

## Integrated Communications: Engaging the community on water quality initiatives in Anne Arundel County - Emily Tuttle

Anne Arundel County prides itself on its high quality of life, which relies on the natural beauty and recreational benefits of the Chesapeake Bay. The County is navigating a challenging set of both regulatory and non-regulatory requirements to comply with the Clean Water Act and Maryland Chesapeake Bay TMDL goals. By taking an integrated planning approach, the County's Department of Public Works (DPW) demonstrated that it could achieve nutrient reductions through a combination of strategies, including septic conversions to public sewer, managed aquifer recharge, and minor wastewater system upgrades.

As a result, the County is implementing a strategic communications strategy to stimulate personal motivation and support for water quality infrastructure initiatives. The County's One Water approach was branded as "Our wAAter," (two AA's for Anne Arundel) and communicates the integrated management program as one cohesive strategy to protect waterways and the Chesapeake Bay while also improving groundwater supplies and water resiliency. Since 2021, DPW has hosted over 30 meetings with individual communities, reaching over more than 600 residents to provide residents with information about program objectives, expected costs, and environmental benefits. A website, [ourwAAter.org](http://ourwAAter.org), serves as an outlet for engagement.

The communications approach also includes quarterly public advisory group meetings, social media, messaging, media relations, graphic design, and Geographic Information System mapping to drive program interest and awareness. The communications approach is regularly updated in response to feedback and input trends. As the program develops further, the project team plans to use resident feedback to inform policy-making decisions.

## Engaging Coastal Communities on Climate Change - Amanda Moore

The more we understand how to effectively communicate and engage communities around climate risk and solutions, the greater success we'll have in addressing climate change. For many, figuring out what to do about climate change can be overwhelming and lead to inaction. But building resilience is an urgent need and often starts at the community level. How do we help individuals and communities, especially those at high risk to climate impacts, feel empowered to engage and act to create a better future?

National Wildlife Federation's Gulf Program, with support from the National Academies of Sciences, explored climate change communication in the Gulf of Mexico region through innovative community engagement methods. Our project focused on the Tampa Bay area, an area with high risk to climate impacts and nearly 4 million residents. Our work analyzed how personal storytelling through film and expert-led field trips resonate and grow awareness of climate change risks and solutions. Our goal is for this work to grow the understanding of how to effectively communicate to foster engagement on climate change issues.

NWF worked with our partners across the Gulf to make a short storytelling film about climate

risks and solutions called Dear Tampa Bay. Dear Tampa Bay explores how communities across the Gulf have faced and are working to address the same climate impacts facing Tampa Bay, showcasing actions that could be applied to the Tampa Bay area. Through surveys administered with film screenings and focus groups after boat tours, we assessed the effects of storytelling and experiential learning on climate risk and resilience beliefs, attitudes, understanding of risk, sense of ability to act, and support for available solutions. The findings of this work can be applied broadly.

Participants who attend this presentation will learn about the findings of the project, as well as resilience strategies and resilience efforts around the northern Gulf. This presentation will discuss the importance of storytelling, experiential learning, stakeholder engagement, and lessons learned from both project implementation and the data gathered. Learn more about the project and watch our film here. The two-minute film trailer can be played during the session.

#### Mobilizing Partnerships for Coastal Conservation: Innovative Outreach and Education in the South Puget Sound - Lindsey Stover

Discover how collaborative partnerships among government agencies, businesses, and non-profits are driving coastal conservation efforts in the Puget Sound region of Washington State. Our presentation highlights shared strategies to engage both current and future boaters in protecting our estuaries through compliance with the No Discharge Zone (NDZ).

Using a practical and replicable case study, we demonstrate the effectiveness of involving diverse groups to inspire social and behavioral change. We'll discuss our approach to using social media and targeted outreach to showcase the simplicity and affordability of mobile pump-out services among stakeholders. By emphasizing the benefits of the NDZ, we aim to encourage boaters to integrate free and low-cost services into their routine maintenance.

By showcasing successes, challenges, and lessons learned, this presentation highlights the power of collaboration in advancing coastal restoration and management of America's estuaries.

#### Bridging Communities: Evaluating Engagement Strategies in the Connecticut Community Participation and Risk Communication Pilot - Sarah Schechter

The Connecticut Community Participation & Risk Communication Pilot was developed following a 2021 meeting of NOAA's North Atlantic Regional Team that recognized the disproportionate vulnerability of underserved communities to climate change impacts, and their exclusion from important planning conversations. This program aims to address gaps in risk perception, information access, and technical tool usability within vulnerable communities. Through direct engagement, NOAA will further understand community needs at the grassroots level, translate those needs, and respond with tailored trainings and co-development of NOAA products and services. In the short term, this initiative provides timely access to information crucial for enhancing local resilience, while fostering relationships and co-development processes to

ensure long-term impacts.

Over the span of 2022-2024, two Connecticut Sea Grant resilience-focused extension professionals piloted events in Bridgeport, Groton, New Haven, and New London, with objectives to (1) Build relationships with trusted bridge organizations in vulnerable communities, (2) Test alternative stakeholder engagement strategies to determine meaningful incentives (3) Facilitate discussions on climate resilience and equity, and (4) Identify priority information and training needs for immediate delivery.

As the program concludes in 2024, this presentation evaluates the effectiveness of various engagement incentives, offers insight into our ongoing collaboration with bridge organizations, and shares lessons learned from the process. Discussion also includes next steps in identifying priority needs aligned with NOAA's objectives.

Data-Driven Messaging: A Legacy of Support for Louisiana Restoration Through Media Research and Polling - Emily Guidry Schatzel

Restore the Mississippi River Delta is a coalition of local and national environmental organizations working within Louisiana to rebuild and restore the coast. The coalition has been conducting public opinion research among Louisiana voters since 2013 and media research about coastal issues since 2016.

Media research has explored the core themes, topics, messengers and tone that have driven the conversation in both national and local media around coastal restoration and coastal land loss. The goal of this research has been to better understand patterns and changes in the conversations through the years.

From northern Louisiana to the coast, across communities and demographic divides, statewide surveys and media coverage over the past decade show widespread support for coastal restoration efforts that protect the ecosystem as well as the jobs, safety and well-being of Louisianians.

This session will present our findings upon synthesize the findings from the many years of public opinion and media research analyzing perceptions on the state's land loss crisis, the Coastal Master Plan and large-scale restoration like sediment diversions. Many of these findings are applicable or of use to other areas dealing with similar issues, like subsidence, sea level rise and stronger storms. This report discusses findings primarily between 2017 and 2023.