

Summary and Outcomes of SaMS Pilot Outreach Campaign

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Summary of Findings:

Pilot Outreach Campaign Results:

The pilot outreach campaign conducted in November and December of 2019 reached an audience of almost 21,000 people. It was an overall success, since many of the objective performance metrics were met.

The results from the message testing portion of the pilot campaign were:

- The SaMS pilot campaign was a success with regard to SaMS webpage views, with a traffic increase of 450%-780% over the extent of the pilot campaign.
- Twelve individuals signed up for the SaMS newsletter as a result of this portion of the pilot campaign.
- Social Media:
 - 100% of the comments were positive or neutral.
 - Throughout the campaign, social media posts had an average like rate (likes as a % of the audience) of 0.99%, which was slightly below the goal of >1%. However, the second step of the message testing portion of the campaign met objectives, receiving an average like rate of 1.37%, indicating that audiences prefer information on the topic rather than announcements.
 - Throughout the campaign, the average share/retweet rate (shares/retweets as a % of the audience) was 0.16%, which is well below the goal of >0.5%.
 - The hashtag #WinterSaltSmart gained traction on social media after the campaign ended.
 - When organizations used their own language (i.e., not the language developed by the SaMS Education and Outreach workgroup), the posts performed better.
 - Social media posts with infographics tended to have the most successful engagement with the audience.
- Emails and newsletters can be successful engagement methods since there was evidence that those lead to increased webpage traffic.

The results from the community listening session portion of the pilot campaign were:

- Twelve members of the SaMS Education and Outreach workgroup and thirteen members of the public attended the meeting.
- The informal cafeteria portion of the meeting facilitated a lot of discussion between attendees and the seven organizations from the SaMS Education and Outreach workgroup members. This format consisted of each organization having a table set up around the room.
- Eight meeting attendees signed up for the SaMS newsletter.
- Most attendees found out about the event from an organization, all of which appear to focus on environmental topics.
- The group discussions were informative and provided recommendations pertaining to:
 - Ways to get the message out
 - Ways to tailor the message (by interest)
 - What information to share
 - SaMS hashtags
 - Message tone (positive, balanced, etc.)
 - Concerns about the outreach effort

Recommendations for SaMS Education and Outreach Messages, Materials and Outreach Methods:

The recommendations below come from both the message testing and the community listening session portions of the pilot outreach campaign.

Messages:

1. Messages should highlight recommended elements and not be prescriptive.
2. The hashtag #LearnAboutSalt was not very popular.

3. Using a positive tone in messages was supported, but when “bad news” has to be shared, it should be presented directly and not dramatized. When sharing bad news, give actionable items of what you can do.
4. Messages could be more successful if focused on drinking water impacts.
 - a. *Note, the results of the SaMS awareness survey indicate that the general public knows the least about these impacts.*
5. Messages should include information on things individuals can do, like salting tips/ideas for alternative deicers around their homes.
 - a. *Note, the results of the SaMS awareness survey suggest that the majority of the population is willing to reduce their own salt use, knowing that there are negative impacts from salts on drinking water and the environment.*

Materials:

1. Infographics performed better than other outreach materials
2. Photos alone did not improve engagement
3. Engagement went up when the logo was used, indicating awareness of the SaMS brand

Outreach Methods:

1. Social media is a very efficient outreach method. This may be particularly valuable when raising awareness on this topic. Note, this pilot campaign did not test any messages related to behavior change.
2. Emails and newsletters can be successful methods for outreach, but may be dependent on the organization and the contact list.
3. For community listening sessions and related efforts, depending on the goal for the specific outreach event, the organizer may want to target communities that are not already involved and interested in this topic if the goal is to expand the general awareness of the topic and learn from new audiences.

Pilot Campaign Purpose and Design:

At the first meeting of the SaMS Education and Outreach workgroup, the workgroup identified the need for a pilot outreach campaign that would test the messages and materials developed by the workgroup to gauge the extent to which they resonate with the general public. The workgroup expected the outcomes of this pilot campaign would inform the final recommendations and resources developed by this workgroup prior to finalizing them in the SaMS toolkit. The workgroup designed the pilot outreach campaign over a series of meetings and ultimately agreed to implement it in November and December 2019.

The pilot outreach campaign had two portions: 1) Digital message testing; 2) An in-person community listening session to discuss and receive feedback. The workgroup designed the message testing portion to be implemented through electronic media (e.g., social media, newsletters, email) by the participating SaMS Education and Outreach workgroup organizations over two weeks – November 18-24 (“Step 1”) and December 9-15 (“Step 2”). Alternatively, the workgroup designed the community listening session to be a one-time, in-person event held at the Kings Park Library in Burke, Virginia, on December 2, 2019.

Message Testing:

Background:

The message testing portion of the outreach pilot was intended to test messages, materials, and methods for disseminating those messages and materials. All outreach methods were electronic, and included newsletters, emails, and social media posts. Organizations in the SaMS Education and Outreach workgroup were invited to participate in this portion of the pilot by disseminating messages and materials through their electronic media.

There were two “steps” to the message testing portion of the pilot, which were simply called “Step 1” and “Step 2.” Organizations were asked to send out one social media post and/or newsletter/email with messages and materials pertaining to Step 1 during the week of November 18-24, 2019. For Step 2, organizations were asked to send out one

social media post with messages and materials pertaining to Step 2 during the week of December 9-15, 2019. Initially the plan intended to have all organizations disseminate messages on the same day. However, because each group has a different audience with different peak times, the decision was made to provide flexibility and give organizations a week to disseminate the messages and materials. Details on each of the steps are provided below:

“Step 1” of the message testing was an announcement. It introduced “What is SaMS,” identified the stakeholders involved, and encouraged the audience to sign up for the SaMS newsletter. Organizations also were encouraged to provide their perspective on why they are participating in SaMS. Step 1 also introduced the SaMS hashtags, which include #WinterSaltSmart as the primary hashtag and #LearnAboutSalt as the secondary hashtag. These two hashtags were developed by the SaMS Education and Outreach workgroup to provide context and introduce the tagline for SaMS, “Winter Salt Smart.” Below is an example of the proposed language for Step 1:

“Winter salt use provides many benefits, but also has serious negative impacts. That’s why DEQ and a group of stakeholders are taking part in SaMS, a Salt Management Strategy working to balance responsible environmental stewardship with safety in Northern Virginia. To learn more and signup for further information, click here: <https://www.deq.virginia.gov/SaMS.aspx> #WinterSaltSmart #LearnAboutSalt”

