

NARRATIVE TOOLKIT: Tools for Communicating Conservation Messages



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Land conservation connects us to each other. Joshua and Kimberlee Middleton, a mother-son duo on the Appalachian Trail. (Photo: Appalachian Trail Conservancy)

INTRODUCTION

Spitfire developed this toolkit to support the Chesapeake Conservation Partnership (the Partnership) and its many partners in communicating about land conservation in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Development of the toolkit was facilitated by the Partnership and its funding partners, the Appalachian Trail Landscape Partnership, the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy, and the Agua Foundation.

This toolkit presents a shared narrative intended to unite and bolster land conservation efforts across the diverse landscapes within the Chesapeake Bay watershed. The toolkit also includes tools and resources for partnership members to implement and tailor the narrative to be relevant to their work and priority audiences.

The narrative presented here was developed through a comprehensive research process which included: a materials review to identify how the Partnership and its members, and Appalachian Trail conservation partners, talk about their shared land conservation vision; a media scan to describe and understand the current narratives about land conservation in key regions; and stakeholder interviews with individuals representing the Partnership's member organizations to identify key messages, regional challenges and ways to support members' communication efforts.



Land conservation puts food on our tables. (Photo: Will Parson/Chesapeake Bay Program)

A narrative provides a persuasive frame or lens through which audiences view an issue. As an overarching story, a narrative is embedded with values and grounds all communication about a specific issue. This toolkit presents a narrative intended to provide land conservation partners with foundational language linking a wide variety of land conservation efforts to the larger region and to individuals' quality of life. The narrative is not intended to be repeated verbatim, but instead to serve as the guiding theme that grounds a wide variety of communications in a central theme.

This toolkit introduces the narrative and provides guidelines for land conservation partners to tailor the overarching narrative to their own work and locality. The following items are presented in the toolkit to help partners tailor the narrative to their own work:

- Step-by-step guidance for partners to tailor their own compelling and persuasive messaging, based on the narrative, for key audiences;
- Guidelines for partners to incorporate the narrative into all day-to-day communication efforts;
- Tips for tailoring the narrative to varying geographic scales; and
- Recommendations for utilizing and tailoring visual elements that convey the narrative.



Land conservation supports our health and well-being. (Photo: Will Parson/Chesapeake Bay Program)

NARRATIVE FRAME AND RATIONALE

A narrative delivers your strategy by providing a persuasive frame or lens through which to view an issue. Values are embedded in the narrative, and it grounds all communication.

This narrative provides land conservation partners with foundational language that links local conservation efforts to the larger Chesapeake region. The narrative ladders up from the hyperlocal – specific properties, rivers, hiking trails or landmarks – to the community, the region, and finally, the watershed as a whole.

Spitfire's stakeholder interviews, media scan, materials review and focus group at the September Steering Committee meeting showed us that people and organizations value lands for different reasons, but that the majority of those reasons fall into one of the Partnership's five focus areas: farms, forests, heritage, health and habitat. The purpose of this narrative is to unite those reasons and connect each of them back to land conservation. Understanding that audiences feel a connection

to their local lands and waters, the narrative focuses on garnering support for land conservation by protecting peoples' personal values, rather than asking them to understand the Chesapeake Bay watershed as a whole.

The narrative will emphasize that, regardless of what focus area you care about, conserving land is crucial to what you love and makes your life better, and its benefits extend to you, your family, your community and beyond.

We recommend using quality of life as the narrative frame based on the following rationale:

Flexibility. This frame is intended to be tailored. We anticipate it will be tailored for:

- The five main Partnership conservation goals: farms, forests, heritage, health and habitat; and
- The target audiences' perspectives on whether (and if so, how) responsibility for conservation should be shared between individuals, foundations and governments. Quality of life is a strong frame, whether your audiences are individuals making choices about their own property, or policymakers deciding whether to fund government land conservation programs. For example:
- Protecting your land with a conservation easement through a local foundation will conserve its beauty and value to your family and to your community for generations to come.
- Fully funding land conservation programs that protect the trails and historic properties in your county drives recreational tourism to your town and improves the quality of life for your constituency.
- Even in the heart of Baltimore, clean rivers make our lives better. Conserving river lands outside our city keeps our water clean and safe to drink.

Quality of life is personal and therefore persuasive. Quality of life is a frame that makes land conservation personal for target audiences. Building up from the personal, to the community, to the region and finally the watershed makes it easier for audiences to understand how protecting land is connected to their personal lives and well-being. This frame can encompass all the different aspects of well-being (spiritual, physical and emotional) as well as all the different aspects of a high quality of life, such as economic prosperity and access to leisure activities.

Threats are specific to potential situations. We name the threats but we don't go so far as casting blame. In conservation, we work with coalitions of people and organizations to achieve our goals. There's no point in putting anyone on the defensive.

