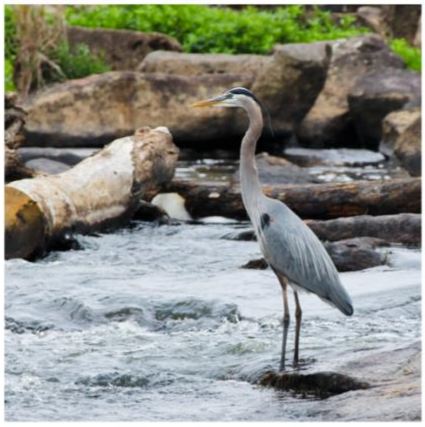
Albemarle-Pamlico
National Estuary Partnership

2025 Communications and Engagement Plan

A supporting document of the 2025 Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP)







Approved by Leadership Council
May 5, 2026

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Executive Summary

The Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Partnership (APNEP) is committed to fostering collaborative, science-based stewardship of the Albemarle-Pamlico estuarine system. This Communications and Engagement Strategy outlines how APNEP will strengthen partnerships, expand outreach, and enhance communications to support the implementation of its Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) with guidance from the Leadership Council (LC), Citizen Advisory Council (CAC) and Science and Technical Advisory Council (STAC).

As a boundary organization, APNEP connects diverse stakeholders, including government agencies, academic institutions, nonprofits, business, communities, and individuals, to address environmental challenges at an ecosystem scale. This strategy emphasizes inclusive engagement, community-driven initiatives, and open communication to ensure opportunities for all voices across the region are heard and valued.

Our Mission
To understand, protect, and restore the significant natural resources of the Albemarle-Pamlico estuarine system.

Goals

APNEP's Communication and Engagement Plan goals listed below were created to support the 2025 CCMP, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) Workplans, Clean Water Act (CWA) §320 Workplans.

1. Facilitate the Implementation of APNEP's 2025 CCMP, ensuring community involvement and ownership.
Support the successful execution of the CCMP in alignment with APNEP's mission to understand, protect, and restore the significant resources of the Albemarle-Pamlico estuarine system. Ensure community involvement and ownership in CCMP implementation.

- Engage residents, local organizations, and community leaders and other interested parties across the region.
- Support participation in APNEP initiatives through outreach, events, and collaborative projects.
- Strengthen relationships with local governments, schools, and civic groups.

- Provide clear, accessible information to help communities understand and contribute to estuarine protection, restoration, and resiliency efforts.

2. Promote Environmental Stewardship and Volunteerism
Inspire and support individual and collective stewardship actions that increase public engagement, and awareness of the ecological health and water quality conditions of the Albemarle-Pamlico estuarine system.

- Fund and promote community-based projects through CAC guidance, RFPs, and other funding avenues.
- Promote volunteer opportunities and citizen science initiatives.
- Support environmental education experiences and teacher education events.
- Develop and distribute educational materials that promote stewardship behaviors.

3. Enhance Public Awareness and Understanding of Ecosystem Health
Increase public knowledge of the Albemarle-Pamlico region's environmental challenges and the benefits of ecosystem protection.

- Use targeted communications strategies (e.g., social media, newsletters, StoryMaps).
- Highlight the connection between ecosystem health and human well-being (e.g., water quality, resilience planning).
- Develop and share success stories from projects APNEP is involved in or sponsors.
- Provide accessible, science-based information to the public and decision-makers.

4. Build Capacity for Ecosystem-Based Management and Resilience
Equip local and Tribal governments, partners, and communities with tools, training, and resources to support ecosystem-based planning and climate resilience.

- Develop and implement training tools and workshops on ecosystem services and nature-based solutions.
- Support local planning efforts that integrate resiliency, and flooding considerations.
- Provide spatial decision support tools and high-resolution land cover data.
- Facilitate coordination across jurisdictions and sectors.

5. Strengthen Partnerships and Collaborative Networks
Leverage and expand APNEP's network of partners to amplify communication, engagement, and implementation efforts.