“Step 2” of the message testing shared messages and content to raise public awareness on the topic of salt use benefits and impacts. Emails and newsletters were not supposed to be a part of this step since the SaMS Awareness Newsletter would be distributed during this step to those on the SaMS contact distribution list, including those contacts who signed-up for the newsletter during Step 1. Therefore, Step 2 consisted of a single social media post from participating organizations and the distribution of the SaMS Awareness Newsletter. Initially the social media posts were supposed to include a brief statement to entice the audience to click on a link to a 1-page flyer to learn more about the benefits and impacts of salts. However, learning that click-through rates are typically low, an infographic that summarized the content of that 1-page flyer was prepared, and groups were given the option to share the infographic or a link to the 1-page flyer. Below is an example of the Step 2 proposed language with the link to the 1-page flyer:

“#WinterSaltSmart #LearnAboutSalt Learn more about salt use in Northern Virginia at: https://www.deq.virginia.gov/Portals/0/DEQ/Water/TMDL/SaMS/SaMS_1pg_flyer_201910.pdf”

Participation and Audience Reached:

Of the 23 organizations in the SaMS Education and Outreach workgroup, 10 participated. Overall, there were 35 total **digital communications**, which are being defined here as any single electronic distribution of content. Digital communications include social media posts, items in an email or newsletter and entire newsletters or emails. These 35 digital communications occurred during the period that spanned November 18 through December 16. This included some digital communications that were distributed in between the week designated for Step 1 and the week designated for Step 2. Of the 35 digital communications, 6 were newsletters/emails and 29 were posts on social media. Collectively, the digital communications reached an audience of almost 21,000 people. See **Table 1** for a detailed breakdown of the digital communications, the audiences they reached, whether or not the organization used the proposed language for Step 1 and/or Step 2, and for social media posts, what type of visuals were used. Information on the language used and the visuals used will be discussed later as this seemed to influence the success of the digital communications. **Figure 1** displays the audiences reached over time with each digital communication and as a cumulative total.

Table 1. Pilot campaign message testing summary of digital communications.

	Entire Effort			Step 1		Step 2	
Organizations Participating	10			9		7	
	Total	Social Media	Email or Newsletter	Social Media	Email or Newsletter	Social Media	Awareness Newsletter
Audience Engaged	20,948 ^a	19,368	1,580 ^a	12,285	1,480	7,083	100
Number of Digital Communications	35 ^a	29	6 ^a	18	5	11	1
Digital Communication Used Provided Language	21 ^a	16	5 ^a	12	4	4	1
Digital Communication Used Their Own Language	14	13	1	6	1	7	n/a ^b
Digital Communication Included a Picture	3	3	n/a ^c	2	n/a ^c	1	n/a ^c
Digital Communication Included the SaMS Logo	10	10	n/a ^c	10	n/a ^c	0	n/a ^c
Digital Communication Included a Picture and the SaMS Logo	3	3	n/a ^c	3	n/a ^c	0	n/a ^c
Digital Communication Included an Infographic	9	9	n/a ^c	0	n/a ^c	9	n/a ^c
Digital Communication Did Not Use Any Visual	4	4	n/a ^c	3	n/a ^c	1	n/a ^c

^aIncludes Awareness Newsletter

^bThe Awareness Newsletter was prepared using language the workgroup developed

^cInformation on use of visuals was only available for social media posts

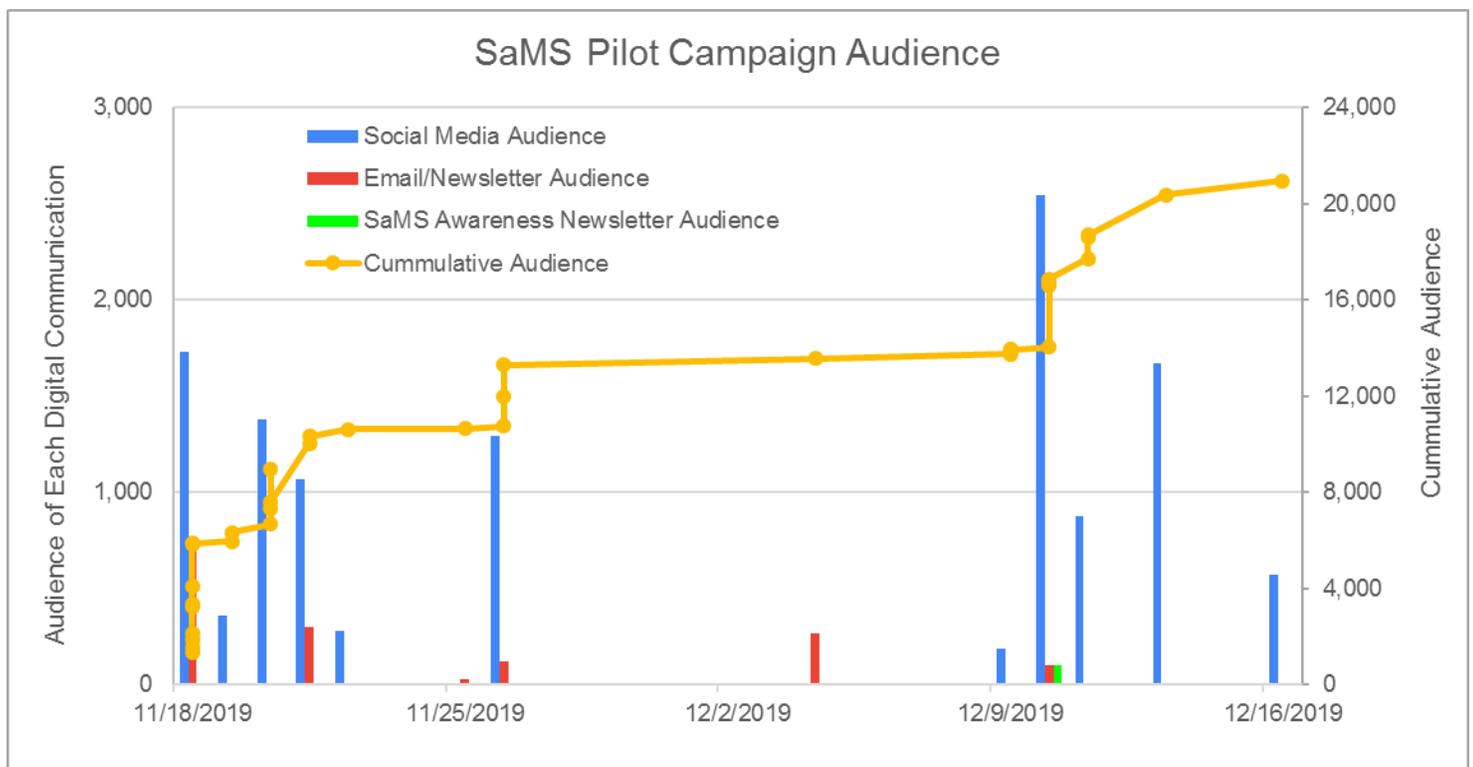


Figure 1. Audience reached by SaMS Pilot Campaign.

