

Salt Management Strategy

3rd Government Coordination Workgroup Meeting

December 18, 2019

The third Government Coordination (GC) Workgroup meeting for the Salt Management Strategy (SaMS) was held from 1:00 pm – 3:30 pm on December 18, 2019, at the offices of the Northern Virginia Regional Commission (NVRC) at 3040 Williams Drive in Fairfax, Virginia.

Attendance

Fifteen (15) individuals, including two DEQ staff members and one staff person from the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin (DEQ's contractual support), participated in the meeting in person. One person participated via conference call.

Heather Ambrose, Fairfax County
Heidi Bonnaffon, Metropolitan Washington
Council of Governments (MWCOG)
Glenda Booth, Friends of Dyke Marsh and
Audubon Society of Northern Virginia
Renee Bourassa, Interstate Commission on
the Potomac River Basin (ICPRB)*
Cathy Cogswell, Loudoun Water
Mike Collins, Arlington County
Dennis Cumbie, Loudoun Countyⁱ
Satoshi Eto, City of Fairfax

Dave Evans, DEQ*
Norm Goulet, Northern Virginia Regional
Commission (NVRC)
Tracey Harmon, Virginia Department of
Transportation (VDOT)
Pam Kenel, Loudoun Water
Jessica Lassetter, Alexandria City
Merrily Pierce, McLean Citizens
Association
Greg Prelewicz, Fairfax Water
Sarah Sivers, DEQ*

*Facilitator

ⁱ Participate via Conference Call

Meeting Highlights

- Meeting discussions focused on topics for which the workgroup will prepare recommendations, including:
 1. Winter maintenance training for NoVA local governments
 2. Enhanced pre-season coordination through existing forums (messaging and enhanced BMP plans) and a new post-season forum to better share winter operations information among regional governments
 3. Engaging relevant existing NoVA and DC metro forums during SaMS implementation to broaden support
 4. SaMS coordination leadership during implementation by the Northern Virginia Regional Commission (NVRC), and
 5. Local government support for the water quality monitoring and research workgroup's recommendations for "pooled" monitoring programs, and a SaMS pilot evaluation project.
- The draft recommendations for inclusion in the final SaMS report are *italicized* in the meeting notes for easy reference.

- The workgroup also discussed the topic of potential future legislation to support SaMS implementation. DEQ explained that it cannot advocate for legislative policy without authorization by the governor, and therefore the SaMS report will not include any recommendations for future legislation. Several workgroup members expressed interest to explore this topic further outside the SaMS process, and it was recognized that the time requirements to develop legislative recommendations will result in deferring follow up on this until beyond the SaMS development effort.

Notes for Other Workgroups / Potential Areas of Overlap

- The Water Quality Monitoring and Reporting Workgroup (WQMR) recommended that local jurisdictions look for opportunities to pool monitoring efforts. This could ensure efforts are not duplicated and facilitate resource and equipment sharing. There is also a regional need for a platform to coordinate the sharing of water quality monitoring data. There will be a forum on January 14, 2020, hosted by Virginia Tech, to inform development of a National Science Foundation grant application aimed at engineering approaches for mitigating the impacts of salinization on our freshwater systems.
- The WQMR workgroup recommends exploring a pilot water monitoring program that would compare two similar watersheds: one that has enhanced BMPs and one that does not (a control). The watersheds could be tracked over several years to explore water quality differences between the two. Broad partnerships from academic institutes, local jurisdictions, VDOT, private winter service providers, and others would be vital to this project. The “Pooled Monitoring” grant from the Chesapeake Bay Trust is a potential source of funding for this project.

