

Our Year of Email Deliverability Hell (and How We Climbed Out of the Fire)

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INTRODUCTIONS



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OUR YEAR OF EMAIL DELIVERABILITY HELL (AND HOW WE CLIMBED OUT OF THE FIRE)

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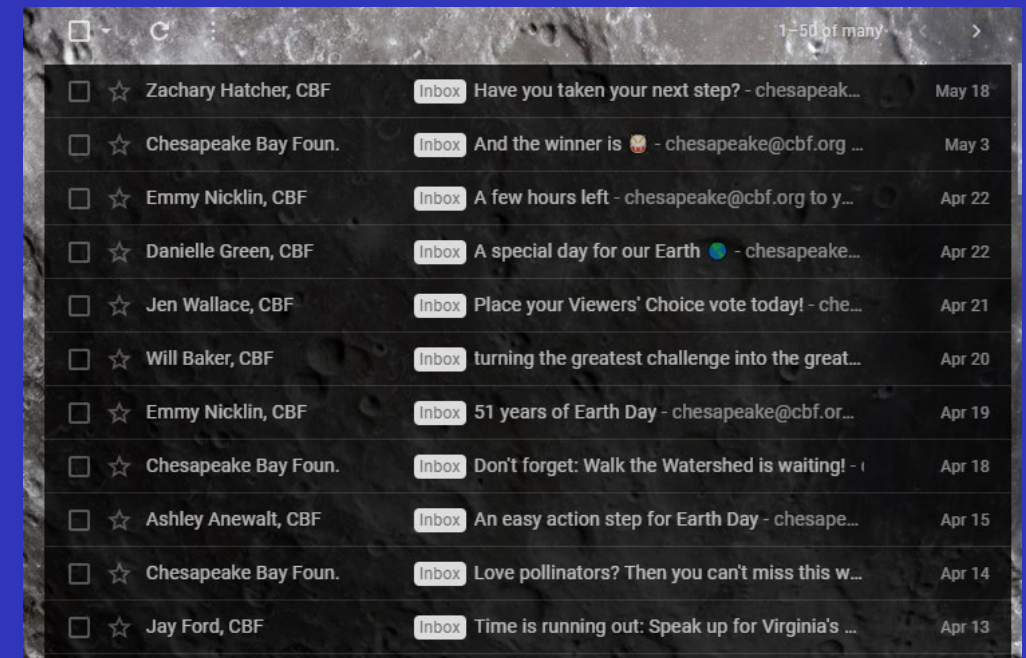
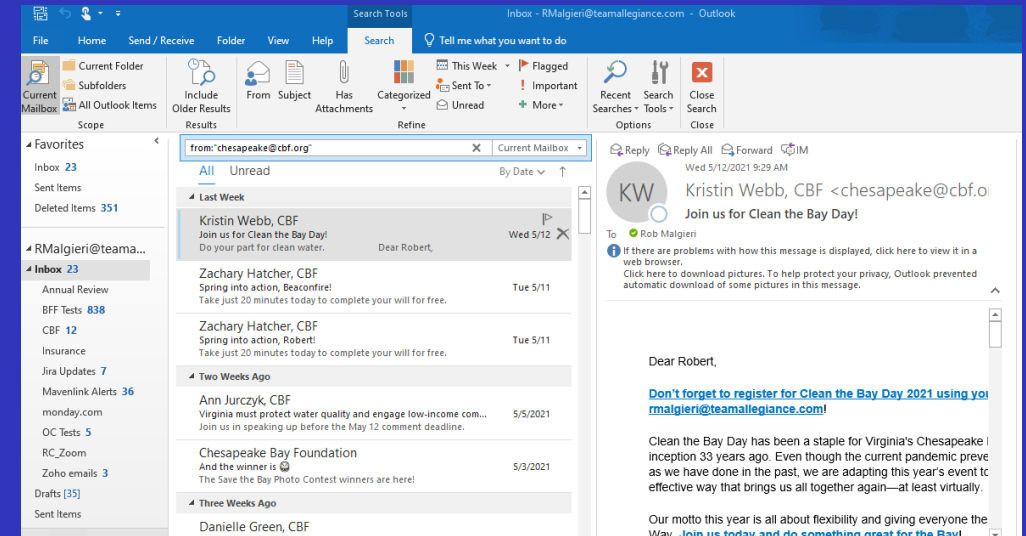