Performance Metrics

The SaMS Education and Outreach workgroup identified a number of objective measures of success in the pilot outreach campaign prior to its launch. The purpose of these measures was to evaluate the performance of the messages, materials and outreach methods. Social media generated the most detailed statistics; however, newsletters and emails also provided valuable information. Evaluation metrics are discussed in further detail below.

Evaluating the Campaign Elements

Social Media

Social media posts were evaluated by sentiment and engagement (number of comments, likes, shares and retweets). Positive performances were determined if a <50% negative sentiment rate, >1% of likes and >0.5% of shares and retweets were achieved. For detailed statistics, see **Table 2**.

Sentiment: From November 18, 2020 to January 9, 2020, there were 45 mentions of SaMS and the hashtag #WinterSaltSmart on social media (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) as well as various online news outlets. The average sentiment of the mentions was 89% positive, 7% negative and 4% neutral. The sentiment was calculated using Falcon.io, an online social media marketing platform, and a manual quality assurance review.

Comments: There were 12 total comments on the 29 social media posts, **none of which were negative**. All 12 comments were either **positive** or **neutral**.

Likes: For the entire pilot period, the average like rate was 0.99% based on the total social media audience (19,368) and the total number of likes (192), which **falls below the goal of >1%**.

However, certain individual posts demonstrated high performance rates, giving insight that will help generate increased engagement in the future. As such, the following should be noted:

- Organizations that used their own captions had an average like rate of 1.20%, with 7 of these 13 posts having like rates >1%.
- Posts that used boilerplate language had an average like rate of 0.85%, with only 8 of these 16 posts having like rates >1%.
- **Step 2 had an average like rate of 1.37%** in contrast to Step 1, which had an average like rate of 0.77%. This suggests that information on the topic connected more with the audience than the announcement in Step 1.
- The infographic in Step 2 also seemed to resonate with followers, receiving an average like rate of 1.57%, with 8 of the 9 posts with infographics having like rates >1%.

Share/Retweet Rate: For the entire pilot, the average percent of the audience that shared or retweeted posts **was under half of our goal**.

- Only six of the 29 posts did exceed the goal of a share/retweet rate >0.5%.
- There did not seem to be an impact on the share/retweet rate by the choice of language (i.e., using the provided language or using original captions).
- Step 1 had the lowest average share/retweet rate at 0.12%. Interestingly, including a logo in the post did relate to higher share/retweet rates (0.21%), but posts that included a picture (e.g., French fries with salt, a salt pile, or a winter scene), even with a logo had 0% share/retweet rates.
- Step 2 had higher share/retweet rates, with an average of 0.23%.
- Posts with infographics had higher average share/retweet rates (0.24%).
- Posts without visuals (including posts from Step 1 and Step 2) had an average share/retweet rate of 0.23%.

Table 2. Social Media Metrics Summary

	Entire Effort	Step 1	Step 2	Impact of Language		Impact of Visuals			
				Used Provided Language	Used Their Own Language	Used a Picture ²	Used the Logo	Used an Infographic ³	Did Not Use a Visual
Number of Social Media Posts	29	18	11	16	13	6	10	9	4
Total Audience	19,368	12,285	7,083	11,733	7,635	4,712	8,168	5,404	1,084
Number of Comments	12	7	5	10	2	1	6	5	0
Number of Negative Comments	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
% of Comments Positive or Neutral ¹	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Number of Likes	192	95	97	100	92	40	55	85	12
Number of Posts Above 1% Likes	15, or 52%	6, or 33%	9, or 82%	8, or 50%	7, or 54%	2, or 33%	3, or 30%	8, or 89%	2, or 50%
Average % Likes	0.99%	0.77%	1.37%	0.85%	1.20%	0.85%	0.67%	1.57%	1.11%
Number of Shares/Retweets	31	15	16	20	11	0	17	13	1
Number of Posts Above 0.5% Share/Retweet	6, or 21%	3, or 17%	3, or 27%	2, or 13%	4, or 31%	0, or 0%	3, or 30%	2, or 22%	1, or 25%
Average % Shares/Retweets	0.16%	0.12%	0.23%	0.17%	0.14%	0.00%	0.21%	0.24%	0.23%
# of posts where average audience reached is known						3	2	3	0
Average % of average audience reached (where known)						71%	161%	204%	n/a
Average Audience % of Followers						11%	29%	23%	37%

¹Metric of success is >50% positive comments. Only one comment was positive, the rest were neutral.

²Includes 3 posts that had a picture and the logo.

³All but 1 of the posts had the same infographic. The unique infographic had the same content.

Social Media Traction:

The use of the SaMS hashtag #WinterSaltSmart was tracked using Falcon.io, an online social media marketing platform. The analysis did not include the secondary SaMS hashtag #LearnAboutSalt in order to streamline the algorithm. From November 18, 2019, through January 9, 2020, there were 36 mentions tracked by the software on social media (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter). **Figure 2** shows the number of mentions over that period. Since there was no objective measure of success for social media traction, the most effective approach was to look at the mentions over time. **While SaMS pilot outreach posts contributed to the mentions, it is clear that traction did occur following the pilot campaign, which can be considered a success.** However, this conclusion should be cautioned since a twitter hashtag search conducted on January 28, 2020, showed usage of this hashtag in parts of Pennsylvania. Whether or not this pilot outreach campaign contributed to its use in Pennsylvania is not known. However, since the goal was to gain traction in Northern Virginia, posts in Pennsylvania do not speak to that goal.

Falcon.io also determines the sentiment of the hashtag use. Based on that assessment, the platform determined the hashtag use to be overwhelmingly positive.

