and the latest science. On Instagram, high-quality images of wildlife and scenery tend to perform well.

Social media is a useful avenue through which the Communications Office is able to share partner news and events, as well as promote partners’ own social media posts. Many stories

and events that would not align with the goals of the Bay Blog perform well on social media. However, it's important to reinforce the need to provide consistent, appropriate content to our followers: a story shouldn't be shared because we want to share it, it should be shared because our audience is interested in it. By honing in even closer on the posts that perform well, we can continue to grow our social media efforts in both size and engagement.

**Video and Photo**

The Communications Office's video and photo library has become a premier multimedia resource for organizations both within and outside of the watershed. Videos appear on our website, YouTube, and Vimeo, and images appear on our website and our Flickr page. Both types of multimedia can appear either as standalone products, or within a larger story that runs on the Bay Blog.

Intended audiences for our multimedia products overlap with the intended audience for many of our communications products, in particular the Bay Blog and website content. These audiences include the interested public, Bay Program partners, student and educators, and our followers on social media. Most of our multimedia content has highlighted partnership work throughout the watershed, and photo and video content has relied on collaboration with a variety of partners.

The Communications Office produces several different types of video products, each of which carries a slightly different key message:

- Bay 101 videos illustrate some of the main concepts relevant to Bay issues.
- From the Field videos offer a behind-the-scenes look at scientific work, offering an introduction into that field of work as well as an up-to-date look at one or more Bay issues.
- Chesapeake Unscripted videos show an often surprising cross-section of public perception of Bay knowledge and values.
- Other feature videos may introduce charismatic experts with messages relevant to environmental health in the Bay watershed.

Our images carry key messages as well:

- Photo essays and feature story images tell stories to heighten awareness of Bay issues, science, culture, history, and geography.
- Photos shared through Instagram and other social media fill gaps left by more in-depth features and similarly create occasions for conversation on relevant topics.

Our most-viewed videos are from our most directly educational series, Bay 101. Within that category, the top subjects represented are commonly known species (blue crabs, oysters, striped bass), as well as some of the most talked-about issues affecting the Bay (air pollution, algae blooms). Our ten most-viewed photos on Flickr don't follow any clear pattern, though the blue crab is unsurprisingly represented. Two similar photos of John Smith's replica shallop have roughly twice the views as the next closest photo (of a construction site at Blue Plains Wastewater Treatment Plant).

| <b>Top Videos (All-time)</b> | <b>Views</b> | <b>Top Photos (All-time)</b>           | <b>Views</b> |
|------------------------------|--------------|--|--------------|
| Bay 101: Blue Crabs          | 26,300       | John Smith Shallop 1                   | 10,308       |
| Bay 101: Oysters             | 18,200       | John Smith Shallop 2                   | 10,146       |
| Bay 101: Air Pollution       | 15,500       | Blue Plains Wastewater Treatment Site  | 5,473        |
| Bay 101: Striped Bass        | 15,400       | Stakeholder discussion, Tangier Island | 3,715        |

|                       |        |                |       |
|-----------------------|--------|----------------|-------|
| Bay 101: Algae Blooms | 12,100 | Choptank River | 3,343 |
|-----------------------|--------|----------------|-------|

*Table 5: Top video and photo products (in views) from the Chesapeake Bay Program.*

In an informal interview with a local educator about our video products, a high school environmental science teacher mentioned that the Bay 101 videos are “very useful” for specific lesson plans and serve as an engaging introduction to a topic. The students have an easier time relating to the videos, he explained, because they are more recent than the other video material used in class—such as Bill Nye, which is often more than 10 years old and speaks to a younger audience. The teacher mentioned that students appreciate hearing information straight from experts in the field, as though they’re “talking to a real person.”

Multimedia products are promoted and incorporated into other products in a variety of ways. Videos are promoted on “sliders” on the CBP homepage, paired with feature stories in the Bay Blog, appear on a dedicated video section of the website, and are shared through social media and newsletter avenues. Images are paired with feature stories or photo essays, appear in our Flickr library, and can also be used on any of our social media platforms.