Email Deliverability

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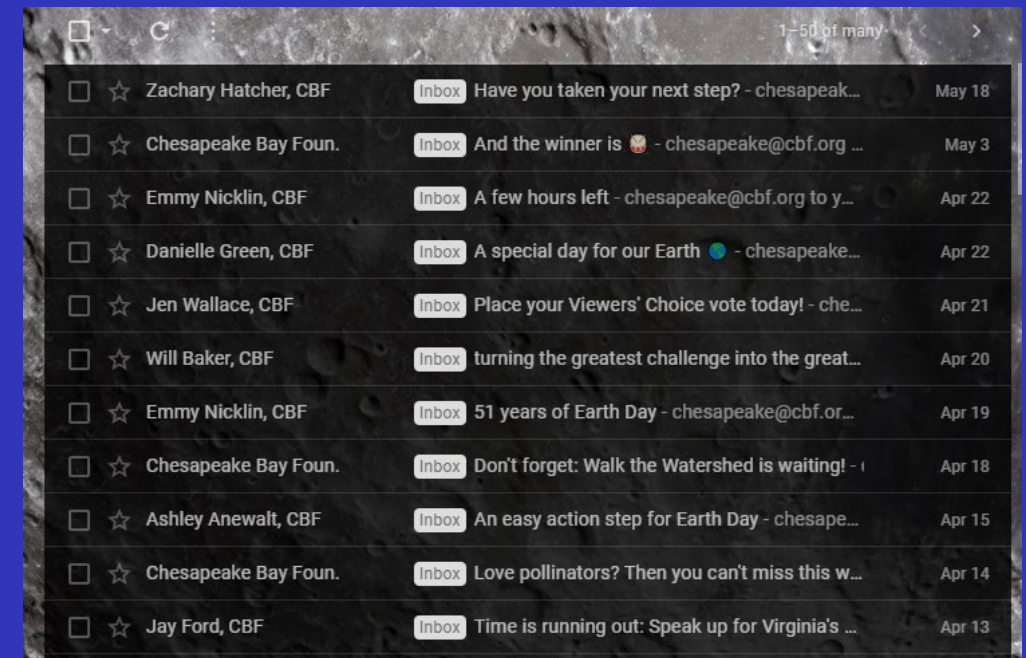
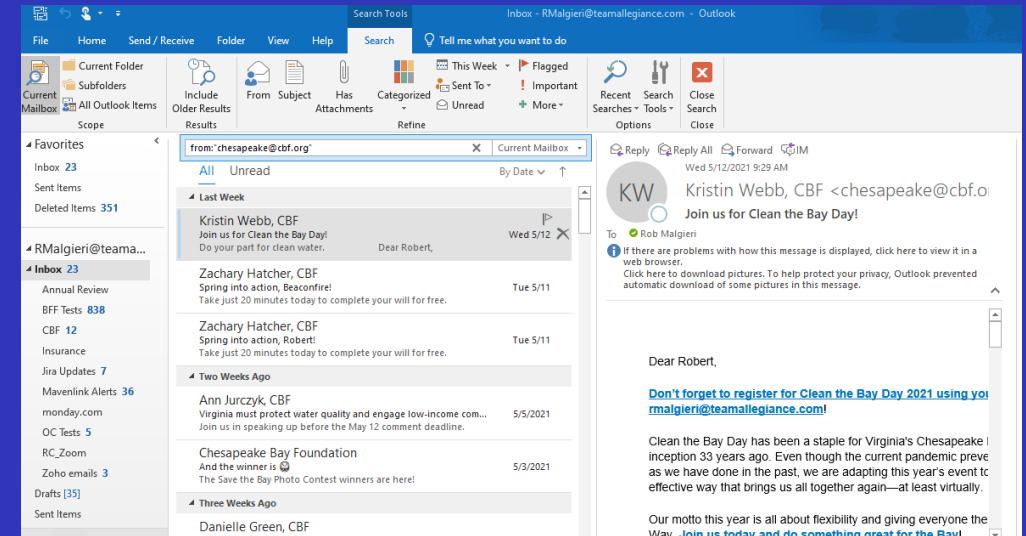
EMAIL DELIVERY VS. DELIVERABILITY

- There is a key distinction between **delivery** and **deliverability**.
- **Email Delivery** measures how often your emails are successfully delivered to an email service provider's servers (think: Gmail, Yahoo, etc.).
- **Email Deliverability** is a measure of your ability to deliver emails to your subscribers' inboxes.
- You need to master delivery & deliverability in order to maintain a healthy email marketing program.



WHY SHOULD I CARE?