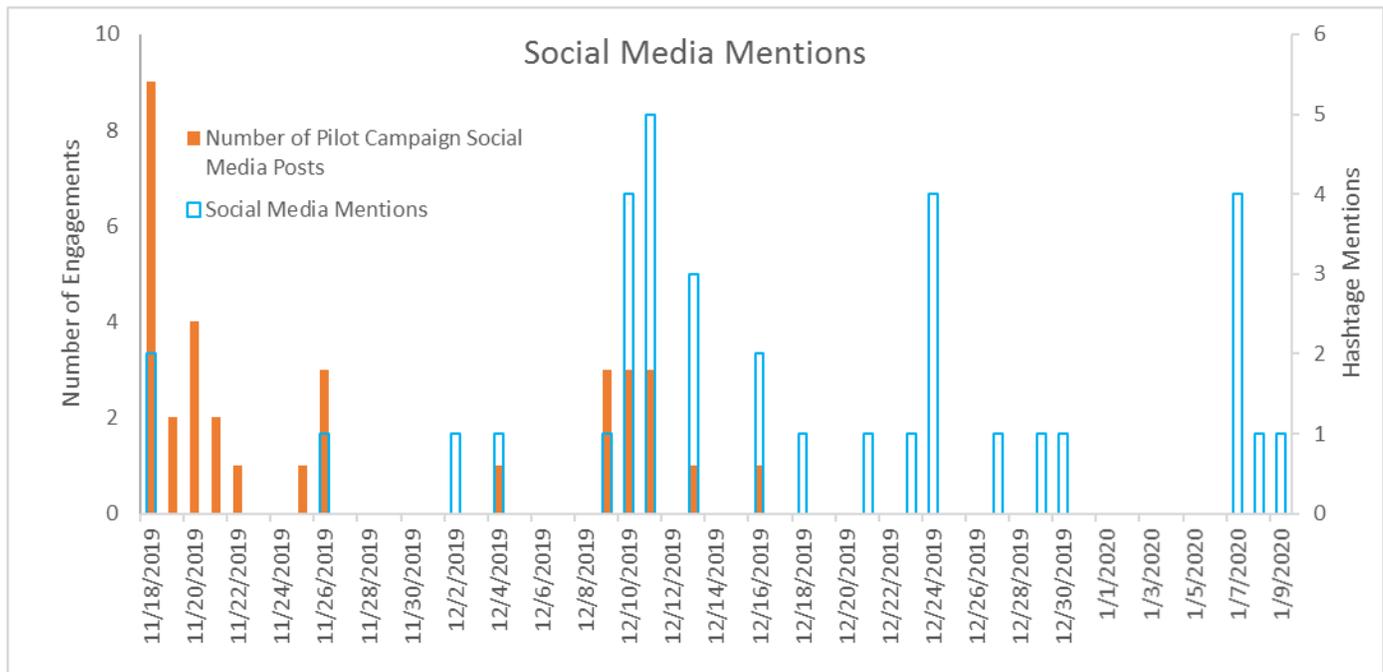


Figure 2. Mentions that include mentions with the hashtag #WinterSaltSmart over time and compared to the number of SaMS pilot outreach campaign posts.

Email and Newsletter Distributions:

There were no objective measures of success for emails and newsletter distributions determined in the pilot outreach campaign. Furthermore, success is difficult to measure for these forms of communication since many of the communications were not solely focused on SaMS. Instead, many included a small snippet of information about SaMS in them. Nonetheless, these methods of communication did allow for the audience to be estimated. The total audience engaged through emails and newsletters was 1,580 individuals, which includes 100 from the SaMS Awareness Newsletter (more in the [section below](#)). For newsletters, where the information was available, the open rate ranged from 20% to 114% of the average open rate. However, since the content is not viewable prior to opening, this metric is not very useful for determining success.

With the audience known, the success of emails and newsletters can be evaluated in terms of their impact on page views from links included in them. All of the emails or newsletters included a link to the SaMS webpage. However, this is a difficult evaluation to make since emails and newsletters last longer in inboxes when compared to social media posts. So the impact on page views may be distributed over time following the delivery of the email or newsletter. Complicating things further, it is difficult to tease out the impact of any specific digital communication on page views

since they were all distributed around the same time. Nonetheless, there were two instances where 100% of the daily audience engaged was from an email or newsletter. **Figure 3** shows there were large jumps in page views around these two instances, especially when the following days were included in the analysis. Therefore, it is possible that emails and newsletters have the potential to be successful outreach methods.

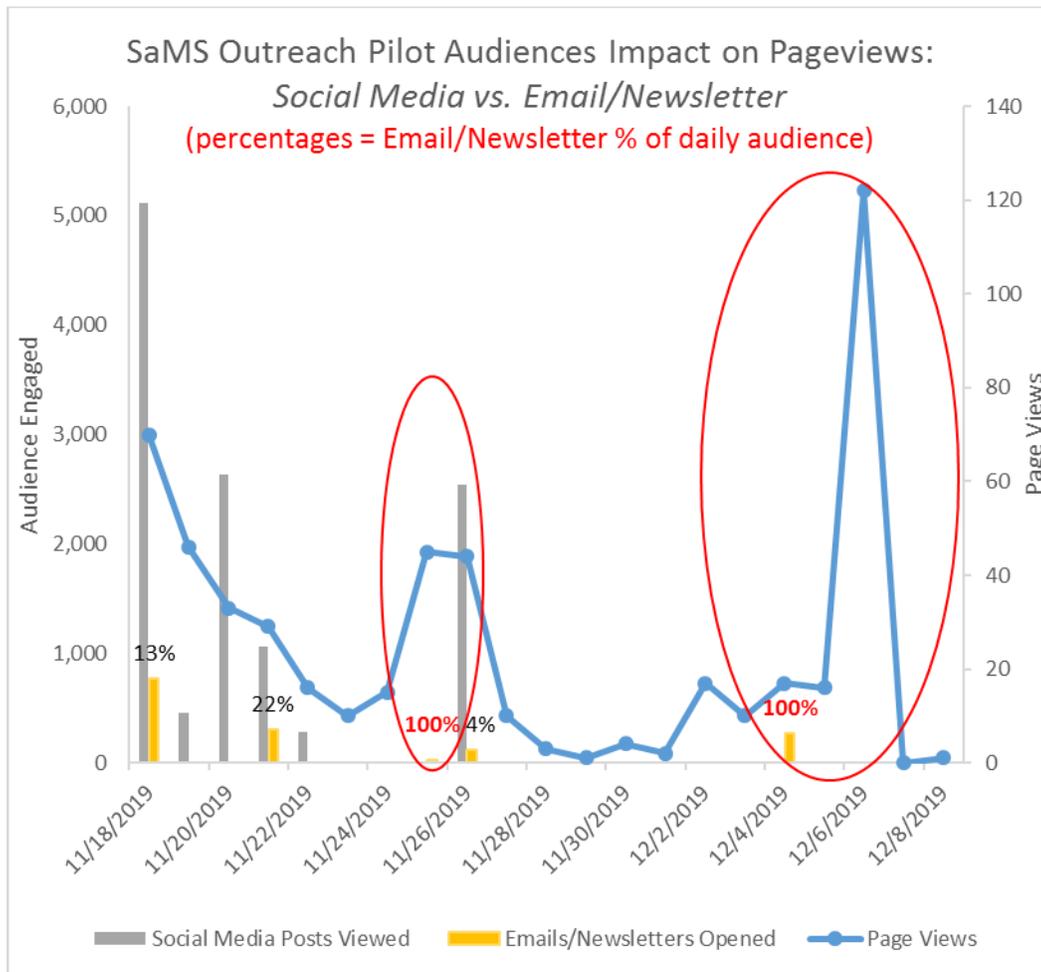


Figure 3. Two examples of the impact of newsletters and emails on pageviews.