Buy-in. Partnership members already use the quality of life frame to inspire audiences to protect land in the watershed. This narrative will help build upon and enhance what Partnership members are already saying. Increasing the connection to landscape conservation will help audiences see their place in the big picture.



Land conservation connects our kids with nature.

NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

We approach this narrative with the following structure:

Lead with values. Messaging should lead with values that drive land conservation in the watershed and focus on the five main conservation goals for the Partnership. A value speaks to why a person may support conservation. These values can be tailored to specific audiences. For example, when speaking to a coalition of farmers in Maryland, focus on the value that land conservation lends to their livelihoods and way of life.

Emphasize the ends. Focus on the benefits that land conservation brings. How does conservation support a person's values? When you conserve land, what great things happen? These ends should be tailored to match the values of your target audiences.

Focus on lived experience. Identify the hyperlocal areas that your audiences connect with. What proves or brings to life the benefits? It's not just about farms; it's about one specific farm where your audience has an emotional connection. These hyperlocal examples should then be tied back to the value of the overall watershed to foster an emotional connection.

Name the threats. There are multiple potential threats to the lands and waters we depend on: unplanned growth and development, sea level rise and flooding and a general lack of understanding of what and where the Chesapeake Bay watershed is, and how it benefits the people who live in and around it. The narrative should overcome these barriers in a way that helps audiences understand their personal stake in land conservation, starting with their local area and building up to the whole watershed.

Link the problem to the solution. The narrative will show that land conservation enhances quality of life benefits for people and communities. How does conservation solve their problems and allow them to live their values? In this way, land conservation becomes a solution to a problem, instead of an activity that needs defending from criticism. The message should connect to the audience and what they value, whether it's preserving historic lands, keeping a hiking trail open to the public or conserving forests – or any combination of these assets. Note that the ask in the narrative is not specific beyond land conservation. In tailored messaging, the ask will be more direct and targeted to address your audience.



Land conservation protects the wildlife we love and need. (Photo: Steve Droter/Chesapeake Bay Program)

NARRATIVE ARC

VALUES

Whether you live on a farm or in the city, are a history lover or a hiker, or simply want to drink pure water straight from the tap, the land you live on and around shapes your life.

- Land can be as essential as your source of income or as profound as your place for peace and tranquility. Both ends – and everything in between – connect your quality of life to the place where you live.

BENEFITS

When we conserve land, we invest in our quality of life.

- When we protect our land, our rivers are cleaner.
- That means we can turn on the tap and have a glass of pure drinking water.
- When we protect our land, we can enjoy parks in the city and suburbs that are green and full of life.
- When we protect farmland, we keep working lands in family hands and we can have delicious, local and healthy food on our tables.
- When we protect our land, we sustain wildlife populations for outdoorsmen, blue crab populations on the Eastern Shore and streams that are clean and full of trout for fishermen.
- When we protect our land, we can go for a hike on the Appalachian Trail and see a spectacular view at McAfee Knob.
- When we protect our land, we preserve historic places and lands that teach us about and connect us to our past.

(Note: This list's order – and examples – can change based on audience).

THREATS

But if we don't prioritize land conservation, we put at risk much of what we value in our lives: clean water, healthy food, exercise, recreation and relaxation, and, in some cases, our livelihoods.

Imagine...

- ...coming around the corner on Skyline Drive to see the fall leaves change, and the beautiful vista is marred by a transmission line running through Shenandoah Valley.
- ...an historic property in your town is sold to make room for office buildings, or the local farms that stock your pantry slowly but surely disappear.
- ..The morning you turn on your tap to get a glass of water and nothing comes out – or what does trickle out is brown and smells terrible.
- ...you can no longer drive 15 minutes outside the city to the nearest park because it's been bulldozed to build more apartment buildings – or half an hour to a winery because they don't have the water to irrigate the grapes.
- ...your favorite stretch of the Appalachian Trail, once a place of tranquility, is now surrounded by cars, roads and industrial development.
- ...the all-too-real situation we don't have to imagine: without natural lands to absorb their floodwaters, rivers have overflowed their banks, inundating historic towns like Alexandria, Virginia and Ellicott City, Maryland.

(Note: This list's order – and examples – can change based on audience).

SOLUTIONS

These hypothetical situations could turn into ruinous realities if we don't conserve crucial land in the watershed. If we are smart about how we use and protect our land, we can continue to enjoy the things we love and feel secure in knowing that these lands will be here for us and our families.

- Communities across our region have already shown how together we reap the benefits when we protect our land. *(Note: This is a good place to insert specific land conservation success stories).*
- Land conservation ensures future development and growth can take place, while still protecting the places we need and love so we can continue to enjoy them.
- From our morning walk in the park to the locally-grown food we eat for dinner to the comfort we feel when we go to bed at night knowing that we're protecting the places we value, the land and water all around us makes our lives better and gives us peace of mind. Land conservation is an investment in ourselves, our communities and our future.

TAILORING THE MESSAGE

MESSAGE BOX TOOL

The message box tool is intended to provide guidelines for creating your own messaging based on the narrative.