Follow-up Action Items

- Discuss a region-wide winter maintenance professional training event with public works directors (Norm Goulet, NVRC).
- Look into specifics of a recently awarded Fairfax County contract with a snow removal trainer (Dave Evans, DEQ). Update: a contract was awarded by the Fairfax County Dept. of Public Works to DW Clonch, LLC for winter operations professional services.
- Share contact information for MWCOG pre-season event (Heidi Bonnaffon, MWCOG).
- Share contact information for the new chairperson of the Northern Virginia Chamber of Commerce (Merrily Pierce, McLean Citizens Association). Update: Merrily provided contact information for Clayton Medford, Vice President for Government Affairs.

Meeting Summary

Introductions

The meeting began with brief introductory remarks from DEQ and introductions from the group. Jessica Lassetter from the City of Alexandria joined the workgroup, replacing Joni Calmbacher who has departed her position with the City. The Government Coordination (GC) Workgroup’s purpose is to promote effective government coordination for the development and implementation of SaMS goals and objectives.

Purpose and Scope

Highlights of the previous meeting were discussed. This included the coordination of activities to decrease implementation cost, such as a regional training for NoVA local government winter maintenance professionals and the MWCOG shared service contract that allows for lower cost bulk purchases of winter deicer products among local jurisdictions. The MWCOG contract could be an appropriate way to reduce the cost of competitively bid alternative deicer products in the future..

Pre-season and post-season forums were discussed at the previous GC Workgroup meeting. MWCOG has an existing pre-season forum that involves National Weather Service regional forecasts and a discussion of winter plans by DC/MD/VA transportation agencies. Members observed that there are possibly other existing forums that would be appropriate for incorporating local jurisdictions plans for implementing enhanced BMPs. Adding additional information to appropriate existing forums will elevate the profile of the SaMS efforts to the public. Heidi Bonnaffon will share the contact information for the MWCOG forum and other workgroup members are encouraged to identify relevant pre-season forums to DEQ.

There are no existing regional post-season winter operation events geared to helping improve snow removal response in future seasons. A new post-season NoVA winter operations forum could be especially useful for people that are new to snow removal. Topics could include storm communications (including closures), how well the region coordinated, weather forecasting, tracking BMPs, metrics, operational challenges, and what lessons were learned. Public works directors, division superintendents, and operations managers could be brought into the conversation, but it could also be helpful for all staffing levels. One possible forum design is to hold a full day of sessions, with morning sessions focused on communications and administration, and an afternoon session focused on field operations, including BMP use, tracking metrics, challenges and lessons learned. . This event could also be a good opportunity for winter maintenance employees and those that work in environmental/stormwater management sections to connect.

SaMS Report: Look at existing forums to include an agenda item for a pre-season training/information presentation to increase awareness of BMPs and communications during snow events. A new post-season wrap-up forum where area winter management professionals can learn from each other, share expertise, and share resources could improve service throughout the region.

There was a discussion regarding the recommendation of liability relief in the final SaMS document. Some comments from the members included:

- Concern over legal action can be an incentive for excessive use of deicers during a winter event.
- Previous SaMS meetings (especially the May 2018 SAC training) contained information on liability relief legislation. New Hampshire has liability relief associated with certification of winter service operators.
- A concern that liability relief may excuse industries from mistakes.
- Several workgroup members believe that slip and fall liability relief could be the most impactful potential legislative action in support of SaMS implementation.

DEQ noted that, as a state agency, it cannot advocate for legislation without authorization by the governor. Accordingly, the SaMS report will not make any legislative policy recommendations. The workgroup concluded that legislative policy normally requires long-term efforts to frame proposals, build support, and prepare for formal legislative consideration. The workgroup sees this as something to be deferred to a later date.

There is interest within the workgroup to pursue legislative recommendations outside of the SaMS process. The Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Association has a legislative committee that may be a good venue. They draft a legislative package every year. NVRC could coordinate the process for interested SaMS participants. The following individuals expressed interest in pursuing this issue outside of the SaMS process: Heather Ambrose, Heidi Bonnaffon, Glenda Booth, Mike Collins, Satoshi Eto, Jessica Lassetter, Merrily Pierce, and Greg Prewelicz.