However, despite exceeding photo archive growth targets, there are often times that CBP photos are not used in our other communications efforts. This tends to happen when:

- No existing photos fit the need,
- Existing photos may fit the need but are not readily found in the Flickr archive,
- Producing photos in-house would require unobtainable resources, or
- We have the resources but the multimedia specialist may be unaware or left out of the discussion.

In lieu of original photos, we source images from creative commons and Shutterstock, which are convenient and can supplement our limited photo library. However, it can be difficult to find images within our focused niche of science and restoration, and while “scenic” photos are always available they represent missed opportunities to add depth to stories. Although having Communications Office staff shoot photos for stories is ideal, shooting for “stock” photos would help in providing relevant, high-quality, CBP-produced images for stories that would otherwise use images from outside sources.

Our multimedia products have successfully told topical stories about the Bay on subjects that may not be well-represented in traditional news outlets, and this content helps created a full picture of the Bay watershed. However, time, staff, and financial constraints limit the ability to travel to the outer reaches of the watershed, making Delaware and West Virginia far less represented in our video and photo libraries. In the past, staff have scheduled longer lengths of travel to visit areas of Pennsylvania and New York; it may be useful and worthwhile to consider scheduling similar trips to visit other areas underrepresented in our multimedia products.

### **Web Content**

Apart from the Bay Blog, which accounts for around seven percent of visits to chesapeakebay.net, the flagship website of the Bay Program contains a variety of other sections and pieces of web content. Some of this information, such as the Goal Implementation Team pages and the “Meetings Calendar” are meant for an internal, CBP audience. However, most of the content is meant as an educational tool for students, educators, and the interested public.



Apart from the blog, sections of the website that are frequently updated with new content for a public-facing audience are:

- Discover the Chesapeake, which accounted for 41% of website traffic in 2015;
  - (The Field Guide, nested under Discover the Chesapeake, accounted for 29% of total site traffic)
- Learn the Issues, which accounted for 11%; and
- Take Action, which accounted for 1%.

Analytics for this content shows a direct relationship to when school is in session: page views are higher during the school week and school year, and fall back down on weekends and during the summer months. Since these students and educators make up such a large part of traffic to our site, it’s critical for us to continue to provide fresh, accurate content for them to use.

| <b>Discover the Chesapeake (Jan. 1, 2015-Dec. 31, 2015)</b> |              |  |              |
|---|--------------|--|--------------|
| <b>Top 10</b>   | <b>Views</b> | <b>Bottom 10</b>   | <b>Views</b> |
| <a href="#">Field Guide</a>                                 | 269,043      | <a href="#">Gyotaku</a>                                    | 2,603        |
| <a href="#">The Chesapeake Bay Watershed</a>                | 221,940      | <a href="#">Civil War Battles</a>                          | 6,448        |
| <a href="#">Discover the Chesapeake</a>                     | 184,153      | <a href="#">Bay Coloring Book</a>                          | 9,125        |
| <a href="#">Facts and Figures</a>                           | 174,230      | <a href="#">Shipwrecks</a>                                 | 12,305       |
| <a href="#">Bay 101</a>                                     | 149,000      | <a href="#">Archaeology and Native Americans</a>           | 13,059       |
| <a href="#">Bay Ecosystem</a>                               | 139,831      | <a href="#">Pirates on the Chesapeake Bay</a>              | 14,212       |
| <a href="#">Food Webs</a>                                   | 79,669       | <a href="#">African Americans in the Chesapeake Region</a> | 20,394       |
| <a href="#">Dissolved Oxygen</a>                            | 77,450       | <a href="#">Water Clarity</a>                              | 20,941       |
| <a href="#">Estuary System</a>                              | 71,609       | <a href="#">Life at the Bottom</a>                         | 24,920       |
| <a href="#">Physical Characteristics</a>                    | 50,061       | <a href="#">Captain John Smith</a>                         | 25,866       |

Table 6: Top and bottom 10 page views for the Discover the Chesapeake section.