To create a compelling message based on the narrative, follow the guidelines below.

CREATING COMPELLING MESSAGES WORKSHEET

Who are you trying to reach with this message? (Remember to keep your audiences as narrow as possible and only select one audience as a time – different audiences need different message boxes.)

Brainstorm a list of values that your audience has. Circle the one that is most important that you will tap into with your message.

Brainstorm a list of barriers that your audience has. Circle the one that is most important that you will overcome with your message.

Now fill in the four sections of your message box.

| 1 Message Box | | |
|------------------|--------|-----------------|
| Audience 1: | Value: | Barrier: |
| Value Message | | |
| Vision Statement | | Barrier Breaker |
| Ask | | |

The narrative above is an overall framework that can be tailored for specific regions, threats and audiences.

For example, if you were speaking to recreational hikers who live in Washington D.C. and care about access to nearby parks and trails, but who don't know about a proposed development project that could destroy places they love, your narrative could say:

Land conservation ensures that the places you love to visit are always there when you need to get away. But unless we act to conserve land now, your favorite trail could be churned up by bulldozers and you can say goodbye to your weekend hike. Supporting land conservation policy will prevent this from happening and ensure you can continue to do the things you love.

Or, if you were speaking to watermen on the Eastern Shore asking them to support a new piece of land conservation policy:

Land conservation ensures the Chesapeake Bay's water is clean and supports the crabs we catch on the Eastern Shore. Protected places hundreds of miles upstream support a bountiful harvest and a thriving economy here on the water.

Or, if you were asking a farmer to put their land into a conservation trust:

Putting your land in a conservation trust ensures that you can still use and profit from your property, with the peace of mind that comes from knowing it will never be paved over by developers. You, your family and your community will continue to benefit – be it scenic views, delicious local food or higher property values – and will be part of the reason why our state is known for its natural beauty, instead of industrial blight.

STORIES

What's the difference between a narrative arc and a story? A narrative is a framework, while the success stories we tell incorporate elements from that framework and build on it, with a beginning, middle and end, a main character and an antagonist.

Just outside our town, 500 acres of beautiful private farm was in danger of being bulldozed for a condo development. The landowner loved his property and wanted to conserve it, but thought he had no choice but to sell. Once he learned that he could protect his land in an easement, we worked with him to make it happen. As a result, we can still drink from the tap, serve up local food and take in the breathtaking views. *(Note: or even, "we can now hike and birdwatch in this special place because the landowner wanted to give back to our community and turn it into a public preserve.")* These 500 acres are precious threads in a tapestry of lands and waters all around us that improve our quality of life. And it's land conservation that keeps this tapestry from unraveling.

While stories in the news (about a hurricane, flooding, red tide, new climate change report or other event outside of our control) provide us the opportunity to reinforce our overarching narrative through op-eds, letters to the editor, blogs and other communication vehicles:

This most recent hurricane wreaked havoc on communities throughout our region, flooding our homes, causing significant property damage and contaminating our water. But it could have been so much worse. As we rebuild, we can be thankful that the wetland areas we've conserved throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed protected us from the worst of the storm. In addition to being prime birdwatching areas and nurseries for the fish we love to eat, our scenic wetlands and marshes acted like sponges and soaked up floodwaters and reduced the storm surge. It's yet another way land conservation is an investment in ourselves, our communities and our future.

INCORPORATING THE NARRATIVE

Once you have your narrative, it's easy to incorporate it into the day-to-day communication you are already engaging in, whether in a Facebook post, tweet, letter to the editor or newsletter item. Below are guidelines for framing organizational responses to relevant news or other events we can expect to happen.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

You can construct and tailor your response using the following framework:

1. Statement about the topic at hand (Is it a natural disaster? A piece of legislation you want to highlight? An event?)
2. Link land conservation and the topic to the quality of life benefit your audience cares about. (Drinking water? Hiking trails? Historic lands? Farms?)
3. Where appropriate, include an ask (e.g., call your representative, sign a petition, attend an event).

POLICY CHANGE OR LEGISLATION

A spiel about a policy or legislative opportunity usually includes an ask to contact a representative or policymaker and share your support (or disapproval) of the proposed change. Be sure to link the issue to quality of life to remind your audience why they should care.

XX policy – now being considered by the Virginia state legislature – will make it even easier for landowners who want peace of mind to protect their land with a conservation easement. Easements ensure the working farms, wildlife habitat and scenic vistas we know and love are conserved for future generations. Ask your representative to support this policy.

EVENT

Your organization's events are a great way to remind members and supporters that land conservation enhances their quality of life, and your work helps make that possible.

The Moonshadow Hike on October 18 will be one of the brightest night hikes we've had this year. Join the AT Conservancy and learn how protecting land around the trail grants us some of the rarest and most spectacular views of the night sky on the East Coast.