- Facilitate Management Conference, STAC, and CAC activities.
- Collaborate with regional initiatives such as the Currituck Sound Coalition and the Albemarle-Pamlico Federal Partnership.
- Promote cross-state coordination through the NC-VA MOU.
- Facilitate knowledge exchange and co-development of outreach strategies.

Target Audiences

APNEP's target audiences include both partners that can assist with goal implementation and specific audiences identified throughout the CCMP or recommended by the Management Conference. These include target audiences that are well positioned to most effectively support and implement the CCMP, including:

1. Management Conference Members (including ad-hoc teams and workgroups)
2. Government (Local, State, Tribal, Federal, Regional, Resource Managers, Policy Makers)
3. Academic Institutions & Researchers
4. Educators (K-12, Adult, Informal)
5. Nonprofits & Funders
6. Residents & Landowners
7. Visitors & Recreational Users
8. Businesses

Partnerships
APNEP partnerships span all target audience categories and can change over time based on CCMP focus, funding availability, politics, personalities, and more. Relationships are nuanced and range from highly engaged, to moderately engaged, to "on the roster". APNEP's website hosts a comprehensive list of historic partners but it is not indicative of currently active partners.

Programs and Activities

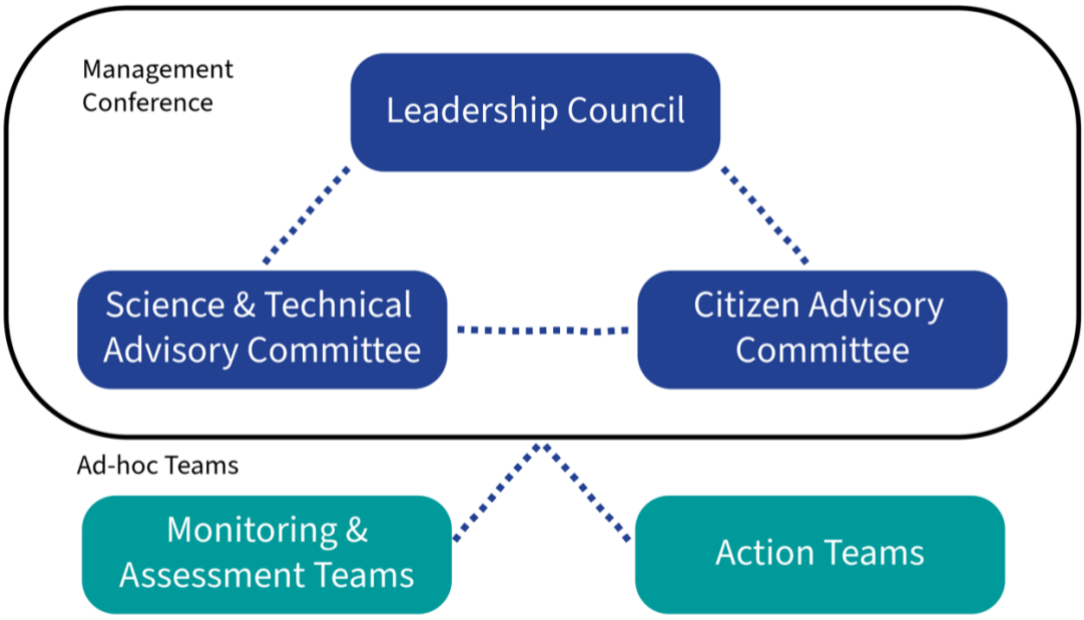
APNEP maintains a roster of core and special programs and activities to achieve communications and engagement goals. Implementers, target audience(s), evaluation mechanisms, budget and funding information, timeframes, and key deliverables (if applicable), and potential enhancements are outlined in each section. More detailed budget and funding information can be found in APNEP's most recently approved §320 and IIJA Workplans.

