

# Pilot Communications Plan [DRAFT]

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## *Outreach Pilot Campaign for the Salt Management Strategy*

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### Purpose

The Education and Outreach Workgroup of the [Salt Management Strategy \(SaMS\)](#) is conducting this pilot outreach effort to:

- Establish a baseline of the current level of awareness of the issue (impacts from winter salt use) and existing motivation to take action.
- Test messages and materials developed by the Education and Outreach Workgroup to gauge the extent to which they resonate with general public and target audience.

### Background

- *What's the issue?*

While salts are used to keep us safe during winter storms, they have a number of harmful impacts. Increasing awareness as well as ways individuals can optimize their winter practices and encouraging them to take action will put Northern Virginia on the path towards minimizing these negative effects.

- *What's being done to address it?*

DEQ and a diverse set of stakeholders are developing SaMS with recommendations for improving winter practices that promote an efficient and effective use of salts. The strategy will also contain options for raising awareness of these impacts, ways individuals can make a difference, and recommendations for a monitoring and research program to advance the adaptive implementation of SaMS.

- *Who is leading the effort on communications for this pilot?*

The Education and Outreach Workgroup, a subcommittee of the SaMS Stakeholder Advisory Committee, has agreed to evaluate communication techniques and messages – the committee will conduct a survey, track distribution, and refine communication channels and outreach messages during the project pilot. Results of the pilot will be incorporated in the SaMS recommendations.

### Objectives and Measures of Success

- Conduct a social indicator survey to identify the current level of awareness of the issue and motivation to take action (goal: 100 completed surveys).
- Identify reactions to outreach messages and materials through feedback from:
  - Social media posts
    - Number of likes per post (goal: 50 or more)
    - Comments (goal: 67 percent positive sentiment)
    - Number of shares and retweets (goal: 25 or more shares/retweets of the posts from an organization).

- Response to social indicator survey questions on draft messages and materials (goal: 51 percent positive sentiment).
- Increase in the number of hits on SaMS website after outreach effort is implemented (goal: 20 percent increase).
- Information learned from this pilot project will:
  - Refine outreach messages and materials to improve reception by the intended audience.
  - Develop a baseline against which the effectiveness of education and outreach efforts to increase awareness and promote positive behavior changes are measured during implementation of SaMS.

### Key Messages:

- Overarching SaMS message:
- Awareness message:

“What is SaMS” message: While salts are used to keep us safe during winter storms, they also have a number of harmful impacts. To address these impacts without compromising public safety, the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality and a diverse set of stakeholders are developing a Salt Management Strategy (SaMS). SaMS will contain recommendations for optimizing winter practices that promote more efficient and effective use of salts without comprising public safety. The strategy will contain options for raising awareness of these impacts, ways individuals can make a difference as well as recommendations for a monitoring and research program to better inform the adaptive implementation of SaMS. For more information, visit: <https://www.deq.virginia.gov/SaMS.aspx>.

- Where to go for more info?
  - <https://www.deq.virginia.gov/SaMS.aspx>.

### Key Audiences

- Residents and businesses within Accotink Creek chloride TMDL project area, with focus on the Long Branch watershed.
- General public of Northern Virginia – more specifically, commuters, homeowners, business owners, winter storm professionals and educators.

### Communication/Distribution Channels:

- Webpage and/or social media outlets:
  - SaMS webpage
  - DEQ homepage
  - DEQ social media (Facebook and Twitter)
  - Encourage Education and Outreach Workgroup members to share information on their organizations’ websites/social media outlets and/or encourage other organizations they work with or have connections to share the information. The information shared will include a link to DEQ’s webpage. To date, the following specific organizations have been

identified and are listed based upon prior coordination indicating their acceptance, with exceptions noted where coordination is underway::

- Long Branch Civic Association, <https://lbcava.weebly.com/> (pending coordination)
  - Friends of Long Branch Stream Valley (pending coordination)
  - Fairfax Federation of Citizens Associations (pending coordination)
  - Northern Virginia Trout Unlimited Chapter
  - McLean Citizens Association
  - McLean Chamber of Commerce
  - Fairfax County District Supervisors' webpages (pending coordination with Fairfax's OPA)
- Email and newsletter distribution.
    - SaMS newsletter
    - DEQ RSS Feed (or similar tool through Communications Division).
    - Encourage Education and Outreach Workgroup members to coordinate with their organizations and networks for inclusion of SaMS information in the organization's scheduled distribution and/or encourage other organizations they work with or have connections to share the information.
  - Distribution of hardcopy materials (posters, flyers, brochures, possibly also as an ad in water bills).
    - Consider sending flyers and brochures to homeowners within the Long Branch watershed of the Accotink Creek chloride TMDL project.
    - Review suitable locations and post materials (posters and flyers) and make available for distribution (flyers and brochures) at the following within the Accotink Creek TMDL project area (with a focus on the Long Branch watershed):
      - Businesses
      - Community centers and Libraries
      - Parks
      - Schools/PTAs
      - Homeowner Association Offices.
    - Encourage materials be made available for distribution at offices of Education and Outreach Workgroup members and/or other organizations they work with or have connections to (for example, distribution at an organization's meeting, such as those of the McLean Citizens Association).
  - Listening Session: An informal event to provide opportunity for those in the community to talk with DEQ SaMS team (and workgroup members who chose to participate) about the SaMS and their thoughts and opinions on the outreach materials and messages drafted. Venue will be selected within the Long Branch watershed at either a school or library.

### Frequency of Communications:

Outreach efforts are recommended, per organization, to proceed at the following frequency for each method of distribution:

- Webpage and/or social media outlets: 1- 2x per month
- Email/newsletter distribution: 1x per month to 1x total
- Distribution of hardcopy materials: 1x total
- Listening session: 1 session (aim to hold early during the pilot period)

## Timeframe

Two months: March – April 2019

Initiate the effort in early March and end in late April 2019. The effort may be initiated sooner, mid-February, if the materials and messages are ready for distribution at that earlier date. The survey that accompanies this effort will be available during that timeframe and close on April 30, 2019. The timeframe was selected to overlap with the last half of the winter season, when the topic of winter storms is the most prevalent in the minds of the targeted audience. Additionally, the information can be used to refine and inform recommendations for inclusion into the final SaMS. Information on DEQ's website (and possibly Education and Outreach Workgroup members' networks) may remain after the end of this timeframe; however, new messages will not be generated.

## Resources

The communications plan for this pilot will be implemented by DEQ in the form of posting to the DEQ website, posting on DEQ's social media accounts (Facebook and Twitter) and sharing information when opportunities arise. It will also be implemented voluntarily by those members of the SaMS Education and Outreach Workgroup through their own communications networks or those of organizations they are in connection with. Opportunity to assist with implementing this plan will also be extended to the larger SaMS Stakeholder Advisory Committee.

## Obstacles and/or Emergencies Encountered

Potential obstacles that may arise and proposed solution to address it are:

- Broken links to webpage, survey or typographical errors are identified in materials.
  - Inform the DEQ contact, who will either correct the error or coordinate with the person who has access to correct the error.
- Misunderstanding and/or negative response to message.
  - Inform the DEQ contact, who will coordinate with fellow DEQ staff on whether a response is needed and, if so, coordinating the response. Depending on how the issue was raised, coordination may include the workgroup or SAC member(s).

## Contacts

DEQ Contact:

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Education and Outreach Workgroup Member Contact: (TBD based upon 2<sup>nd</sup> WG meeting discussions)