NEW RESEARCH OR REPORTS

New research lends credibility to the connection between land conservation and quality of life and offers an opportunity to introduce the quality of life frame to new conversations. Depending on your

audience's interests, the message can be tailored to their values. In the example below, you might say that research proves that conserved lands protect fish populations or provide clean water for recreation like boating and kayaking.

New reports show that pollution is still a big problem for the Chesapeake Bay. Conserving land in our watershed is part of the solution. Conserved lands here in the Piedmont help keep our water clean, from your kitchen sink to the mouth of the Bay. Learn more here: [\(link\)](#)

NATURAL DISASTER

Respond to natural disasters such as hurricanes or floods with language that both respects the seriousness of the event and reminds your audience of the link between land conservation and quality of life. Remember to be sensitive and respectful when responding to tragedies. Give pause and don't immediately use the issue for your own motives. For example, if your organization is responding to the record flooding in Ellicott City, you might say:

The floods in historic Ellicott City were a tragedy for families, neighborhoods and businesses. We're working to conserve forests and wetlands in Maryland that absorb floodwaters and help protect our vibrant communities here in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

WILDLIFE OR SEASONAL STORIES

These stories are a great opportunity to link land conservation to the quality of life values that are tied to nature. Focus on how natural events like bird migrations, produce harvests, changing seasons and wildlife sightings contribute to the richness of our experience living in the watershed.

Monarch butterflies are back in North Central Pennsylvania. Next time you see these beauties in your garden, thank a landowner; conservation easements protect the milkweed Monarchs need and make our corner of the Appalachians a beautiful place to live.

APPLYING THE NARRATIVE TO DIFFERENT GEOGRAPHIC SCALES

The Chesapeake Conservation Partnership and Appalachian Trail Landscape Partnership work with multiple partners that conserve land on many different geographic scales, from cities to counties, states, regions and the watershed as a whole.

The quality of life narrative frame is intentionally flexible to allow all partnership members to tailor the narrative as needed. This section provides guidance on how to tailor the narrative to different geographic scales.

START WITH STRATEGY

When applying the narrative to your work, always consider your objective and audience. Your messaging, including the places and values you reference in the narrative, should speak to your audience's values and help overcome their barriers.

There is no hard and fast rule for which geographic scale will be the most relevant or compelling to your audiences, but in general we recommend the following:

- When speaking to **individuals**, reference the smallest-scale, most local examples to illuminate the impact of land conservation. Point to, for example:
 - The farms they buy food from or the families they know who own the farms.
 - The parks their children play in.
 - The rivers that affect their drinking water.
 - The preserves where they hunt.
 - The water they boat and fish on.
 - The places they explore.
- When speaking to **county- or city-level policymakers**, reference places of cultural importance to the county or city. For example, point to:
 - Specific parks, waters or places that residents of the city or county spend a significant amount of time visiting or drive a tourism industry for the county.
- When speaking to **state-level policymakers**, reference general places that are significant to their constituents on the whole. This may include:
 - Farms in general if the state is made up of a significant population of farmers and farmland.
 - Recreation and heritage places if the state economy is fueled significantly by a tourism industry.
 - Waterways if the state is fueled by a fishing culture and economy.
- When speaking to a coalition of **multi-state, state- or federal-level policymakers**, reference the places that are significant to all or most stakeholders in the coalition or group, for example:
 - If farming is a significant culture and economic drive in all or most states, focus on the impact of land conservation on farms.
 - If a river, mountain range, national park or hiking trail runs through all or most states, focus on that specific river or place and the impact it has on each state's residents.

BRINGING IT TO LIFE WITH EXAMPLES

LOCAL OR COUNTY LEVEL

For example, if you want to talk about protecting lands in specific counties of Virginia, you might say:

Gilberts Corner Regional Park is a peaceful slice of nature in the middle of Aldie. It gives us meditative hikes, scenic views and opportunities for quiet contemplation that enrich our lives.

Thanks to a conservation easement, the rich history of iconic Atoka Farm will be preserved for future generations to learn about Virginia's past.

STATE LEVEL

To focus on the benefits of land conservation across a state, reference a resource that is relevant across the state, like farm culture in general, or a place that holds iconic meaning to residents across the state. For example, if you are talking about public lands in Maryland, you might say:

Antietam National Battlefield is an incredible resource for Marylanders; it preserves our state's history, gives us a beautiful place to exercise and play and has a patchwork of open fields and forests that protect the birds and wildlife we love. Parks across Maryland enhance our lives.

WATERSHED OR REGION

To apply the narrative to the largest geographic scale, focus on the impact of land conservation or the repercussions to the watershed as a whole if we do not conserve land. For example, you might say:

The decisions we make about conserving land in PA improve the commonwealth and also help our neighbors. When landowners in PA reduce sediment and nutrient run off, it improves local waterways and also benefits farmland downstream in Maryland, Virginia and West Virginia.