Management Conference

Overarching partner engagement occurs through the underlying set up and structure of the Management Conference, which consists of the LC, STAC, and CAC.

Staff seeks to maintain full active membership of LC, STAC, and CAC. Active participation by advisory committee members in APNEP engagement and communication activities is encouraged. Management Conference members are also encouraged to serve as ambassadors for APNEP in their other professional roles. APNEP staff shares program materials that facilitate ambassadorship and encourage members to share upcoming engagement opportunities with staff to encourage involvement in all primary watersheds in the APNEP boundaries.

APNEP also forms ad-hoc work groups and Monitoring and Assessment teams as needed to accomplish specific tasks. They convene to tackle specific issues and are assembled and dissolved by the partnership as necessary to effectively implement CCMP actions. Teams are either created and facilitated by APNEP staff and committee members or led and facilitated by external partners. Each group is composed of volunteers from federal and state agencies, non-profit organizations, universities, private citizens, current and former committee members, and other scientists and technologists from APNEP partner organizations. For example, APNEP organized a Targeted Protection and Restoration Focus Team to pool resources and knowledge to make meaningful progress on multiple CCMP actions around wetland protection and restoration.



Audience: members represent a diverse cross-section of governmental, societal, economic, educational, and scientific interests from the region in both NC and VA.

Evaluation: APNEP periodically solicits feedback from its membership regarding communication efforts. An organizational needs assessment was completed in 2016 which included feedback on APNEP's communication efforts. Member attendance at committee meetings is recorded but an attendance rate has not been calculated.

Potential Enhancements: Analyze LC, STAC, and CAC attendance rates for meetings, projects, ad-hoc groups, and events on a regular basis using Smartsheet. Determine participation distribution of partners, identify gaps, and pursue targeted engagement if needed. Create a baseline questionnaire to determine how Management Conference members perceive APNEP's communications and engagement efforts to be completed on a bi-annual basis. Revisit the 2016 needs assessment and determine if communication effort questions are still relevant and should be repeated in the questionnaire.

Sponsorship

APNEP supports the implementation of its CCMP by providing both indirect and direct support for outreach and engagement activities. Indirectly, APNEP may host or sponsor conferences, workshops, and projects that include outreach components, encouraging grantees to incorporate communications elements that highlight APNEP's role as a sponsor or partner in order to support CCMP implementation. Directly, APNEP staff aim to participate in events it funds through active participation (speaking or moderating, organizing workshops and panel sessions) or by assisting with tabling, leading or supporting activities, capturing media for communications, and providing logistical support such as setup, promotion, or transportation. These efforts help raise awareness of APNEP's mission, strengthen partnerships, and ensure visibility of the Partnership's contributions. Appendix B provides more information on activity selection.

Additionally, many of the outputs listed in the CCMP are tied to communications materials. APNEP regularly supports partners by providing financial support for educational resources such as booklets, factsheets, and informational brochures.

Audience: Government organizations, nonprofits, environmental educators, and research and education institutions located in the Albemarle-Pamlico watershed.

Evaluation: In FY24-25, APNEP sponsored four conferences; Sea Grant Coastal Conference, United Tribes of North Carolina Unity Conference, NC State University Water Resources Research Institute (WRRI) Conference, and the NC Outdoor Classroom Symposium. Staff also presented at WRRI, the North Landing River & Albemarle Sound

Estuarine Symposium and the United Tribes of North Carolina Unity Conference. Sponsorship and staff attendance is recorded in a Smartsheet and updated regularly.

Potential Enhancements: Track number of attendees at sponsored events. Implement more proactive planning for social media promotion of events APNEP sponsors and attends. Collect feedback on presentations/workshops APNEP hosts at events. Reassess current communication material inventory and partner needs for updated copy.