SaMS Webpage:

During the pilot outreach campaign period (November 18 through December 16, 2019), there were 684 page views, with 643 of those being unique. **Figure 4** shows how much higher the average daily page views were during the pilot period compared to two different baseline periods. The SaMS pilot outreach campaign set the objective measure of success for webpage views as an increase >20%. **This goal was greatly surpassed as the increase in the number of page views was between 450-780%.** Furthermore, during the pilot outreach campaign period, the average time a user spent on the page was about 3.5 minutes, which indicates views where viewers read and engaged with the content. Additionally, 12 (1.87%) of the 643 individuals who visited the webpage signed up for the SaMS newsletter. The impact of digital communications on page views and newsletter sign-ups can be seen in **Figure 5**. It is also worth noting that 329 of the 684 page views linked to the webpage from social media posts on Facebook.

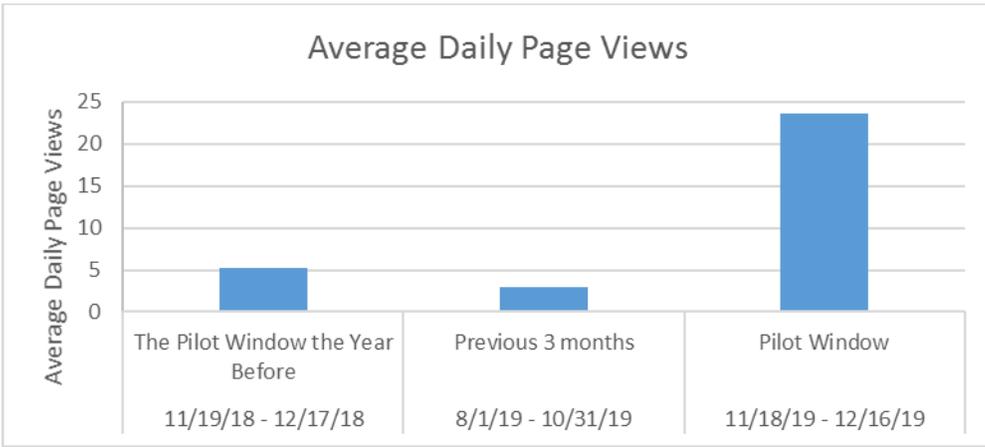


Figure 4. Average daily webpage views for two baseline periods compared to the pilot window.

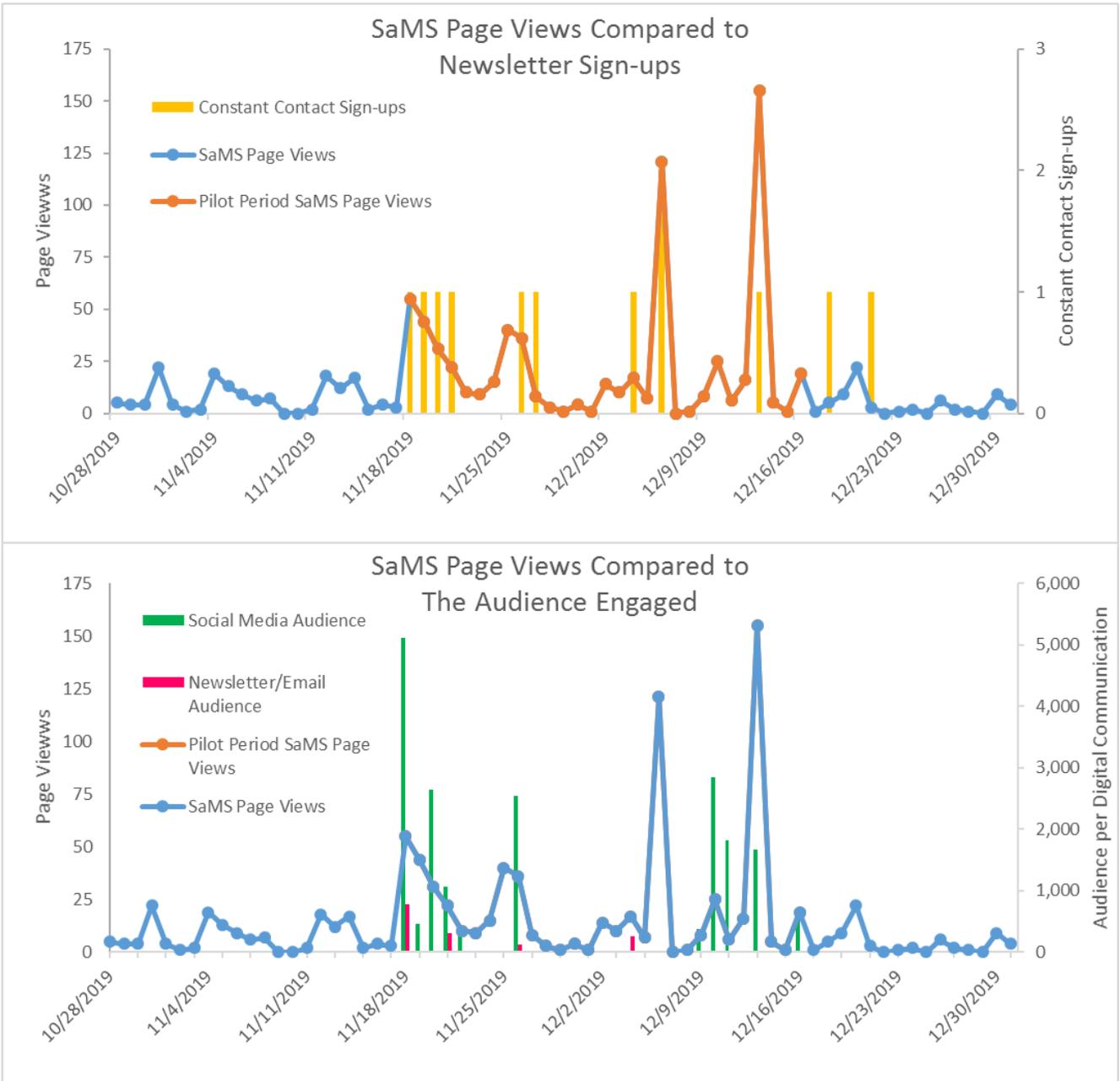


Figure 5. SaMS webpage views compared to newsletter sign-ups and the audience of each digital communication.

SaMS Awareness 1-page Flyer:

As part of Step 2, a 1-page flyer was prepared that outlined the benefits and impacts of salt use. The number of page views for this flyer were supposed to be tracked through a link shortener. However, this detail was overlooked when preparing outreach materials and therefore was not available for all organizations to use. Nonetheless, one organization did use a link shortener, which recorded only 3 clicks from an audience of 1,713 individuals. **Based on that one organization, the click through rate of 0.18% was well below our goal of 20%.** Because this is based on one organization's audience, it is difficult to draw any certain conclusions from this. Additionally, it is worth noting that the infographic was inspired by the idea that click through rates are known to be low. Therefore, it may be that organizations already know their click through rates, and can determine whether or not a linked flyer like this would be successful. Organizations should evaluate their own data to draw this conclusion.