ELEVATOR PITCH

ABOUT THE ELEVATOR PITCH

Whether at a cocktail party, a networking event or on a long airplane ride, everyone is eventually faced with the question, "So, what do you do?" Although some situations are more high pressure than others, being able to describe your work and organization in a succinct and compelling manner is a vital skill – especially when introducing your work to key audiences.

While your issues may be complex, the policies nuanced and constituents' needs huge, developing clear, straightforward language about what you do can help engage audiences and ensure they remember you. It's about opening up your work so that others find it relevant and interesting. With a short, pithy description of your work, you can connect with more potential supporters.

Here are some tips for developing a successful spiel about your work.

- **Brevity.** It's not just the soul of wit; it's also the core of a good narrative. You should be able to say what you need to say in about a minute. Focus on what's most important and cut away the rest.
- **Avoid jargon.** Steer clear of acronyms, buzzwords and insider-speak to keep your audience engaged.
- **Passion.** Perhaps the most important part is the gusto, enthusiasm and commitment your description expresses. Don't be afraid to tap into the passion and drive you feel for your work.

Here are the four components of a strong spiel:

- **Strong opening.** You want a hook to pique the listeners' interest and encapsulate what you are about to say. Convey your vision for the future, tap into the listeners' shared values and capture the importance of your work.
- **Identify the problem.** Define the task at hand in clear simple terms to illustrate the purpose of your work. Using a story, anecdote or statistic helps bring the problem to life in a compelling way.
- **Share your unique solution.** Say what you are doing about the problem and why your approach is unique. Does your organization's mission and approach match the scale of the problem you've outlined?
- **Engage them with action.** Close with an invitation to your listeners to be part of your solution. What can your audience do to engage with, assist or support your work?

SAMPLE ELEVATOR PITCH

Spitfire developed the following elevator pitch to serve as an example and lay the groundwork for members of the Chesapeake Conservation Partnership, Appalachian Trail Land Partnership and Eastern Shore Land Conservancy to create and tailor their own pitches within the narrative framework.

Like all good messaging, an elevator pitch should be tailored based on your audience. This sample pitch was crafted to persuade a skeptical policymaker in the Maryland General Assembly about the

benefits of land conservation. Here, we use a theoretical bill to make the case for the quality of life benefits of land conservation.

STRONG OPENING

There's a reason we like to say "Maryland is for crabs." One-third of all blue crabs come out of the Chesapeake, along with 500 million pounds of seafood each year. Maryland's seafood industry supports tens of thousands of Maryland jobs, from the farmers, fishers and grocers who feed our country, to the shops and small businesses that make our communities places we love to live. The seafood industry, these jobs and the Bay all contribute to Maryland's unique culture. The Bay literally and figuratively puts food on our tables and allows families to spend time doing what they love — whether that's hunting, fishing, crabbing, sailing, hiking, viewing wildlife or enjoying a crab feast.

IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM

But for the first time in more than a decade, the Bay's health declined last year. Unless we are thoughtful about how we manage and protect the land within the Chesapeake Bay watershed, our fish, the families who depend on them for their livelihoods and our unique Maryland way of life is at risk.

SHARE UNIQUE SOLUTION

Land conservation is the answer. The Maryland Farmers and Fishermen Act of 2019 will protect funding for our state conservation programs that improve the health of the Bay and the rivers and streams that feed into it. Conserving land around the Chesapeake Bay will protect Maryland families, workers and their favorite traditions.

ENGAGE WITH AN ASK

Support this bill when it is considered next week so we can protect what makes Maryland such a special place to call home.

WHAT'S YOUR SPIEL?

Whether at a cocktail party, a networking event or on a long airplane ride, everyone is eventually faced with the question, ***"So, what do you do?"*** Although some situations are more high pressure than others, being able to describe your work and organization in a succinct and compelling manner is a vital skill – especially when introducing your work to key audiences.

While your issues may be complex, the policies nuanced and constituents' needs are huge, developing clear, straightforward language about what you do can help engage audiences and ensure they remember you. It's not about "dumbing down" your work – it's about opening it up so that others find it relevant and interesting. With a short, pithy description of your work, you can connect with more potential supporters.

Here are some tips for developing a successful narrative about your work:

Brevity. It's not just the soul of wit; it's also the core principle of a good narrative. You should be able to say what you need to say in about a minute. Focus on what's most important and cut away the rest.

Opening. You want a hook to pique the listener's interest and encapsulate what you are about to say.

For example: "Utopia for Kids finds solutions to the toughest problems facing our kids and families in our state."

Problem. Define the task at hand in clear simple terms to illustrate the purpose of your work.

For example: "We believe affordable health care should be within reach for every family in Utopia, but far too many struggle just to have access to basic care."

Solution. Say what you are doing about the problem, and why your approach is unique. Does your organization's mission and approach match the scale of the problem you've outlined?

For example: "Utopia for Kids worked with a bipartisan group of lawmakers to ensure 180,000 children who were previously uninsured are now covered and able to get the care they need. That means that more children in Utopia have access to affordable health care than ever before."