Grants & Contracts

APNEP provides direct financial support to partners for various initiatives through grants and contracts. This usually involves a public Request for Proposal (RFP) where submitted projects are scored against set criteria by appropriate members of the Management Conference. Proposals are only accepted for projects or initiatives that take place or primarily impact areas within the APNEP management boundary in North Carolina and Virginia, and which assist in implementing at least one of the CCMP actions.

APNEP can also collaborate with partners to apply for external funding sources or provide letters of support when requested. APNEP is eligible to be a government partner applicant and can administer funds to its partners, with a preference for active involvement rather than serving as a grant administrator or "pass-through" partner.

Audience: Government organizations, nonprofits, and research and education institutions located in the Albemarle-Pamlico watershed.

Evaluation: Based on availability of funding each year, multiple engagement project may be funded. Funded projects are required to submit a final report outlining program activities outcomes that is made available on APNEP's website.

In FY24-25, APNEP worked with partners to issue four contracts and support implementation of projects selected during a 2024 RFP. Two projects were completed, and two projects were granted no-cost extensions to wrap up ongoing work through 2026.

- Experiencing the Albemarle-Pamlico Estuary: Fostering Watershed Stewardship
- Shad in the Classroom
- Growing Wild Celery to SAVe Our Wetlands: A Grassroots Collaborative
- Down East Resilience Network Communications Strategy

Potential Enhancements: Feedback from various audiences[1] highlights an opportunity for APNEP to simplify its grant application and management processes. Given the vast

[1] North Carolina State Resilience Office 2025 Triangle Region Resilience Convening participant discussion, Sarasota Bay Estuary Program 2025-2030 Communications Plan, APNEP staff conversations with partners.

geographic scope of the Albemarle-Pamlico region and APNEP's limited administrative capacity, streamlining these processes is a practical step. A more accessible and equitable funding mechanism would better serve the diverse range of potential applicants whose capacity for grant management varies and strengthen the Partnership's ability to support impactful projects aligned with the CCMP.

One promising approach is to move away from overly prescriptive RFPs or targeted outreach that may indirectly exclude others, and instead adopt a more flexible, open-call model for research, restoration, and engagement initiatives. This would allow applicants to propose innovative ideas that align with APNEP's goals without being constrained by narrowly defined scopes.

A compelling example of this model is the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission's annual call for research ideas. Their two-stage process begins with a concise concept submission (limited to two pages), followed by an invitation for a full proposal only if the idea is selected for further consideration. This approach lowers the barrier to entry, encourages early-stage innovation, and reduces the administrative burden on both applicants and reviewers. It also ensures that time and resources are not wasted on fully developed proposals that may be misaligned with program priorities from the outset.

Print and Digital Materials

Website

APNEP's website (apnep.nc.gov) provides an overview of the estuarine system, information about the program, APNEP's current initiatives, and helpful resources. For example, GIS visualization products like the interactive ArcGIS Online StoryMap that walks through the SAV Team's 2021 Metric Report findings and their implications for the estuarine system. The website also serves as a clearinghouse for important APNEP documents such as the annual work plan and budget.

Blog

APNEP's Soundings Blog is used to highlight current projects, partners, and committee initiatives. Blog posts may be written by APNEP staff, solicited from outside groups, or republished from other publications with permission. The blog is distributed online via APNEP's various social media outlets, the newsletter, and is highly visible on APNEP's home page.

Social media

APNEP maintains a social media presence on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and X (Twitter). While social media is primarily used to promote projects and initiatives that APNEP is directly involved in, it is also utilized to share information about the region and

highlight partner accomplishments. The intent of content posted or shared on social media is to inform, rather than to advocate.

Listservs

APNEP retains email subscription lists using GovDelivery. Quarterly newsletter formats vary but generally include a note from APNEP, Partnership news (webinars, events, resources, grants, blogs), and partner spotlights. Special announcements may be sent to newsletter subscribers to promote high priority or time sensitive matters such as job opportunities or grants. GovDelivery also houses project-specific lists for certain projects, like the Scuppernong Water Management Study. This allows stakeholders to receive detailed information on efforts most important to them, as the newsletter only provides an overview.