- Email Service Providers (ESPs) monitor the performance of those who send mail to their servers.
 - They use that data to assign sender scores which impact whether or not a message is delivered to a recipient's inbox (rather than the spam, promotions or some other folder).
- If emails do not make it in front of subscribers the success of any marketing or fundraising effort is severely diminished.
 - Email continues to generate huge ROI for marketers – **but only if their messages are actually delivered and read!**



CURRENT STATE OF EMAIL DELIVERY

- Email delivery rates can vary widely, but in general a good email delivery rate is greater than 95%
- The bounce rate (including both hard and soft bounce) should never be higher than 3%
- A good benchmark for nonprofit email unsubscribe rate is approximately 0.18%.
 - Too much higher could lead to deliverability problems.
 - Too much lower may indicate that you **already** have a deliverability problem.

WHAT AFFECTS MY DELIVERABILITY SCORE?

A lot! But some key factors are:

- **List hygiene**
 - Are you sending messages to only “good” email addresses?
- **Domain & IP address authentication**
 - Lets email service providers know that you are a reputable sender.
- **Sender reputation**
 - Does the ESP think that you are sending high-quality and engaging messages to their users?

HOW DO I FIND OUT MY DELIVERABILITY SCORE?

There is no single score that measures your sender reputation across all email providers.

- However, there are some 3rd party tools that can be used to track your reputation. But, remember, no one tool or report will tell the whole story!
 - SenderScore.org
 - Google Postmaster Tools
 - Microsoft SNDS

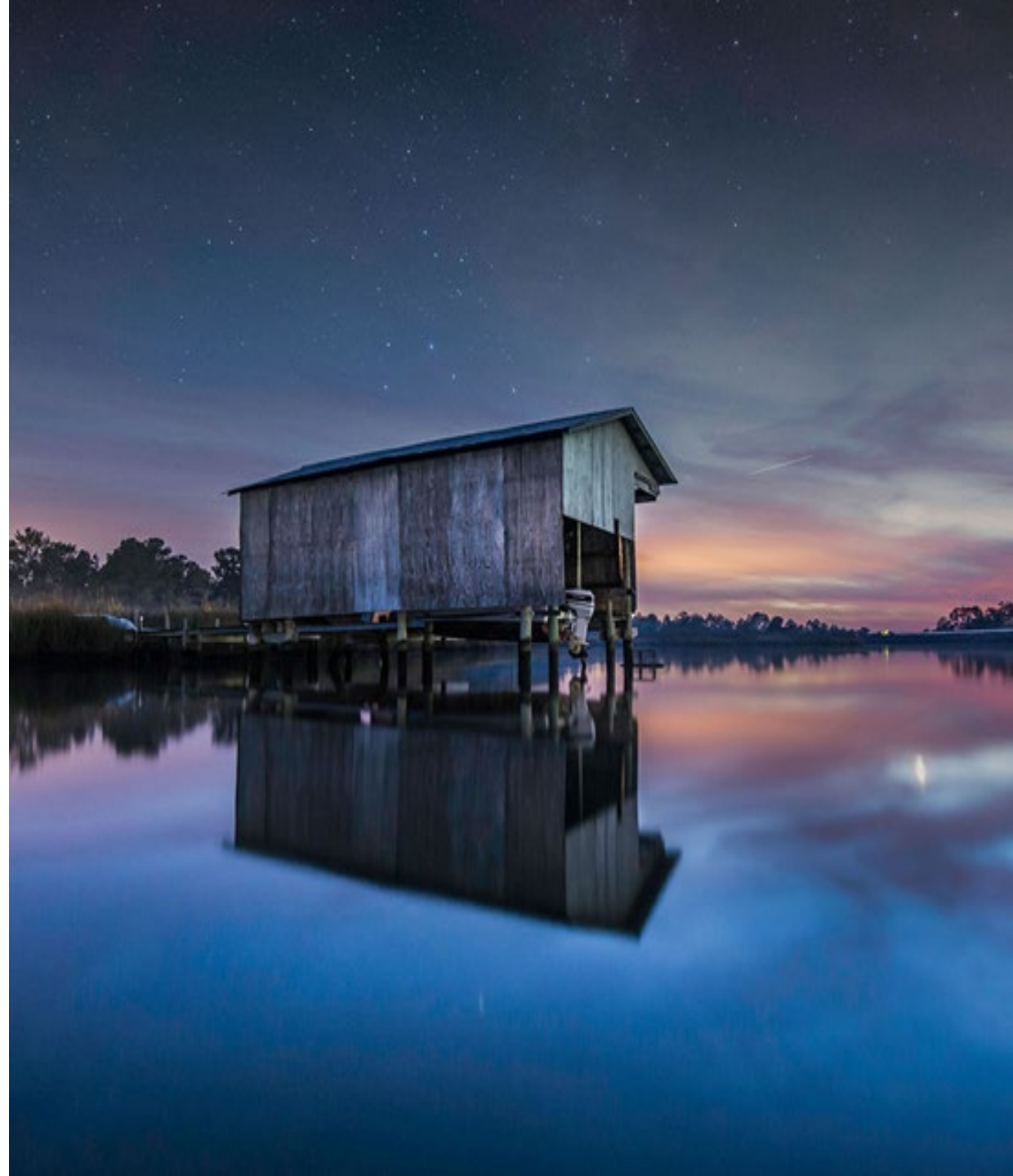
Your emailing platform may also provide sender reputation services.