Action. Close with an invitation to your listeners to be part of your solution. What can your audience do to engage, assist, or support your work?

For example: "We're still focused on building support so that that we can protect health care for all families in Utopia. Would you help by joining our meeting next month to get more families involved?"

Avoid jargon. Steer clear of acronyms, buzzwords and insider-speak to keep your audience engaged.

CREATING YOUR SPIEL

Passion. Perhaps the most important part is the gusto, enthusiasm and commitment your description expresses. Don't be afraid to tap into the passion and drive you feel for your work.

AUDIENCE. Always consider how your description will work with a specific priority audience.

OPENING. You want a hook to pique the listener's interest.

PROBLEM. Define the task at hand in clear, simple terms that illustrate your work.

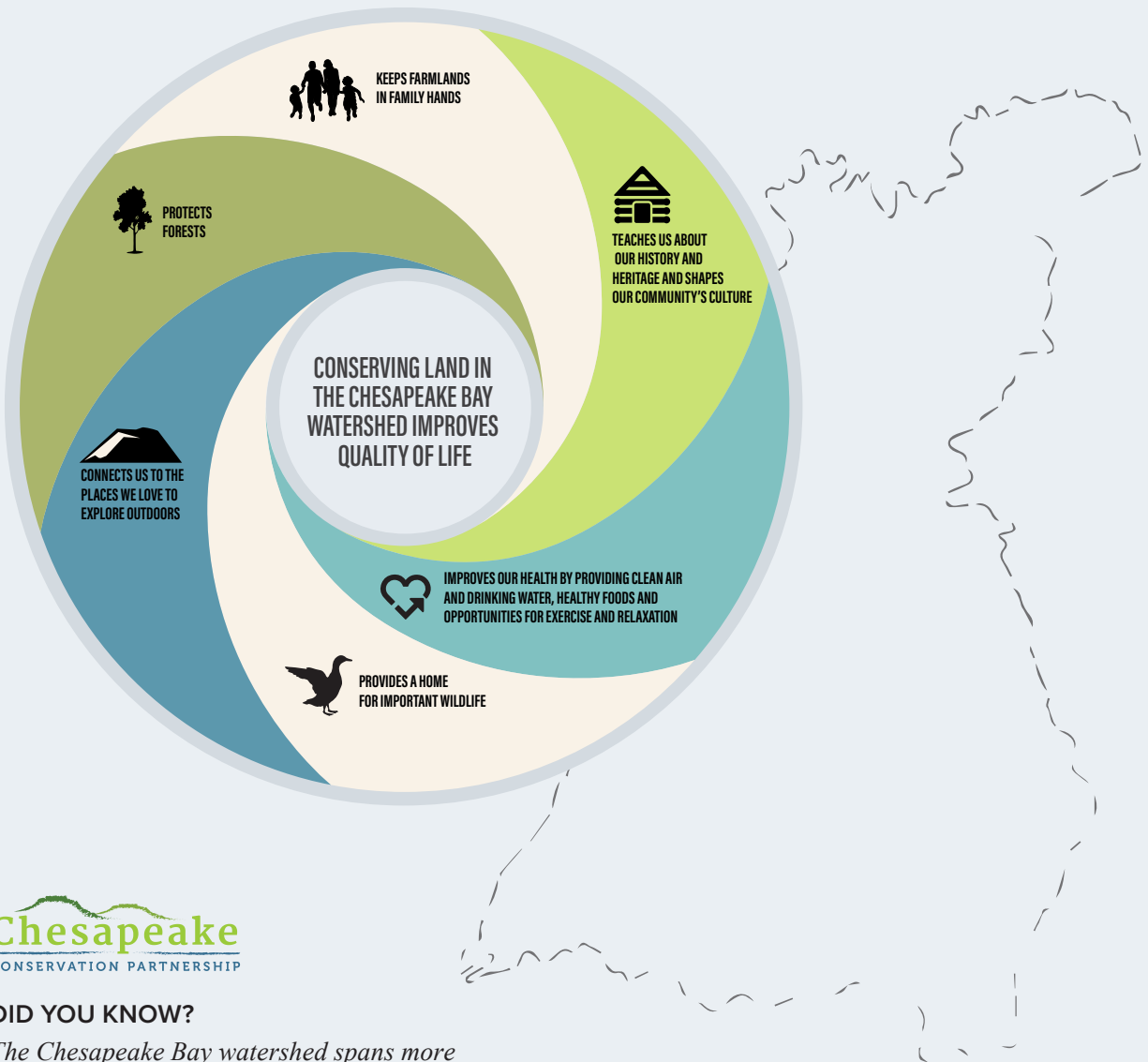
SOLUTION. Explain concisely what you are doing about the problem. What is the unique value you bring to the table?

ACTION. Close with an invitation to your listeners to be part of your solution. What can your audience do to engage, assist, or support you or your work?

