



Communication Best Practices

NOAA CoastWatch Seminar – November 10, 2022

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Overview

- Speaker introduction
- What is communications
- What is accessibility
- CoastWatch Communications Plan
- Discussion



V Wegman – Comms Specialist

- Contractor supporting CoastWatch 75%, NWS 25%
- NASA communications intern 2017-2019 intermittently
- B.A. Communication – Ohio State University
 - Pending: MPM – Carnegie Mellon University



Communications

- Critical to advancement of science, effective government
- Conveying information through all types of media
- Ideally a “two-way street,” encouraging conversation

Good communicators
know their audience



Accessibility – Section 508/255

- What the law requires
 - All electronic information is accessible to individuals with disabilities
 - Websites, videos, documents – [quick guide](#)
- Accessible communication is good communication
- Do it right the first time
- No need to be worried



CoastWatch Comms Plan

Former Plan – 2017-2020

- Third-party composer
- Overly broad
- Limited follow-through

New Plan – 2022+

- Collaborative
- Specific actionable items
- Living document

2. User Engagement		
Activity	Short-term actions (Year 1)	Long-term actions (Years 2 and 3)
Identify and define targeted user groups for outreach needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a comprehensive stakeholder analysis to further define user groups and identify target groups for outreach efforts.⁶ • Create a targeted list of NOAA users and determine what internal communication channels are present to share information (e.g., intranet, message boards, meeting schedules, internal newsletters). • Design a user-satisfaction survey, including questions on how data are being used, to collect relevant demographics, feedback to improve products and data stories.^{7,8} • Implement use of the survey at conferences, posting on websites and sending to former collaborators/published authors of papers using data. • Continue attendance at relevant meetings and conferences (e.g., Ocean Sciences Town Hall) that reach priority user groups, track follow-ups and document outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map out partnering agencies that are using and supplying data from CoastWatch on respective websites, especially those that require registration (e.g., IOOS, Copernicus), and reach out to collect information on user demographics. • Further pursue options for hosting a technical forum (e.g., GitHub, Stack Exchange or Reddit) or a user-group email listserv to solicit questions and archive recent help-desk inquiries.⁹ • Hold focus groups with priority target groups to solicit input on data needs and feedback on products used. • Decide if the same user-satisfaction survey should be used across all program sites and data centrally collected.
Document best practices and provide guidance on user-engagement strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop two case studies each year based on successful user-engagement stories identified by staff members. • Provide a template to regional programs on user metrics to collect and request information on a periodic basis. • Continue yearly discussion on user-engagement strategies at the annual meeting and document outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide support to the regional programs to create a user-engagement best practices and strategy document.¹⁰ • Set up a new user inquiry and referral process to ensure information is being tracked and requests are addressed. • Explore the option to create a central contact database with basic information and demographics to profile key user groups.

⁶ General categories of user groups identified in discussions include: NOAA users, other government agencies, international organizations/agencies, commercial users, academic researchers and the general public.

⁷ Note: The existing NOAA OMB survey on the website, with customizations based on pre-approved sets of questions from the survey office, may be sufficient if data can be accessed. See http://www.cio.noaa.gov/services_programs/pracust.htm for details on survey design and approval. The contact is Sarah Brabson, and refer to her previous emails for more information.

⁸ Include links to the survey prominently displayed on the website, as a note in the footer of news announcements and other communications (e.g., help-desk email signature line).

⁹ See Live Access Server program website (<http://forecast.noaa.gov/LAS/>) for an example of a user email group. Consider

<https://bit.ly/3zFdoRU>

Internal			
Item	Goal	Subgoal	Notes
Define a method for informing the communications team of activities that should be advertised on the website, reported in weekly reports, included in the newsletter, etc.	Situational Awareness and Collaboration across all Nodes, pillars, and science teams	Organizational cohesion	
All website owners across CoastWatch will coordinate a consistent, but not identical, style and quality for all affiliated pages	Situational Awareness and Collaboration across all Nodes, pillars, and science teams	Organizational cohesion	
Develop a "Best Practices" document that defines processes for outreach, engagement, and internal reporting	Situational Awareness and Collaboration across all Nodes, pillars, and science teams	Organizational cohesion	
Continue holding monthly seminars that highlight CoastWatch use cases and notable work	Situational Awareness and Collaboration across all Nodes, pillars, and science teams	Individual recognition	
Continue sending quarterly newsletter to all contacts	Situational Awareness and Collaboration across all Nodes, pillars, and science teams	Organizational cohesion	
Continue holding monthly Ops meetings for representatives of all nodes and pillars to report their activities	Situational Awareness and Collaboration across all Nodes, pillars, and science teams	Mission reinforcement	
Continue holding the CoastWatch Annual Science Meeting	Situational Awareness and Collaboration across all Nodes, pillars, and	Mission reinforcement	

<https://bit.ly/3fofHly>



New Approach

- CW Introduction, Mission
- Document Purpose
- Assessment of Former Plan
 - Evaluated approach
 - Categorized recommended activities
- Redefine audiences and associated goals
 - Internal, Stakeholder, Users
 - Few broad goals per audience, split into tailored “subgoals”
- List activities/actionable items

Communications Plan Document Purpose

This document aims to:

- Assess the former communications plan and the actualization of its recommendations.
- Define goals for multiple facets of communications.
- Plan activities to meet the goals.



Audiences & Goals

Internal: Anyone associated with the NOAA CoastWatch program (Applications, Central Ops, Nodes, Learning Portal)

- Situational Awareness and Collaboration within CoastWatch
 - Organizational cohesion
 - Mission reinforcement
- Full engagement and appropriate representation in meetings
 - Individual recognition
 - Equitable representation

Stakeholders: NOAA decision makers, science teams, and international agency partners

- Situational awareness and definition of needs
 - One NOAA
 - Informing decision-makers
- Adequate representation in decision-making
 - Dedicated personnel
 - Conversation participation
 - Science team collaboration

Users: Current users and potential users

- Name recognition
 - Interpersonal relationships
 - Information broadcasting
 - Product identification
- Accessibility of data, resources, and CoastWatch personnel
 - Direct user engagement
 - Indirect user engagement
- Remote sensing training
 - Public outreach
 - User training

Key Near-Term Actions



· Monthly call for news items

- Forms to submit [news items](#) and [User Story ideas](#)
- Continue weekly SOCD reports & quarterly newsletters

· Node site accessibility evaluations

- Node managers will receive email from V when their website is undergoing evaluation
- Recommendations for edits will also be offered
- Case-by-case discussion of migration to a CMS

· Meeting with Node Managers

- Discuss actionable items, Best Practices document

· Compose Best Practices document

- Guide to CoastWatch communications
- Accessibility, design, who to contact, how to submit news items...



Questions & Feedback

Thank you

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