SaMS Awareness Newsletter:

The SaMS awareness newsletter contained the same content as the 1-page flyer, and was sent to the SaMS newsletter contact list. This contact list was first assembled in 2018, and has been growing throughout the development of SaMS. During the pilot campaign (Step 1), this list grew by 12 individuals, and after the Listening Session (more in the [section below](#)), 8 additional individuals signed-up. On December 10, 2019, the SaMS awareness newsletter was distributed to the 210 contacts on the list. There were 190 successful deliveries, and of that 100 individuals opened the newsletter. This results in an open rate of 56.2%, which is slightly below the average open rate of other SaMS newsletters (~60%). There was a click rate of 18% meaning 18 of the 100 individuals clicked on the various links in the newsletter. The most popular link was to the SaMS webpage (18 times) followed by the link to the list of SaMS organizations (5 times). One individual clicked on the link to the survey in the newsletter (see the [next section below](#)). **Since there was no objective measure of success related to this distribution, it is hard to evaluate this tool's success. Nonetheless, an open rate of 56.2% is relatively high, and it bears mention that 100% of the 20 individuals who signed up for the newsletter during the pilot campaign opened the newsletter.**

Survey Attached to Awareness Newsletter and 1-page Flyer:

A survey to collect feedback on the pilot outreach campaign was included in the 1-page flyer and the SaMS awareness newsletter. While it is known that the survey was clicked on once in the awareness newsletter, there were never any responses contributed. While this seemed like a good option for feedback, it may not be worth the effort to include in future outreach efforts. **Since there was no objective measure of success related to this survey, it is difficult to evaluate its success. However, since there was no participation, it is not considered to be a successful tool.**

Community Listening Session:

Background:

The purpose of the community listening session was to hear directly from the public in-person. Since the outreach materials and messages were being developed to engage the general public, the SaMS Education and Outreach workgroup agreed that it is important to hear directly from the public in-person, both in terms of their interest and awareness on the topic and their impressions of our outreach materials and messages. To implement this community listening session, members of the SaMS Education and Outreach workgroup in partnership with the Friends of the Long Branch Stream Valley worked to develop and advertise the community listening session. Originally, when the community listening session was first envisioned in the spring of 2019, a robust advertising plan was developed, which included 1) coordination with civic associations, 2) posting flyers in places of worship, parks, and other public spaces, and 3) mailers to be delivered to all of the households in the Long Branch (central) watershed. One of the primary reasons for this level of effort was the goal to engage with a population that represents the general public. Unfortunately, when the pilot was put on hold, these partnerships and opportunities were no longer available for the December community listening session. Regardless, advertisements were made through SaMS Education and Outreach workgroup members' outreach channels (e.g., social media), in addition to civic associations' social media accounts, other public community events, and through a public notice.

The community listening session was split into two portions. The first portion was a cafeteria style meeting, where various members from the SaMS Education and Outreach workgroup set up tables around the room. These tables included information related to each organization, SaMS, and in some cases information on the organization’s participation in SaMS. This portion of the meeting was intended to be informal, allowing the attendees to participate at their own comfort level. Following the cafeteria portion, the attendees assembled into a big group for a large group discussion. This portion began with a brief presentation that covered the basics on what SaMS is and what kind of feedback was sought from this listening session. After the background presentation and some time for questions, the group split up into two smaller discussion groups to learn directly from the meeting attendees. Meeting attendees received surveys when they arrived and again after the end of the group discussion to evaluate any change in the attendees’ perspective. The surveys asked 1) how attendees found out about the community listening session, 2) why they attended the event, 3) how important winter salt use is to them, 4) how important the benefits of winter salt use are to them, and 5) how important the impacts of winter salt use are to them. Questions 3-5 were ranking questions based on a scale of 1-5, and these three questions were repeated in the second survey.

In the sections below, the community listening session and its outcomes will be discussed in further detail.

Attendance:

The meeting attendance consisted of 12 members of the SaMS Education and Outreach workgroup attending and 13 members of the public. Prior to the meeting, there was a concern that meeting attendees may be overwhelmed if outnumbered by the SaMS Education and Outreach workgroup members, but this turned out to be a nonissue for this event. As was mentioned previously, 8 meeting attendees signed up for the SaMS newsletter using the sign-in sheet.

Survey Results:

Ten attendees completed surveys, with only 6 filling out both surveys. While this is a small sample size, there were some conclusions that could be drawn from the information (**Table 3**). For example, most attendees found out about the event from an organization, all of which appear to focus on environmental topics. This is additionally evident in the reasons for attending, since 40% of the respondents indicated that their reason for attending was related to environmental concerns.

Table 3. Summary of responses to survey questions 1 and 2.

Questions	Major Responses		
1. How did you find out about tonight's event?	From an Organization	Social Media	A friend/neighbor
Question #1 details	Friends of Accotink Creek, Soil and Water Conservation District, A watershed group	Facebook	
Question #1 Category count	5	2	2
2. What was your reason for attending tonight?	To better understand	Environmental	To stay informed (already aware)
Question #2 details	The strategy, the topic, to educate	Concern for stream health, severity of salt loading	
Question #2 Category count	5	4	1

Importance Rankings:

Attendees were surveyed to see how important they considered the benefits and impacts of winter salt use both before and after they attended the meeting. The goal of gathering this information was to see if existing outreach

materials/exposure to the topic would sway opinions, and to assess the perspectives of the attendees. Since the sample size was so low, there are not many conclusions that can be drawn from this information. Nonetheless, the information is summarized below since it may serve as a good template for future endeavors.

Figure 6 represents the averages of the responses. Since there was too much variability in the responses, changes in responses from the beginning to the end of the meeting cannot be evaluated. On average, winter salt use was seen as somewhat important, salt use benefits were valued the least and salt use impacts were valued the most.