VISUAL ELEMENTS

Conserving land in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed improves quality of life

Whether you live on a farm or in the city, are a history lover or a hiker, or simply want to drink pure water straight from the tap, the land you live on and around shapes your life. Land can be as essential as your source of income or as profound as your place for peace and tranquility. Both ends – and everything in between – connect your quality of life to the place where you live.



DID YOU KNOW?

The Chesapeake Bay watershed spans more than 64,000 square miles, encompassing parts of six states—Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia—and the entire District of Columbia.



VISUAL COMMUNICATION

This toolkit also includes visual tools to reinforce the narrative, including PowerPoint slides and social share graphics. The visual components have been shared virtually to allow members to tailor the images to their content needs. The slides and share graphics are based on the images below:

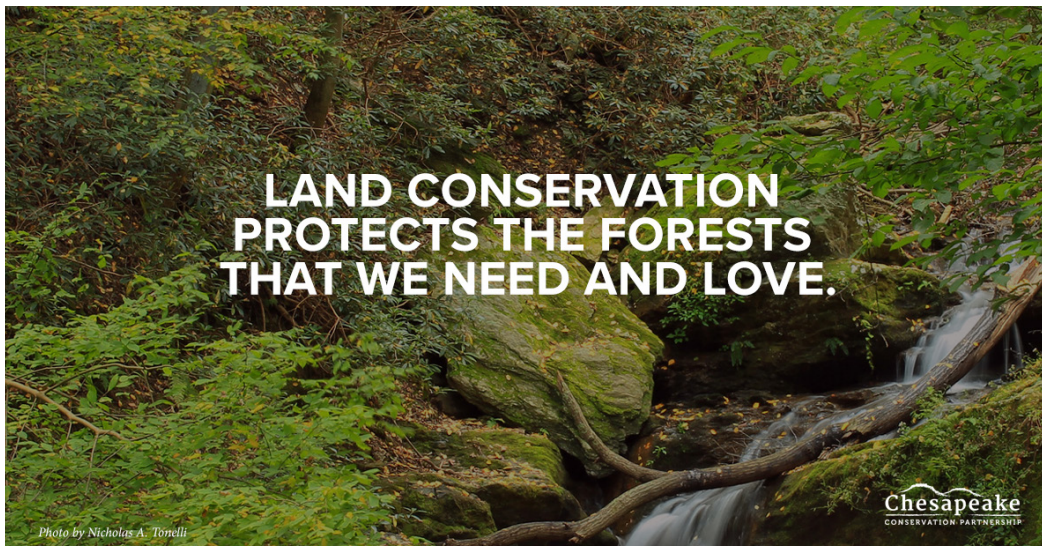




**LAND CONSERVATION PUTS
FOOD ON OUR TABLES.**

Photo by Will Parson/Chesapeake Bay Program

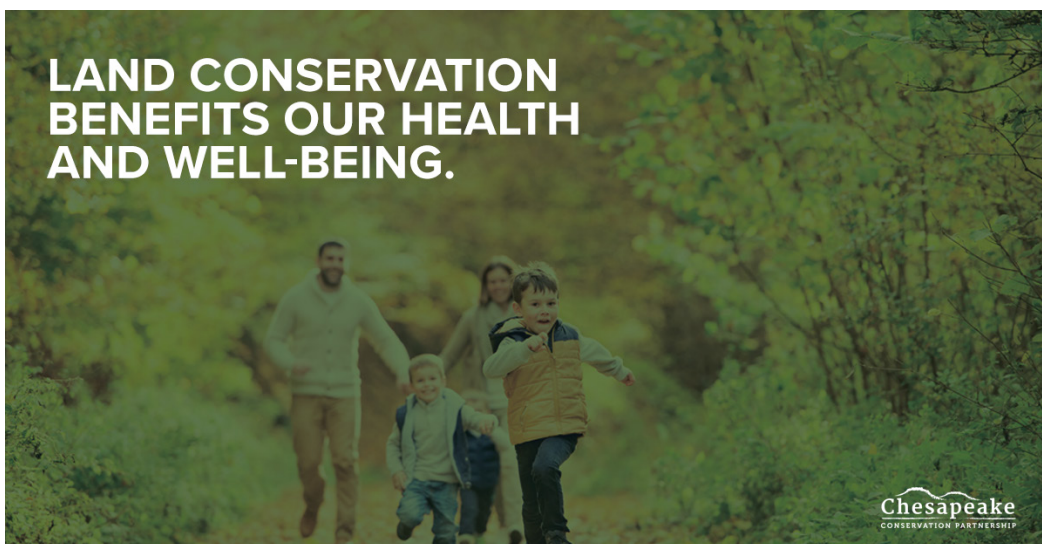
Chesapeake
CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP



**LAND CONSERVATION
PROTECTS THE FORESTS
THAT WE NEED AND LOVE.**

Photo by Nicholas A. Tonelli

Chesapeake
CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP



**LAND CONSERVATION
BENEFITS OUR HEALTH
AND WELL-BEING.**

Chesapeake
CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP

VISUAL STORYTELLING AND TAILORING THE TOOLKIT

Compelling visuals are a crucial part of using communication to motivate your audiences to act. Strong visuals can bring your materials to life. They can help audiences understand an issue or recall facts, and they can evoke the emotions that move audiences to take action.