SaMS Report: Several participants expressed interest to discuss slip and fall liability relief for operators as a future recommendation, while one member expressed an unwillingness to support it without further information. Additional discussions on this issue are expected to occur following completion of the SaMS report.

Follow up from Previous Action Items

George Washington Memorial Parkway uses a deicing product called Apogee on the George Washington Memorial Bridge, mainly to reduce infrastructure damage to the bridge. It is a non-chloride proprietary product (sodium formate) from a sole source vendor. For this reason, it would not be appropriate for a shared-services contract. The MWCOG has a shared services contract rider that could be used among the jurisdictions for alternative deicers, but they would need to be products that are open to a competitive bid.

SaMS Report: Jurisdictions are encouraged to identify promising deicing products that may be more costly than current products but could be more economical if purchased in bulk through a shared services contract.

Heidi Bonnaffon explored how the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) is addressing winter salt use in MS4 permits. MDE is currently finalizing the guidance documents on this matter. New and renewed permits are expected to address technical advances that MS4s can incorporate into operations, public outreach, training, and tracking and reporting. Since the implementation of SaMS is voluntary, the final SaMS report will not make specific recommendations regarding MS4 permits, but it will reflect that a discussion was held regarding the issue. DEQ will share the final MD MS4 permit summary document with workgroup members when it is received, early in 2020.

It was suggested at a previous meeting that the Community Association Institute (CAI) be contacted regarding SaMS. DEQ staff noted that an attendant from the December 3rd listening session is involved with the CAI and the Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Association and has been keeping the groups informed of SaMS activities. DEQ staff has met with some community associations, but the timing was not right earlier in the SaMS process. Community

associations may have a bigger role as the process wraps up, and DEQ plans to reach out to CAI in advance of the final public meeting.

VDOT's pre-season event for elected officials is an "invite-only" event that informs the elected officials and media about how VDOT will respond to snow events throughout the season. It is not intended to be a public event; the materials are available online from the VDOT website: <https://www.slideshare.net/vdotnova/2019-vdot-northern-virginia-snow-briefing>

Workgroup Recommendations

The workgroup previously recommended region-wide operator training events, based on local jurisdictions' interest in this idea. Some larger jurisdictions (Arlington and Fairfax counties) hold annual training events, but smaller jurisdictions could benefit from a coordinated event. Many jurisdictions are currently working on their FY21 budget now and if sufficient training funding is not included in the budget, it would present challenges to participation. Information for managers would be different for field staff, so targeted training events would be helpful. NVRC will discuss the idea with regional public works directors and will need to then engage CAOs. While training in advance of the 2020/21 winter season is desirable, it is not clear a regional training event could be delivered that soon.

SaMS Report: An annual region-wide snow event response training on enhanced BMPs would pool resources and ensure consistent BMP training across the region. NVRC will take lead to plan for the new regional training event.

Existing VDOT and some local jurisdictions hold annual "Roadeos" that include winter operations activities focused on internal training and teambuilding. While the workgroup had some interest in a consolidated NoVA Roadeo focused on winter maintenance, it would be time demanding to develop and is not recommended at this time.

A list was provided to the members of existing forums in the NoVA region that could support the SaMS effort. These are potential partners that could be beneficial to coordinate/engage in various aspects of SaMS. Other forums were discussed, including a renewed effort to reach out to the business committee. The Northern Virginia Chamber of Commerce has a new chairperson, and Merrily Pierce will share that information. Other Chambers of Commerce are also active, including Alexandria, McLean, and Arlington. Other potential partners include local chapters of larger organizations such as Trout Unlimited, Audubon Society, Virginia Native Plant Society, Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment, and private applicators/landscaping company forums. Groups that are public-safety focused (VDEM, state police, etc.) would also be valuable to engage. Mining "Friends of" websites for links to additional groups could provide a larger network of potential partners. Water-quality focused groups, such as the Potomac River Basin Drinking Water Source Protection Partnership and MWCOG's Chesapeake Bay and Water Resources Policy Committee, should be engaged. The SaMS report should identify these groups and include a recommendation to engage them in the future, as appropriate, to build broader support for SaMS implementation. Their identification in the SaMS report would be similar to how "partners" are listed in TMDL Implementation Plans as able to support actions to carry out plan recommendations.