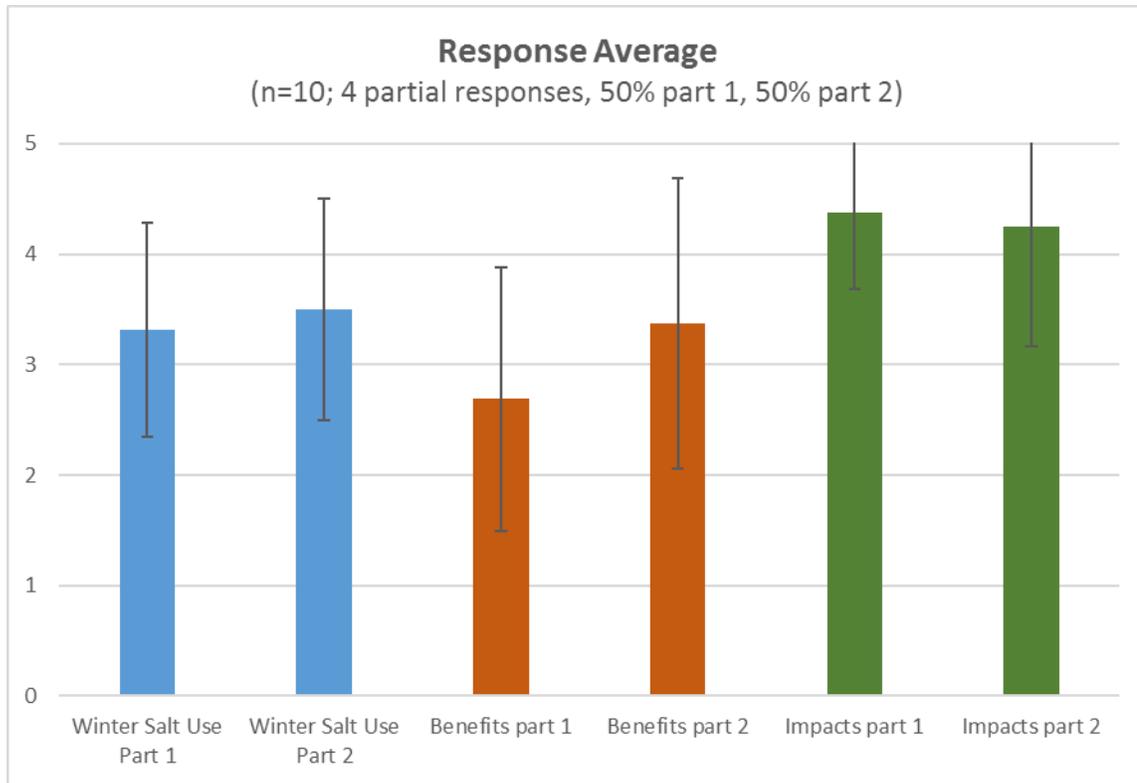


Figure 6. Average of survey response questions for the three importance ranking questions. Part 1 was administered before the meeting and part 2 was administered after the meeting.

Figure 7 displays the individual responses to the importance ranking questions. Of the 6 respondents who completed both surveys, most responses did not change from the beginning of the meeting to the end. With only 6 respondents to analyze and each of them behaving in unique ways, there is little to conclude from this data. Nonetheless, winter salt use importance increased by 2 units in one respondent and decreased by 1 unit for another respondent. The importance of salt use benefits increased by 1 unit for 2 of the respondents and the importance of salt use impacts went down by 1 unit for one of the respondents.

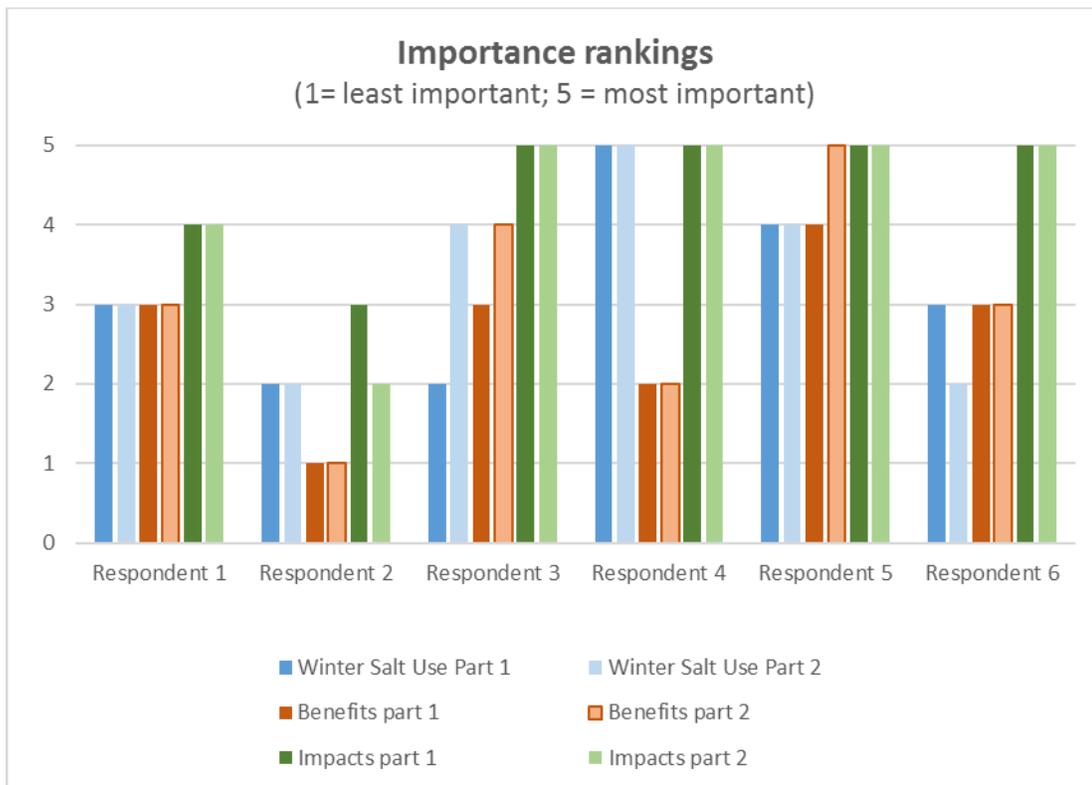


Figure 7. Individual importance rankings for the 6 survey respondents that filled out both surveys.

The Meeting:

Cafeteria Portion:

Seven organizations staffed tables set around the room for the cafeteria portion, which lasted 30 minutes. This portion of the event provided a nice buffer time for people to arrive. A few people left during this period because they did not intend to stay for discussion, and no one left during the discussion. That can be considered a benefit since they may not have attended if it was only going to be a discussion. Additionally, many attendees talked with different SaMS Education and Outreach workgroup members at their booths and around the room. Through this portion of the event, the group was able to gain an understanding of the project and the various partners prior to the next portion of the agenda.

Group Discussion:

Background Presentation:

The background presentation was supposed to be brief and prime the discussion. While it took the entire allotted time (20 minutes), a good level of discussion and questioning did occur.

Breakout Discussions:

The meeting participants broke into 2 groups of 8-10 people. Each small discussion group used the discussion questions as a guide. In many cases, the discussion carried on past the discussion questions, but with many good ideas shared.

The discussion questions included the following:

1. How can we best engage the broader community on this complicated topic?
2. What are you and your peers concerned about?
3. What would you like to know about this topic?
4. What do you think of the SaMS hashtags
5. What do you think about our outreach materials
6. What do you think about our approach to outreach of balancing benefits and impacts in communications and striking a positive tone?

