

**Friends of Casco Bay  
Community Engagement Committee  
Minutes**

Monday, June 7, 5-6:00 p.m., via Zoom

**In attendance\***

Board: Seb Milardo (committee chair), Sandy Marsters (board president), Steve Bushey, Pat Ianni  
Staff: Sara Biron, Will Everitt, Robby Lewis-Nash, Sarah Lyman, Cathy Ramsdell

\*It was a very hot day, likely influencing the meeting's low attendance.

**Welcome** - Seb began the meeting at 5:03 p.m.

**Boater Outreach Plan** - *Will Everitt*

Boaters are a key demographic for us to connect with because they are on the water and love the Bay. Boaters also have unique impacts on the health of the Bay and we want to educate them about how their individual actions matter, both the good and the bad. We put together this communications plan to build relationships with boaters and bring them into our work.

We plan to communicate with boaters through the following strategies:

- “*Habits for a Healthy Bay*” boater messaging will be used on our website and on posters for marinas, yacht clubs, and anywhere else we can connect with the boating public. A draft of the poster is attached to these minutes. Because space on a printed poster is limited, the messaging on our website will be more robust and include explanations as to why these *Healthy Habits* are important. The *Healthy Habits* address:
  - Pumping out sewage, preventing pee and poop from entering the Bay
  - Preventing litter and trash from entering the Bay
  - Preventing oil and gas spills into the Bay
  - Reporting concerning conditions, encouraging boaters to join Water Reporter
  - [Note: Proper disposal of flares will be added to the *Healthy Habits* once the state develops a plan for safely disposing of expired flares.]
- Monthly emails to boaters will focus on individual *Healthy Habits* through the lens of stories about boaters and their relationship to the Bay.
- In the future, we plan to collaborate with Maine Island Trail Association to garner earned media for the *Healthy Habits*.
- Board members who are boaters will help to spread these messages among peers and the boating community.

Will shared the draft of the poster with the committee for feedback.

Sandy liked the design of the poster, noting how many boats there are in the picture. Sandy asked if we should encourage boaters to become members in this communications plan. Pat agreed with Sandy, expressing that she would like to see a membership ask on the poster. Will responded that growing membership is always a goal. We usually bring new members into our organization by connecting with them, familiarizing them with our work, and then contacting them about membership and donating.

Steve asked if we know how many boaters are registered in the Bay. Will responded that we have a rough idea. When someone registers a boat in Maine they must register it as freshwater and/or saltwater. We periodically purchase the state's list of boats registered to be used in saltwater in the coastal towns surrounding Casco Bay. Cathy added that we have been using these lists for years to contact boaters as potential new members.

Steve commented that the “pee and poop” language on the poster distracted and struck him when he first saw it. He was unsure if this was good or bad. Seb and Sandy had similar reactions. Will and Cathy responded that this kind of reaction is good because we want the poster to capture the attention of people passing by. Language like “pumpout” and “sewage” do not carry the same impact, and using more direct and evocative words like “pee” and “poop” conveys the idea that contributing sewage to the Bay is gross and bad for the health of our coastal waters.

Pat questioned if we should add information about how to contact DEP and DMR in the “report what you see section,” perhaps even in place of encouraging Water Reporter participation. Will responded that we went back and forth on these ideas when we designed the posters. We ultimately left out DEP and DMR contact information because it is difficult to fit all of that content on the poster. We also imagined that our boater webpage would have more information about reporting concerning conditions, including how and when to contact state agencies.

Sandy shared that he felt the word “apathy” was pointed at him as a boater and wondered if we should use different language. He also questioned if we can actually get boaters to change their behavior when it comes to peeing in the Bay because it is such a widely accepted practice. Pat responded that peeing in the Bay is similar to how people once thought of throwing cigarettes out of car windows; while this still happens, it is a less acceptable practice today. Seb agreed with Sandy’s comment about preventing boaters from peeing in the Bay: everyone sees the Bay and the ocean as enormous, so what difference does a little pee make? Staff reminded everyone of the nitrogen/ammonium content in urine, which, in many ways, is worse for the Bay than poop in the Bay.

Cathy reminded everyone that there are other communications strategies in addition to the poster, and that those parts of the plan will help address these concerns. Emails, webpage content, social media posts, and conversations with boaters will provide opportunities to go deeper on why these issues matter, including how one person’s sewage can have a negative impact on the Bay. Cathy reiterated that if we are getting these kinds of uncomfortable responses to words like “pee” and “poop” or “apathy,” the poster is doing its job. Capturing people’s emotional attention can help set the stage for behavioral change in the future.

Will added that not all boaters have a marine toilet that can be pumped out. Opting for direct language like “pee” and “poop” is not only more vivid than “pump out your boat” but it also addresses a wider audience. Will responded to Sandy’s concern about the size of the Bay and the impacts of one person’s sewage. Looking at the image of the mooring field in the poster’s background, one can imagine how a boater peeing over the side of every boat pictured could negatively impact the Bay. It is the cumulative and collective impact that drives home the message.