Other Materials

Where feasible, APNEP-supported restoration and demonstration projects include the APNEP logo on any signage. APNEP has also participated in the development of educational signage and supported partners by providing financial support for signs. APNEP's website provides a media kit with brand guidance.



APNEP provided financial support for educational signage at the Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center in Columbia, NC (2026).

APNEP also contributed to six highway signs noting drivers are entering the Albemarle-Pamlico watershed. Roadway signage was installed in 2019 at six locations throughout the watershed: Orange County, Wake County, Johnston County, Sampson County and Onslow County. The signs raise awareness of the extent of the region and of the connectivity from headwaters to the coast. APNEP would like to expand the roadway signage into Virginia.

APNEP created a core set of printed materials including case statements, tabletop displays, banners, program presentations, and other program documents. These materials are available both online and in paper form and may be used at outreach and education events including conferences.

Audience: These materials vary widely and serve to inform all target audience groups.

Evaluation: APNEP has mechanisms for monitoring communications performance, such as social media engagement, website traffic, and newsletter metrics. These data are available through Google Analytics, DubBot, and integrated social media and newsletter monitoring tools. APNEP has also periodically solicited feedback from its membership and the public regarding its communication efforts. Social media, website, and newsletter data should be

reported annually. Website, blog, printed materials, and social media activities are budgeted in program administration duties. Financial support for educational signage or materials varies based on funding availability and are usually budgeted within Sponsorship and Grant activities.

Potential Enhancements: APNEP has been without a full-time Communications & Outreach Specialist since 2020 and there are gaps in monitoring and reporting. The responsibilities are now part of the Partnership Coordinator role (hired Sept. 2025). A workflow for tracking metrics across all platforms and mechanisms is in development with an estimated completion date of Summer 2026. As aforementioned, a future strategy may be to create an optional questionnaire to determine how target audiences perceive the communication efforts of APNEP and/or how they receive information.

Internships

APNEP has hosted numerous Science Communications and Outreach interns through the Department of Administration State of NC Internship since 2018, and other programs including AmeriCorps and NC-DEQs Student Training & Experience Program. Past interns have developed ArcGIS StoryMaps, maps showing project distribution in the region, an analysis of communication and outreach strategies for aquatic invasive and nuisance species, strategies for targeted SAV outreach, recommendations for the Partnership's outreach activities, and most recently, targeted communications and tools for IIJA implementation.

Audience: Academic institutions and policymakers.

Evaluation: APNEP has hosted over 50 interns since its NEP designation in 1987. Internship projects are reviewed by staff and may or may not be uploaded to the website. Post-internship sentiment, activities, and/or accomplishments are not currently captured. Interns are generally budgeted for within program administration, specific projects, or supported by non-federal funds.

Potential Enhancements: Feedback from internship experiences should be evaluated. It can provide insights into the program's effectiveness, helping to identify strengths and weaknesses in areas like onboarding, mentorship, and work assignments. Interns can help alleviate workloads by taking on repetitive communications and engagement monitoring tasks such as social media analytics. Being more strategic in assigning projects and tasks and recording internship feedback will make these programs more effective for both interns and APNEP.

Research Collaboration & Dissemination

APNEP's mission, structure, and ecosystem-based approach allow for broad-scale inquiries and research designed to support management efforts in the region. APNEP staff members engage with the Science and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC), Monitoring and Assessment Teams, partner organizations, and project-specific contractors on diverse research initiatives. This network of professionals allows APNEP to consistently access and apply advanced scientific knowledge in areas of strategic interest to the program. Furthermore, natural resource managers, partner agencies and organizations, and other professionals commonly identify knowledge gaps, which if rectified could result in more robust management of the ecosystem's natural resources. Successful research collaborations rely on solid communication and engagement practices.