SaMS Report: Identify potential partners (business communities, water-quality focused groups, “Friends of” groups, etc.) that could help support the SaMS implementation effort, to facilitate engagement during SaMS implementation.

The NVRC and DEQ met recently to discuss the transition of coordination of SaMS by DEQ to the implementation of SaMS by NVRC. Norm Goulet has received letters of support for this from the jurisdictions. NVRC has agreed to pursue funds for a new full-time equivalent (FTE) position to fulfill the work necessary to move the SaMS effort forward. The next step is to discuss the idea with the Chief Administrative Officers by mid-2020 and hold a briefing for the elected commissioners in the region. As the final SaMS report will be completed by December 2020, the timeframe for the transition process would be mid-FY21. DEQ expressed its appreciation for NVRC’s commitment to step into a SaMS implementation leadership role in the future.

The continuation of the annual survey of public awareness and attitudes about winter maintenance/salt use will be part of SaMS implementation. NVRC has secured the services of a private firm to conduct the survey. The survey consists of 13 questions to get a baseline understanding of the general public level of awareness of salt impacts as well as how individuals use salt at their home and business. The survey was launched on December 6, and it will take a couple of weeks to get the 500 responses needed for statistical validity. The final report is anticipated in February. Results will be a useful set of metrics to measure the effectiveness of future outreach efforts.

Water Quality Monitoring and Research (WQMR): The workgroup briefly discussed the WQMR workgroup’s recommendations to encourage “pooled” monitoring programs by regional monitoring organizations, and to develop a pilot evaluation program to assess the water quality impacts of enhanced BMP implementation. MWCOG noted that they may have resources to support additional salt monitoring in area waters, and others noted that the Occoquan lab and regional water utilities have extensive existing data. Sharing data among monitoring organizations and with the public is a current technical challenge. Members noted that there are upcoming grant RFAs by the Chesapeake Bay Trust and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) that could be opportunities to advance salt monitoring efforts, and expressed hope that the Virginia Tech forum on January 14, 2020 may present an opportunity to discuss this topic in more depth.

Meeting Wrap-up

The SaMS Steering Committee will assist in ensuring the final SaMS report will be true to the workgroup discussions.

The recommendations from this meeting will be drafted and sent to the workgroups for approval. Government Coordination workgroup recommendations should be finalized for the draft report by mid-February 2020.

Handouts from the meeting are available on the SaMS Meeting Materials [webpage](#).

All information, questions, additional resources, etc. should be emailed to Dave Evans (david.evans@deq.virginia.gov) and Sarah Sivers (sarah.sivers@deq.virginia.gov). DEQ will consolidate information received and distribute it to workgroup members as needed.

Meeting notes were prepared and submitted to DEQ by the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin.

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A survey was shared following the meeting to capture any additional thoughts workgroup members had following the meeting. Feedback is arranged below based on the sections of the agenda. Only sections where additional thoughts were provided are included:

Workgroup Recommendation Discussions - Pre-season Coordination

“While the COG pre-season call does exist as an "operator" forum for forecasting and road conditions, it is not a forum for discussing water quality BMP preparations and pilots. I would recommend a separate pre- and post- season forum that is in alignment with the SaMS water quality BMPs/measuring/tracking/reporting goals.”

Workgroup Recommendation Discussions - Post-season Coordination

“Per above, it would be helpful if NVRC(or COG) could convene a post- season forum that is in alignment with the SaMS water quality BMP measuring, tracking, and reporting goals.”