Sandy echoed Cathy by reminding everyone that the poster itself is not the campaign, and that the campaign supports the poster. The poster does a good job of boiling down the ideas we’re concerned about, and the additional context that we all agree must be conveyed will come from other parts of the communications plan.

Cathy applauded the staff’s work on the poster, noting how much foresight there was in its design. For example, Cathy noted that there is a blank space below the *Healthy Habits* for incorporating language about flare disposal once we know the outcome of the flares bill.

Pat agreed with Will’s comments and appreciated that this poster conveys the idea of cumulative impacts, pushing back on the idea that the ocean is so big that it can absorb any influence. Cathy agreed, wondering where and how we can begin adding language about cumulative impacts to our communications. If we truly want to change boater behavior, it is very important to convey the concept

of cumulative impacts. Cathy added that many of the boats in mooring fields, like the one pictured in the poster, are owned by people who live out-of-state. It is relatively inexpensive to pay for a mooring and these people do not have to pay any state or real estate taxes. She hopes they will take seriously their individual contributions to the health of the Bay.

Pat asked if we should include kayakers and kayaking businesses in this communications plan. She also questioned if kayakers would respond to the pee and poop habit, noting that there is nowhere in a kayak to use the bathroom. Cathy responded that those who fly small planes use devices for relieving oneself when there is no bathroom on board; people can figure these things out, kayakers included.

Steve asked about targeting the fishing community. He shared that in some ways fishermen have even more of an impact on the health of the Bay than recreational boaters because they are out on the water every day. Will responded to the suggestions about including kayakers and fishermen, offering that these are good points that can be addressed as we build on this plan. Building relationships with the boating public is a long-term project, and as we grow this communications plan in future years we can develop posters for specific groups like kayakers and fishermen.

Seb appreciated that the messages in the poster are crisp and clear without a lot of verbiage.

Will asked if there are other materials, like business cards or fliers, that would be helpful for board members to have when speaking to boaters about these issues.

Sandy replied that he could not think of any additional materials that would be helpful. Sandy also wondered if we should anticipate any blowback from boaters about not operating the pumpout program this year. Pat added that it would be useful to have some talking points about why we're not operating the pumpout boat. Cathy responded that a lot of the pushback so far has come from marina operators, and that we can share talking points with board members.

Seb noted that it will be hard to track how boaters respond to these messages and posters.

### **Tabling at Maine Boatbuilders Show - Will Everitt**

Johanna Sprague and Portland Yacht Services host the annual Maine Boatbuilders Show. The show was not held last year due to the pandemic, but this year it is scheduled to be held July 23-25. Years have passed since we last had a table there, but Joe and Cathy used to attend to connect with the community. We think that tabling at the show this year could provide a good opportunity to connect with boaters, especially prospective boat buyers, and spread our *Healthy Habits* messaging. We can also have general information about our organization available.

Will asked if board members would be interested in working alongside volunteers to staff a table at the show. Steve, Sandy and Pat all expressed enthusiasm for attending and tabling. Based on their enthusiasm, Cathy said that we will get rolling on logistics and reserving a table for the event. She noted that three whole days is a lot of tabling time, and that if we cannot have someone at the table at all times that is okay.

Sandy expressed his excitement to connect with people and boaters at the show. He recently realized that many people do not fully understand what we do as an organization and think that the Bay has always been blue and healthy. He added that it is important to educate the public about the history of the Bay and how efforts from organizations like ours have made it so much healthier today.

Pat added that the TD Bank Green Team is looking for volunteer opportunities.

Sarah asked if there are any other materials that we should give out at the show. Sandy responded that we should have some fliers about our work. Seb added that we should have information about the Continuous Monitoring Stations. Pat suggested handing out our most recent newsletter. Cathy added that we have pins, stickers, and magnets that we can give as handouts. Will said that we can also have a small version of our *Healthy Habits* poster to hand out at the table. Sandy suggested having a computer or a monitor to display some of our event videos. Cathy added that she cannot remember what condition our posters are in, but that we will have some good visuals for the table. We will also have membership envelopes at the ready.

Pat asked if other non-profits attend the show. The group agreed that the Maine Maritime Museum and Maine Island Trail Association are usually there.

## **Closing**

Will reminded us that our upcoming [Casco Bay Matters event](#) is next Wednesday. At the event, Mike will share data from the three Continuous Monitoring Stations for the first time! Will asked that board members who attend the event take notes about what worked well and what we could improve on in the future. We have been doing Casco Bay Matters events for a while and we want to continue to get better at them.

Will also noted that the idea to focus the event on the deployment of the new Continuous Monitoring Stations and their data, instead of the success and amount of funds raised in our capital campaign, came from this committee. He added that the original idea for the boater messaging campaign came from this committee as well.

Seb adjourned the meeting at 6:00pm.