“Discover the Chesapeake” includes sections like the Field Guide, Bay facts & figures, a history of the watershed, and an introduction to the Bay ecosystem. This general-knowledge section is meant to introduce visitors to the watershed. All-inclusive or summary pages such as “Facts & Figures” and “Bay 101” are the top visited pages in this section, whereas the much of the content on Bay history makes up a majority of the lowest-performing pages in the section.

Opportunity exists to cross-reference these general information pages with other top-performing pages, such as those in the Learn the Issues section. Many of the pages are also text-only, and one survey respondent felt the pages were “text heavy.” Visual content may help ground the reader in the material and reinforce material in a different way.

| <b>Learn the Issues (Jan. 1, 2015-Dec. 31, 2015)</b> |              |                                |              |
|--|--------------|--------------------------------|--------------|
| <b>Top 10</b>  | <b>Views</b> | <b>Bottom 10</b>               | <b>Views</b> |
| <a href="#">Learn the Issues</a>                     | 257,093      | <a href="#">Forest Buffers</a> | 13,458       |
| <a href="#">Blue Crabs</a>                           | 110,504      | <a href="#">Education</a>      | 14,759       |
| <a href="#">Oysters</a>                              | 103,952      | <a href="#">Weather</a>        | 16,652       |
| <a href="#">Air Pollution</a>                        | 82,937       | <a href="#">Groundwater</a>    | 20,261       |

|                                       |        |                              |        |
|---------------------------------------|--------|------------------------------|--------|
| <a href="#">Agriculture</a>           | 75,631 | <a href="#">Shad</a>         | 20,927 |
| <a href="#">Bay Grasses</a>           | 75,454 | <a href="#">Menhaden</a>     | 21,607 |
| <a href="#">Chemical Contaminants</a> | 74,611 | <a href="#">Development</a>  | 22,997 |
| <a href="#">Invasive Species</a>      | 72,895 | <a href="#">Wastewater</a>   | 28,676 |
| <a href="#">Nutrients</a>             | 66,787 | <a href="#">Forests</a>      | 28,883 |
| <a href="#">Stormwater Runoff</a>     | 49,144 | <a href="#">Striped Bass</a> | 29,800 |

Table 7: Top and bottom 10 page views for the Learn the Issues section.

The “Learn the Issues” section presents information on top issues that are affecting the health of the Bay, such as agriculture, nutrients and stormwater runoff. Again, these are educational pages that give viewers a general overview of each topic with the opportunity to dive deeper into the subject. This section can also expand and shrink due to what issues are most important to our audience—pages can be added or removed as their usefulness dictates. Of a small survey of audience members, two of three respondents had no additional topics to add; the remaining respondent suggested adding information on “hydraulic fracturing, environmental justice, and nutrient trading.”

Each page has a similar set up and contains multiple kinds of content; however, most of the Learn the Issues pages have an accompanying Bay 101 video, but not every page has a corresponding video. Since Bay 101 content and videos are some of our top performers, making sure they appear on our Learn the Issues pages will provide even more engaging content for our audience.

