**AAPA Communications Awards Submission**

**Category: Promotional/Advocacy Materials**

**Summary of Entry:** A visually-driven communications piece that helps legislators understand the value of allocating funds to dredging our channels.

1. **What are/were the entry’s specific communications challenges or opportunities?**

The effort to make the Norfolk Harbor wider, deeper, and safer took a significant step forward in January when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) approved the National Economic Development (NED) plan.

The approved plan recommends deepening Norfolk Harbor to 55 feet, Thimble Shoal Channel to 56 feet, the Atlantic Ocean Channel to 59 feet, and widening Thimble Shoal Channel east of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel from 1,000 to 1,300 feet.

As Congress continues its two-year cycle of Water Resource Development Act (WRDA) bills, The Port of Virginia is poised to maintain the momentum of its channel deepening and widening project. We wanted to create brief articles that are then paired with compelling imagery in an engaging, digital newsletter format to capture readers’ attention and help educate them.

The Port of Virginia is committed to providing updates to our legislators on every level to keep them current on how we are using the dollars invested in our terminals, and how the efforts we are undertaking will provide returns on investments for years to come in terms of job creation.

1. **How does the communication used in this entry complement the organization’s overall mission?**

As we continue to move forward with our projects on land and the water, it is critical to ensure that we keep our audiences informed so that they recognize the economic benefits and return on investment from a funding perspective that The Port of Virginia offers.

1. **What were the communications planning and programming components used for this entry?**

Our Government Affairs team meets regularly with federal government legislators and staff to help educate them on the importance of US Ports and The Port of Virginia specifically.

Our marketing and communications team worked closely with our Government Affairs and Engineering teams to compile appropriate data and draft compelling copy that would help legislators understand the 1:9 funding ratio (every $1 in federal funding puts $9 in state and private investments in action).

1. **What actions were taken and what communication outputs were employed in this entry?**
   1. **Explain what strategies were developed to achieve success and why these strategies were chosen.**

As Congress continues its two-year cycle of Water Resource Development Act (WRDA) bills, The Port of Virginia is poised to maintain the momentum of its channel deepening and widening project. We wanted to create brief articles that are then paired with compelling imagery in an engaging, digital newsletter format to capture readers’ attention and help educate them.

The Port of Virginia is committed to providing updates to our legislators on every level to keep them current on how we are using the dollars invested in our terminals, and how the efforts we are undertaking will provide returns on investments for years to come in terms of job creation.

* 1. **Specify the tactics used (i.e., actions used to carry out your strategies).**

Our marketing and communications team worked closely with our Government Affairs and Engineering teams to compile appropriate data and draft compelling copy that would help legislators understand the 1:9 funding ratio (every $1 in federal funding puts $9 in state and private investments in action).

1. **What were the communications outcomes from this entry and what evaluation methods were used to assess them?**

Anecdotally, the one-sheeter continues to be successfully used in meetings. To keep the Norfolk Harbor Channel deepening and widening project on schedule and meet the existing and growing demands of commercial and military navigation, modification in WRDA 2018 of the original 1986 authorization is required to allow for the additional recommended depth and width in the Thimble Shoal and Atlantic Ocean Channels.

The port’s channels and harbor are already 50 feet deep. However, the depths beyond 55 feet in the Thimble Shoal Channel and 57 feet in the Atlantic Ocean Channel, as well as the widening, require new authorization.

Authorization of the recommendations in the upcoming Chief’s Report as well as the additional Thimble Shoal widening from the Section 7001 Report would provide flexibility in the construction of the project without requiring additional future authorization. The total project, including the additional Thimble Shoal widening, remains well within the current cost limits based on the original 1986 authorization – only the dimensions require modification.

The Port of Virginia is excited to work with Members of Congress from Virginia and across the country to move this project forward and begin realizing its national benefits.