Chesapeake Bay Foundation's Story



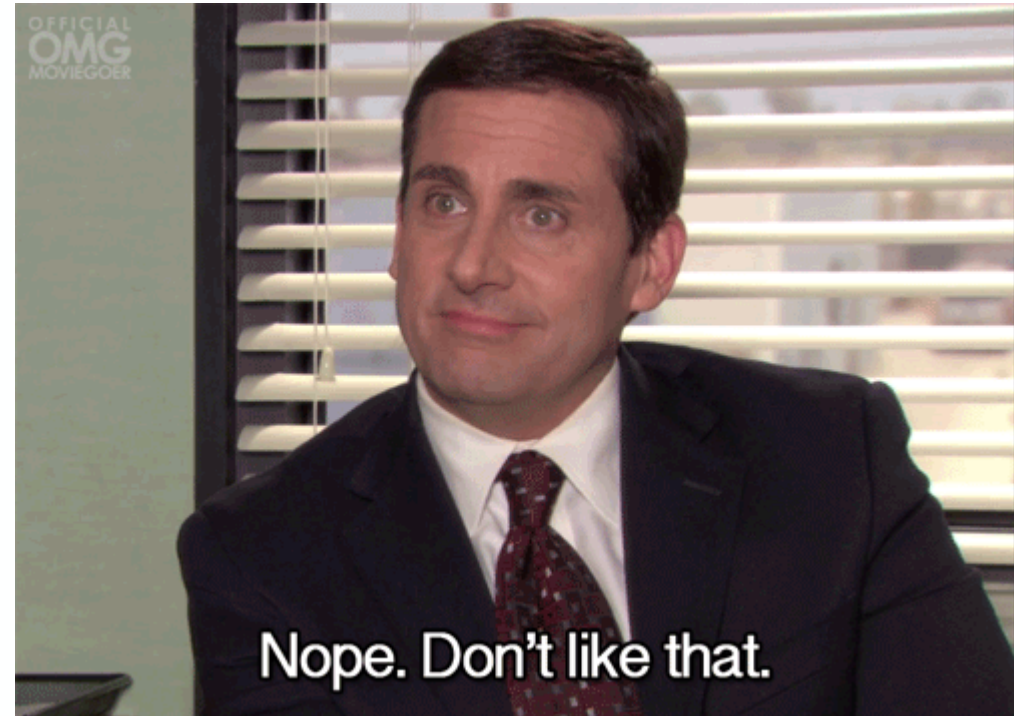
CBF'S STORY

- Founded in 1967, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation is the largest independent conservation organization dedicated solely to saving the Bay.
- CBF has been sending fundraising and marketing emails to their subscriber list for more than 15 years.
- Over that time they have created a robust email program with an excellent cadence of fundraising, marketing, and advocacy emails.



CRISIS #1: SENDING WITHOUT SUPPRESSIONS

- CBF accidentally sent an email to their full list without suppressing any of their standard suppression and “deadwood” groups
- As a result, email delivery rates plummeted and bounces spiked
 - Hard Bounce Rate of 1.53% and Soft Bounce Rate of 5.97%
 - Overall delivery rates dropped from 98% to 69% the very next day.



CRISIS #1: IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

- To prevent continued declines in email stats, CBF invested in creating engagement scores for all constituents in their CRM based on past email interactions (# of emails opened in last 3 months / 6 months, etc.).
- Those engagement scores were used to create email segments for High Engagement, Moderate Engagement, and Low Engagement.
- We then began throttling emails to send to the most responsive people on the list first before sending to moderate and low engagement groups.
- This helps boost your sender reputation with ESPs because the high open & click-through rates indicate that your message is timely, relevant and interesting.