| <b>Take Action (Jan. 1, 2015-Dec. 31, 2015)</b>               |              |   |              |
|---|--------------|---|--------------|
| <b>Top 10</b>   | <b>Views</b> | <b>Bottom 10</b>                                  | <b>Views</b> |
| <a href="#">How To's and Tips</a>                             | 33,098       | <a href="#">How to Begin Birding this Winter</a>  | 118          |
| <a href="#">Take Action</a>                                   | 13,384       | <a href="#">How to Recycle Your Electronics</a>   | 399          |
| <a href="#">How To's and Tips: In Your Backyard</a>           | 10,870       | <a href="#">How to Construct a Compost Pile</a>   | 444          |
| <a href="#">Visit the Chesapeake</a>                          | 9,317        | <a href="#">How to Test Your Soil</a>             | 532          |
| <a href="#">How To's and Tips: In Your Home</a>               | 6,064        | <a href="#">How To's and Tips: At Work</a>        | 710          |
| <a href="#">Attend an Event</a>                               | 5,620        | <a href="#">How to Pick a Crab</a>                | 769          |
| <a href="#">How to Deice the Bay-Friendly Way</a>             | 4,407        | <a href="#">How To's and Tips: On the Road</a>    | 1,065        |
| <a href="#">How to Choose and Use Native Plants</a>           | 3,993        | <a href="#">How to Drive the Bay-Friendly Way</a> | 1,094        |
| <a href="#">How to Dispose of Leaves the Bay-Friendly Way</a> | 2,529        | <a href="#">How To's and Tips: At School</a>      | 1,109        |
| <a href="#">How to Build a Rain Barrel</a>                    | 1,272        | <a href="#">How To's and Tips: On the Water</a>   | 1,227        |

Table 8: Top and bottom 10 page views for the Take Action section.

The purpose of the “Take Action” section is to inform individuals who are hoping to get more involved in Bay restoration. While other content on our site is aimed at educating them about the Bay and issues facing its health, this section helps them to find watershed groups in their area, attend events, and find ways to help in their daily lives.

The “How To’s and Tips” page is by far the most popular of the subpages in this section, and provides public-friendly, shareable content that can be posted on our various social media platforms. This is also the content that is most regularly updated—while the “Events” and “Visit” have some useful information, a general lack of visitors has led to this content being updated less frequently, which in turn would lower user engagement even further. Either more effort should be put into keeping this content fresh, or the pages should be rethought altogether.

## Recommendations

Based on the above observations, the Communications Office has a variety of opportunities to improve its work moving forward:

- **Create an official content strategy for the blog.** The Communications Office operates with an unofficial, unwritten idea of what the content strategy for the Bay Blog is. However, the lack of a written, official content strategy can lead to strain when differing opinions arise about what content is and is not appropriate for the blog.
- **Continue to structure blog posts for a general audience.** While many of the blog posts produced by the Communications Office perform well, opportunity remains to adjust our efforts to reach a broader audience. Examples include adapting the way we tell stories about policy and scientific reports, as well as lowering readability scores when possible.
- **Create a style guide for voice, tone and graphics.** Much of the branding and style guidelines, while generally adhered to, are unwritten. A written style guide will allow for text and graphics to be coordinated across the partnership, whether it is the Communications Office or an outside organization who is creating the product.
- **Modernize the suite of newsletters.** CBP's three electronic newsletters have a small but dedicated following that open and engage with these email updates. By updating the newsletter templates to decrease the amount of text, add a modern feel, and incorporate the CBP brand, it may be possible to better engage current subscribers and broaden our overall audience.
- **Increase the amount of media-related activity.** Because of the Communication Office's small staff, it is often necessary for others to help us tell our stories. By increasing the amount of press releases and media activity we engage in, and by improving our personal relationships with members of the media, we can foster an avenue through which our messages can reach the broader public.
- **Create products outside of the web.** In recent years, CBP communications efforts have increasingly been focused on web-based products. However, by lacking a robust suite of print products, we risk alienating audiences who do not have access to the internet. Creating additional printed products may be an important part of connecting with previously underserved audiences.
- **Expand library of "stock" images.** It can be difficult to find high-quality images related to Chesapeake Bay science and restoration; shooting "stock" photos would help in providing relevant, Bay Program-produced images for stories that would otherwise use images from outside sources.
- **Maintain consistent, accurate and timely messages and graphics.** A baseline content inventory and audit will highlight web content that may be out-of-date or no longer relevant, and will also highlight gaps where content is inconsistent (e.g., Learn the Issues pages with no Bay 101 video, pages that lack visual content). Continually updated content will better engage our audience and highlight our key messages.