Many CCMP actions also include communication and engagement components. For example:

- Sharing scientific findings with the public
- Promoting best practices through community workshops
- Engaging stakeholders in monitoring and restoration efforts

It is important that these are considered throughout the project lifecycle.

Audience: Government organizations, nonprofits, and research and education institutions located in the Albemarle-Pamlico watershed.

Evaluation: APNEP has numerous research projects that are ongoing. Involvement ranges from technical support, in-kind services, and logistical assistance, as well as direct engagement with partners as needed. A few current projects include the NC Sea Grant-APNEP Joint Graduate Fellowship, Coastal Plain Ecological Flows Evaluation, NC Aquatic Nuisance Species Management Plan Coordination, Economic Valuation of Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV), and Economic Valuation of the Albemarle-Pamlico Watershed.

APNEP's website provides details on each project, often accompanied by an infographic or interactive ArcGIS map. Throughout the project lifecycle, APNEP may feature research activities (e.g., field work, workshops) on social media or in a blog post.

Communication and outreach efforts may be included in research project (water quality, SAV, wetland, oyster, and/or resilience) scopes of work and budgets or be a part of the program administration budget (i.e., blog post).

Potential Enhancements: Most partners have social media of their own, so with better transparency and planning, opportunity exists for extending APNEP's reach by coordinating on posts. This can sometimes more than double the number of views a post receives.

APNEP staff should more frequently consider connecting with partner communication staff or proactively alerting the Partnership Coordinator when major project milestones or announcements are on the horizon. There are not currently expectations within APNEP regarding notification of research activities for communication purposes, so establishing these would be advantageous.

Additionally, website engagement with research project materials (StoryMaps, infographics, etc.) is not monitored. Evaluating these materials using Google Analytics could be helpful data in realizing APNEP's reach and how much time staff should invest for certain products.

Networking & Development

As a partnership organization, APNEP works to provide partners with opportunities to connect with one another and keep groups informed of what is happening in the wider APNEP network. This is a nuanced process, and may depend on things like known resources, location, availability, and even personalities. All program staff members work to develop and maintain relationships with partner organizations throughout the region, particularly those relating to specific job responsibilities, ongoing projects, and other assignments.

APNEP staff regularly participate in external workgroups and committees to expand reach, facilitate regional collaboration, and reciprocate volunteer involvement. Some workgroups align with core responsibilities and are outlined in position descriptions. Where possible, APNEP prioritizes projects that align with the complimentary missions of these external workgroups. Staff actively seeks opportunities to integrate external workgroup projects with APNEP goals. Staff are currently involved in numerous workgroups/committees.

As previously mentioned, staff also attend external events that align with APNEP's priorities. These may include conferences, symposium, forums, festivals, and workshops. Attending events helps highlight APNEP and build partnerships, stay informed on regional trends, and support professional development. See Appendix B for event selection practices.

Audience: Networking and development efforts span all target audiences.

Evaluation: A network analysis was conducted in 2013 to identify communication patterns among Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Partnership partners. The analysis helped APNEP target its limited communications resources to increase collaboration and share information efficiently with stakeholders. Though dated, the analysis still provides useful insight as APNEP's core operations and partnerships have not changed drastically since 2013. There is not currently a regular evaluation of APNEP's networking activities or

capacity, though events staff members attend, and in what capacity, is recorded in Smartsheet. Committee and working group involvement is also recorded there.

Networking and development activities are generally budgeted for within program administration, unless attached to a specific project.

Potential Enhancements: APNEP may consider repeating the analysis or refocusing on the results (Appendix B) from the 2013 network analysis. As with other activities and programs listed above, a survey of APNEP's audiences regarding their perception of APNEP's ability to foster connections could be useful.

Following event participation, in addition to sharing notes from events, staff should consider recording this information in a written document stored in APNEP's OneDrive.