The information discussed in the groups is organized below:

- Ways to get the message out:
 - Newsletters/Water Bills/Blogs/Webpages
 - Civic and homeowners associations and their newsletters
 - Nextdoor community pages
 - Police sometimes can do special announcements, maybe SaMS topics can be shared similarly.
 - Local newsletters
 - Local blogs
 - Water bill – short message tied to them (online or in print)
 - County supervisor newsletters
 - Can provide reminders seasonally and resources for how to do things
 - Social Media
 - Important to have pre-developed materials for social media, so that groups can share it widely
 - Video Media
 - Local weathermen – they have public trust
 - Virginia Public Access TV Channels
 - YouTube – including “how-to’s”
 - School communities
 - Student discussions with parents can change the behavioral norm
 - Science fair projects
 - High school environmental groups
 - Retailers selling salts
 - Have information where salt is sold
 - Balance impacts of salts with alternatives (maybe alternatives have a higher unit price that is attractive to retailers)
 - Environmental Groups/Forums
 - Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District Green Breakfast
 - Environmental groups (e.g., “Friends” groups, Lands & Waters, Master Naturalists)
- Ways to tailor the message (by interest)
 - General public - Drinking Water Concerns
 - Keep messages to drinking water concerns since most people may not care about aquatic life
 - Physicians (Sodium has a health advisory level)
 - Some physicians are focused on environmental issues.
 - Drinking water outreach to residents and Fairfax City Health Department
 - Pet impacts are also important to people.
 - “Make sure to sweep up your salt after the storm to help protect pets paws – you can also use it again next time!”
 - Vegetation impacts
 - Garden centers
 - VA Native Plant Society
 - Master Gardeners
 - Salt tolerant plants
 - Farmers Markets
 - Fishery impacts
 - Trout Unlimited
 - Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

- What information to share:
 - Inform them of levels of service to expect so they can plan accordingly.
 - People like to know what to do so share salting tips/ideas for alternative deicers around their homes.
 - People need to know what to do so that they can share in that discussion in their neighborhood. Most people just assume/don't know.
 - Use social media to inform the public of road maintenance challenges so that you can manage expectations and prepare/plan accordingly. It is important to highlight the purpose/intent of salting and the differences between transportation and property management applications.
 - Alternatives to salt
 - What about Beet Juice?
 - Water/aquatic impacts – consequences, stress drinking water/health concerns
- The SaMS hashtags
 - #LearnAboutSalt is too ambiguous
 - Favored #WinterSaltSmart, but general impression was not strong
- Message tone (positive, balanced, etc.)
 - Sometimes the negative needs to be stated to get attention, but it should not be dramatized and should be presented directly.
 - When sharing bad news, give actionable items of what you can do
- Concerns about the outreach effort
 - Need to engage commercial & institutional property managers
 - Chamber of commerce
 - Fairfax County “Committee of 100”
 - Leadership Fairfax
 - Non-English language constituencies – role of church communities

Lessons Learned:

Message Testing:

The lessons learned during the message testing portion of the pilot campaign, fall into three categories: 1) Coordinating a multi-organization outreach campaign, 2) Metrics for success, and 3) Outreach methods.

1) Coordinating a Multi-organization Outreach Campaign: When there are multiple organizations involved, there are multiple audiences and multiple communication strategies involved. This can be an asset. However, it presents a challenge when the campaign is prescriptive. Since organizations know how to best speak to their audiences, messages should highlight the points that need to be addressed and avoid prescribing specific language. The data on likes and shares/retweets tends to support this concept that messages are more successful when scripted to their audience. Coordinating these multi-organization campaigns are further complicated by the fact that the different audiences have different peak use times/days. A week-long interval seemed to balance the need for flexibility while also concentrating the campaign to a period of time. Even still, it seemed like there needs to be flexibility to post outside of the prescribed campaign windows since this happened during this pilot. Finally, this type of outreach campaign would benefit by improved coordination and quality assurance among the participating organizations. For instance, mishaps that occurred during the pilot, like the link shortener not being created and information being misunderstood (e.g., when/what to post, what information to record), may have been avoided. Planning ahead may help communications programs integrate campaigns like this into their communication plans and help avoid some of the challenges experienced in this pilot.

2) Metrics for Success: When designing this campaign, the SaMS Education and Outreach workgroup identified individual engagement metrics such as comments, likes, shares and retweets to evaluate the success of social media posts. However, these engagement metrics varied significantly between organizations and between Step 1 and Step 2 of

the campaign, suggesting overall that the campaign was not as successful as it actually was. Therefore, it is recommended that the overall engagement rate be used to measure success instead of the individual metrics. In other words, the comments, likes, shares and retweets should be summed for each social media post to determine the total number of engagements with the post. This value should be compared to the actual audience reached by each post to determine the engagement rate. This overall metric will allow for better comparison between different types of posts, and provide an overall measure of success that can be used to see how the engagement rate changes over time. Additionally, this is more in line with how social media performance is actually measured.

3) Outreach Methods: Social media seems to be a very inexpensive and successful outreach method. Since the goal for outreach efforts is to raise the level of awareness to promote behavior change, social media may prove to be very efficient and effective tool. It is important to note emails and newsletters are also viable outreach methods, although the success of email and newsletter communications may be influenced by the contact list or organization administering the email or newsletter. Beyond the method of communication, infographics tended to be popular and successful engagement materials. This may be because these share information people are interested in since pictures alone were not very successful. It may be worth considering the difference in engagement metrics between infographics or posts that share information on a topic versus infographics or posts that share information with actionable items (i.e., what you can do about it). The infographic was inspired by a discussion on click through rates. While click through rates (i.e., clicking on a link in a post and going to the hyperlinked page) are generally known to be low, organizations should consult their data to determine how successful links versus infographics may be for their audience. Lastly, since the survey attached to the flyer and awareness newsletter had no responses, it may not be worth the effort in future campaigns.

Community Listening Session:

The lessons learned in the community listening session can be grouped into two categories: 1) Advertising the session, and 2) Running the event.

1) Advertising the Community Listening Session: Since there was an opportunity to do more widespread outreach when the listening session was first planned, it would have been ideal to capitalize on that opportunity while it existed. Depending on the goal for the specific outreach event, the organizer may want to target communities that are not already involved and interested in this topic if the goal is to expand the general awareness of the topic and learn from new audiences. While the groups that are involved and interested should not be excluded, these groups tend to be comprised of persons already engaged and aware. Connecting with other groups not related to the topic will require more extensive outreach efforts.

Lessons Learned for Running the Community Listening Session: Since the discussion could have lasted longer, a 60 minute discussion is recommended over the 40 minutes used in this community listening session. In terms of the survey, identifying means that can encourage higher completion rates. During the pilot effort, there was a low survey completion rate; 3 of out of 13 participants did not complete a survey and less than half of the attendees filled out both surveys. Lastly, if attendance is expected to be low, it is probably not worth it to administer the surveys due to the large variation in results.