This section provides guidance for partnership members to tailor the toolkit's visual images to their own work.

SELECTING EFFECTIVE VISUALS

Just as you choose words when you're writing, you should choose images or create visuals carefully to resonate with your audiences. To help you to identify the visuals that will be most effective, consider the following recommendations:

- Use images that your audience will recognize from their lives.
- Use real images when possible rather than stock photos.
- When using stock photos we recommend using images that are geographically specific to the targeted location.
- When taking photographs for use, ensure you're asking subjects for permission. We also recommend keeping a photo consent form on file.
- Use images that represent a diverse group people with varying backgrounds and interests to demonstrate the widespread impact of your work.
- Use images that evoke emotions by demonstrating the human and quality of life impacts.
- Use images with a decent amount of clean space for adding text content.

FINDING AND CREATING VISUALS

Free Images

- Creative Commons on Flickr.com. Make sure you attribute the photographer/owner correctly when using any image.
- The Chesapeake Bay Program's flickr page has over 12,000 amazing photos and can be accessed at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/chesbayprogram/>. Be sure you attribute the photographer/owner correctly when using any image.
- The Library of Congress has a phenomenal and well-organized collection of photography available at <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/>. Again, attribute properly when using these.
- Unsplash allows you to use, repurpose and alter photographs with no credit/attribution needed. You can access it at <https://unsplash.com/collections>.

Photography Tips

- **Fill the Frame:** Remember that your audience will most likely be viewing your photos on a small screen. The smaller the final image is going to be displayed, the larger the subject in the image should be. Filling the frame refers to allowing your subject to take up the majority of the photo frame.
- **Rule of Thirds:** When composing a photograph, envision dividing the image into a “tic-tac-toe” board with two horizontal lines and two vertical lines. Align your subject to one of those lines or the points where they meet.
- **Find a Focal Point:** Every photograph should have an immediate focal point – something your audience will see first. You can ensure this by separating the foreground (subject) from the background.
- **Clean Backgrounds:** No one wants a light pole sticking out of their head. Compose your photographs to have a clean background and create a stronger focal point.

Apps for Editing Visuals

- Snapseed is Google's powerful photo editor for use on smart phones.
- VSCO is another smart phone photo editor, offering filters for photos.
- Canva is a free design tool that lets you create infographics and alter images. It is accessible at <https://www.canva.com/>.
- Piktochart is a web-based application that allows users to create infographics for free. It is accessible at <https://piktochart.com/>.

TAILORING THE INFOGRAPHIC

The infographic [shown on page 25](#) was created to be tailored by each partnership member to demonstrate their specific land conservation focus and its benefits.

The infographic offers ample opportunity to tailor the content to match your needs.

- Edit the central text to speak directly to your audience or location.
 - For example, you might say, "Land Conservation Protects Maryland's Future" or "Protecting Land Keeps Virginia a Great Place for Families."
- Edit the broad values to speak to those that matter most to your audience and incorporate local references.
 - For example, you might change "provides a home for important wildlife" to "protects Maryland's blue crab population."
- Edit the subtext to include local references and proof points.
 - For example, under "protects Maryland's blue crab population," you might say "which protects jobs, puts food on our tables and keeps our state's unique culture alive." Or, under "teaches us about our history," you might reference James Madison's Montpelier or the Annapolis statue of U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall.

A virtual native file of the infographic is available for members' design teams to tailor.

TAILORING THE SOCIAL SHARE GRAPHICS

The social share graphics also offer ample opportunity for tailoring. We chose real images of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed and kept them broad enough to serve all members. To make these images have the greatest impact, we recommend including the following:

- Local references that will resonate with audiences, such as naming a specific farm, forest, waterway or monument.
- A call to action to motivate audiences, such as signing a petition, sharing the graphic or attending an event.

You may also consider exchanging the image for one audiences will recognize from your community. To keep the branding consistent, we recommend using the same font, logos and coloring. This information is available, with other tools for editing, in the virtual, native file of the share graphics.

TAILORING THE POWERPOINT SLIDES

The PowerPoint slides are also made to be tailored. For the slides, we recommend adding subtext to include local references that will resonate with your audiences and keeping text to a minimum so you don't crowd the slides. Remember, you can include more information in the note sections.

The PowerPoint slides are available in their native format to be edited, as well.

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Kevin Thomas, Antietam National Battlefield, MD

Nicholas A. Tonelli Follow, West Branch Ketchum Run

Chesapeake Bay Program, Watermen hand tonging for oysters on Choptank River



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