



Salt Management Strategy (SaMS) Community Listening Session held at Kings Park Library, Burke, VA December 3, 2019

A community listening session, which is a part of an education and outreach pilot campaign associated with the development the Salt Management Strategy (SaMS), was held from 6:30 pm – 8:15 pm on December 3, 2019 in Burke, Virginia at the Kings Park Library at 9000 Burke Lake Road, Burke, Virginia.

Attendance

Twenty five (25) individuals, including three (3) Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) staff, one (1) staff from the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin (ICPRB; DEQ's contractual support), and eight (8) SaMS Education & Outreach workgroup members, participated in the meeting.

Meeting Summary

Informal Informational Session: The meeting began with an informal informational session where seven booths were staffed by seven different SaMS Education & Outreach workgroup member organizations. These organizations included, ICPRB, Virginia Department of Transportation, Friends of Accotink Creek, Fairfax Water, City of Fairfax, Fairfax County, and DEQ. Each organization presented information on their organization in addition to why their organization was participating in the development of SaMS.

Overview of SaMS: The meeting participants gathered as a group and DEQ provided a brief overview of SaMS in addition to a brief history of the project. After this overview, meeting participants were encouraged to ask questions. One participant asked if SaMS has worked with any local meteorologists. DEQ responded that SaMS has not, but that it was a good recommendation to consider pursuing. Another participant asked what will happen if there is no progress made in water quality as SaMS is implemented, and if there is no progress, the participant wondered if there will be any requirements/consequences. DEQ explained that in the Accotink Creek watershed there are permitted sources of stormwater where actions will be required based on the TMDL. However, DEQ also cautioned that water quality changes are a long-term goal. Instead, changes in application practices (i.e., implementing best practices) and reductions in salt use can be short-term metrics to evaluate progress. One final participant asked if this issue of salt impacts has been observed in other places in Virginia. DEQ responded that DEQ monitors waters across the state and have not yet seen the same level of impact as we do in Accotink Creek/Northern Virginia. DEQ also noted that a citizen monitoring group in the Shenandoah Valley tried to see the impact of salting on their waterways last year and did not observe any criteria exceedances. DEQ emphasized that the problem will likely occur in areas with certain levels of development.

Group Discussion: The meeting participants split into two groups, where they discussed the following questions:

- Primary Questions:

- How can we best engage the broader community on this complicated topic?
- What are you and your peers concerned about?
- What would you like to know about this topic?
- Secondary Questions (if time allows):
 - What do you think of the hashtags:
 - #WinterSaltSmart
 - #LearnAboutSalt
 - What do you think about our outreach materials?
 - What do you think about our approach to outreach?
 - Balancing the benefits and impacts in communications?
 - Aiming for a positive tone

Group 1: The discussion from group 1 is summarized below:

- Good ways to engage the broader community:
 - Homeowners Associations' newsletters
 - Nextdoor community pages
 - Sometimes the police have special announcements on there, and this may be a good place to do something similar for SaMS.
 - Have information at places that sell salt/other deicers.
 - Keep the message to public health and safety (e.g., drinking water) since most people may not care as much about fish and other organisms.
 - The impact on pets is another area that may resonate with the general public.
 - It is important to have pre-developed materials for social media that are intended to resonate with the general public (e.g., drinking water/public safety).
 - Use social media to inform the public of road maintenance challenges so that expectations can be managed and the public can prepare/plan accordingly.
 - Help the public understand what levels of service to expect in their neighborhood, so they can plan accordingly.
 - People also like to know what to do, so sharing how to salt efficiently and knowing alternatives to salts is helpful.
 - What catches attention?
 - Purpose/intent of salting, including the differences between transportation and private applicators
 - It is an educational issue – people do not know these impacts and how to salt efficiently. There needs to be something that starts the conversation and allows it to keep going organically among people/neighbors.
 - How to get the message out
 - YouTube – including “how to” videos
 - Local newsletters
 - Local blogs
 - High school and local environmental groups
 - Water bills – short message tied to them (online or in print)
 - County supervisor newsletters

- These can provide reminders seasonally and resources for how to do things efficiently.
 - School system lessons
- What do you think of the hashtags?
 - #LearnAboutSalt is too ambiguous.
 - The group favored #WinterSaltSmart, but the general impression was not strong.
- What do you think about our approach to outreach (e.g., balanced and positive)?
 - Sometimes the negative needs to be stated to get attention, but it is best presented “directly” and not dramatized.
 - When sharing bad news, actionable items (“what you can do”) is very important.

Group 2: The discussion from group 2 is summarized below:

- Good ways to engage the broader community:
 - Civic Associations
 - Local meteorologists
 - School communities
 - Student discussions with parents
 - Science fair projects
 - Environmental groups
 - Lands & Waters
 - Master Naturalists
 - “Friends of” groups
 - Retailers
 - Where salt is sold for deicing, alternatives may have a higher price that is attractive to retailers and can be promoted over salt.
 - Drinking Water Concerns
 - Physicians may be interested and engage with the community well since sodium has a health advisory level.
 - There is a group of physicians focused on environmental issues (mostly air quality) that may take an interest in this topic
 - Drinking water outreach to residents and Fairfax County Health Department
 - Because of vegetation impacts, groups focused on plants may be interested in those impacts.
 - Garden centers
 - VA Native Plant Society
 - Master Gardeners
 - Farmers Markets
 - Virginia Public Access TV Channels
 - Northern Virginia SWCD Green Breakfast
- The group would like to know more about...
 - Alternatives to salt

- What about Beet Juice?
- Water/aquatic impacts – consequences, drinking water impacts and health concerns
- Available speakers for Civic Association Meetings
- The group would like to see engagement with...
 - Commercial & institutional property managers
 - Chambers of commerce
 - Fairfax County leadership
 - Non-English language constituencies
 - Church communities may play a big role here
 - The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, because of fishery impacts
 - Other state agencies

Meeting Wrap-up: The meeting concluded with the two groups sharing highlights from their group discussions. When these highlights concluded, DEQ informed the participants that their contributions during the meeting will be folded into a summary report for the SaMS Education & Outreach workgroup to help develop recommendations that will be a part of the final SaMS document. DEQ thanked meeting participants and encouraged them to sign-up for the SaMS newsletter to stay informed.