Appendix A: APNEP Programs and Activities Roadmap

Program / Activity	Implementor	Description / Delivery	Audience	Potential Enhancements	Budget* and Timeframe
Management Conference	Staff and Management Conference	Engagement through LC, STAC, CAC, and ad-hoc workgroups to support CCMP implementation.	Broad cross-section: government, scientific, educational, economic, societal representatives.	Analyze attendance regularly; create baseline questionnaire; revisit 2016 needs assessment.	Staff time, $3000 budgeted for MC activities, NEP $10,000 required minimum for travel funds, ongoing
Sponsorship	Staff	Direct or indirect support for conferences, workshops, outreach events.	Government organizations, nonprofits, environmental educators, research/education institutions.	Track attendees; plan social media; gather presentation feedback; reassess materials.	Staff time, $1,200 budgeted for events and sponsorships, ongoing
Grants & Contracts	Staff, Management Conference, contracting entity (university, NGO, local gov, etc.)	Financial support through RFPs; collaboration on external grants; letters of support.	Government, nonprofits, research & education institutions.	Simplify grant process; consider open-call model; reduce applicant burden; explore two-stage proposal model.	Staff time, RFP amounts vary based on focus area (SAV, resilience, etc.) and fund availability, ongoing
Print & Digital Materials	Staff and contracting entity if applicable (e.g., grant to update signage)	Website serves as clearinghouse, blog, social media, listservs, signage, printed materials.	All target audiences.	Develop metric-tracking workflow; consider communications effectiveness questionnaire.	Staff time, large print jobs taken from focus area budgets (SAV, resilience, etc.), ongoing
Internships	Staff	Longstanding internship programs producing maps, StoryMaps, outreach analyses, tools, recommendations.	Academic institutions and policymakers.	Capture internship feedback; use interns for analytics; improve assignment strategy.	Staff time, ~$7,000 per intern, May-July annually
Research Collaboration & Dissemination	Staff, contracting entity (university, NGO, local gov, etc.)	Collaboration with STAC, partners, contractors; integration of communication components in CCMP actions.	Government, nonprofits, research & education partners.	Coordinate social media with partners; set research notification expectations; monitor website analytics.	Staff time, amounts vary based on focus area (SAV, resilience, etc.) and fund availability, ongoing
Networking & Development	Staff	Staff maintain partner relationships, join	All target audiences.	Repeat 2013 network analysis; survey audiences;	Staff time, NEP $10,000 required

		workgroups, attend events, support regional collaboration.		record event insights in shared docs.	minimum for travel funds, ongoing.

Appendix B: Assessment of APNEP Participation in Outreach and Education Events

Staff will use the following questions to determine the value or benefit of participating in or providing financial support for (sponsoring) an event. APNEP participation versus sponsorship of an event will be determined based on the level of need for direct outreach (participation) versus funding (sponsorship), as well as APNEP staff time/availability, available funds, and the partners involved in the event. Every question may not be relevant to each request. Flexibility is inherent, as new opportunities and activities present themselves from time to time, and as we engage new partners throughout the region. Questions are listed in order of importance.

> **Participation**: Participation is defined as the attendance of APNEP staff at an event, festival, conference, workshop, or other outreach event. While APNEP's participation may involve indirect costs in terms of staff time, travel costs, and supply costs, there is no direct funding of the organizing partner(s).
>
> **Sponsorship**: APNEP may provide funds to sponsor an organization's event. To qualify for sponsorship, an event must be one that APNEP staff could participate in, as either facilitators or attendees, as time and staff availability allows. Examples of sponsored events include conferences, workshops, festivals/community events, and collaborative environmental education or outreach events. Sponsorship requests above $2,500 (the current cap for invoices vs. contract) will be referred to the appropriate Management Conference entity for consideration.

Evaluation Criteria: Questions for participating in education and outreach events and/or sponsoring conferences & workshops:

Criteria must be fulfilled for APNEP **participation and/or sponsorship**:

1. Does the event or sponsorship address CCMP actions, and which one(s)? Events addressing CCMP Actions that haven't been implemented or have been identified as Partnership priorities take precedence over other requests.
2. Would the event or sponsorship support APNEP's identity as a neutral, science-based organization? APNEP will not attend or sponsor advocacy-focused events that may undermine its credibility.

At least one of the following criteria must be fulfilled for APNEP **sponsorship**:

1. Is the request targeting an audience that APNEP's Management Conference has identified as a strategic need for the Partnership? (Ex: local governments), or would help APNEP to build or maintain a relationship with the potential partner organization?
2. Does the person/organization making the request participate significantly in the Management Conference via the Leadership Council, STAC, IAC, Action Teams, or other workgroups?
3. Does the sponsored event benefit a large number of partners, directly or indirectly? Examples: conferences, workshops, seminar, festival, etc.

Other criteria to consider when deciding whether to **participate in or sponsor** an event. At least one target audience must be reached.

1. Audience - Who are the target audience(s) for the event?
    a. Does the event reach an under-targeted or underserved population? Examples include Tier 1 counties, Title IX schools, counties targeted by the Hometown Strong/Governor's Rural Initiative
    b. Does the event reach groups across regional, watershed, or geopolitical boundaries? (Virginia partners, bringing new groups together for collaboration)
    c. Does the event allow APNEP to reach one of its target audiences?
        i. General public (volunteerism, land stewardship), agricultural communities, educators, policy and decision makers at multiple levels and from all branches of federal, state, and local government, outdoor recreation audiences (boaters, fishermen, hikers, paddlers)
2. Time Commitment - How much of a time commitment / staff logistics is needed?
3. Leverage - How much leverage can be obtained from participating?
    a. Examples of leverage include financial contributions, relationship building opportunities, and registration/attendance cost waivers for APNEP staff.

Appendix C: Key Findings from K.A. Brogan's "Using Social Network Analysis to Identify Communication Patterns Among Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Partnership Partners" (2013)

- APNEP should work to facilitate collaboration on interstate (NC/VA) environmental initiatives.
- Particularly in North Carolina, there is a lack of connections between state agencies and NGOs. APNEP can play a role in matching state agencies and NGOs that have similar objectives and/or projects.
- Academic and educational institutions are relatively isolated from the larger network, with limited connections to professionals working in other sectors. APNEP should work to connect the financial resources of their university affiliates with their monitoring, research, and management data needs. one of the largest estuary systems in the country. Additionally, ensuring that educational institutions are aware of current conservation and restoration projects in the region, and working with the institutions to communicate effectively about Albemarle-Pamlico watershed issues, can increase volunteer participation in APNEP projects and public support for APNEP and its partners.
- APNEP should work to integrate isolated organizations and individuals (as identified by the social network analysis) into the larger regional network. However, prior to devoting time and resources to developing stronger relationships with isolated organizations, APNEP should evaluate whether partnerships or involvement would be relevant or useful and adjust the strength of involvement (communication vs active collaboration) accordingly.
- Highly connected, and therefore presumably influential, individuals in the network could also be considered for inclusion on APNEP's advisory committees and Leadership Council to provide a broadly connected perspective of regional environmental issues.
- APNEP should focus on delivering relevant policy and project information to key players and ask them to pass along the information to their professional networks to increase the efficiency and range of APNEP communications' distribution. By leveraging the connectedness of key players, APNEP will be able to reach larger portions of the network through direct contact.
- APNEP should seek to involve people with strong inter-state connections in regional planning and outreach initiatives. In addition, holding meetings and workshops in areas convenient for both coastal Virginia and North Carolina stakeholders, and publicizing these events through outreach in both states, should bring a variety of

interested parties together and foster collaboration between attendees from different areas and organizations.

- APNEP should identify and communicate with areas that are currently left out of wider regional activity. Areas in northwest Virginia and North Carolina were relatively underrepresented in the geographic analysis and could be important areas of outreach for APNEP given the watershed dynamics and the impacts of upstream activities on estuary health.