SURVIVING CRISIS #1

- By using email quality scores and throttling messages to send to the most active subscribers, CBF's email rates began to improve to pre-crisis rates – **and reached 95% in just a month.**
- **And we met our fiscal year-end fundraising goal.**
- Longer-term processes implemented:
 - Email verification/validation with NeverBounce.
 - Worked with Blackbaud to explore email inbox placement and deliverability, highlighting the need for a re-engagement series and tightening our inactive file.



And then...

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CRISIS #2: SPAM TRAP

- Within a few months, email rates had returned to normal when one of CBF's emails was sent to a spam trap.
- What is a spam trap?
 - **Recycled SPAM traps (RST)** — Include email addresses that are abandoned by recipients or retired by mailbox providers, then re-purposed to identify senders who continue to send to them.

Note: A mailbox provider can convert an abandoned or retired address into a RST after just six months. After their pre-defined period of inactivity, they turn the account off and return hard bounce errors to senders — a process known as *gravestoning* — for 30 to 90 days. Some of those addresses are then reactivated and used as RSTs.
 - **Pristine SPAM traps (PST)** — Include email addresses that are not associated with a person, but rather only exist to identify poor or malicious senders.
 - **Role account (or function email account) traps** — Include email addresses with `webmaster@`, `hostmaster@`, `sales@`, `support@`, `postmaster@`, etc.
- The result was that CBF's email sender IP address was added to a blocked list, and the organization was prevented from getting emails to supporters' inboxes.



CRISIS #2: IMMEDIATE SOLUTION

- Immediately paused the welcome series and isolated all records that could have been created in the timeframe of the spam origin in order to review & purge them from the file.
- CBF invested in semi-regular email verification to improve the organization's sender reputation.
- Implemented reCaptcha on email signup forms and tightened up their inactive lists.

Please take a moment to tell us a little about yourself.


* First Name:


* Last Name:

* Email:

* ZIP / Postal Code:

Your submission includes periodic e-mail updates from CBF. You may unsubscribe at any time by clicking "Unsubscribe" at the bottom of any e-mail you receive from us.

I'm not a robot 

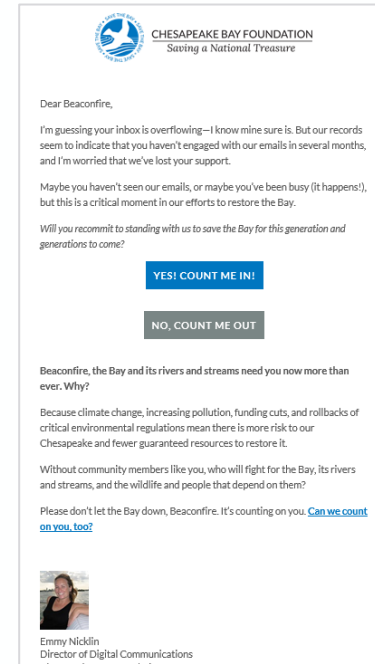


Long-term solutions and best practices

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RE-ENGAGEMENT SERIES

- To improve overall list health CBF implemented a re-engagement series
- This four-email series has been automated to regularly send to people who have just fallen into the inactive group
- The series has been successful in getting people back on the active list and improving the size of the healthy email file



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION
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Dear Beaconfire,

I'm guessing your inbox is overflowing—I know mine sure is. But our records seem to indicate that you haven't engaged with our emails in several months, and I'm worried that we've lost your support.

Maybe you haven't seen our emails, or maybe you've been busy (it happens!), but this is a critical moment in our efforts to restore the Bay.

Will you recommit to standing with us to save the Bay for this generation and generations to come?

YES! COUNT ME IN!


NO, COUNT ME OUT

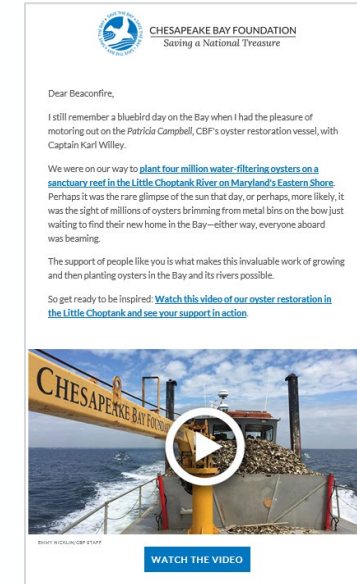
Beaconfire, the Bay and its rivers and streams need you now more than ever. Why?

Because climate change, increasing pollution, funding cuts, and rollbacks of critical environmental regulations mean there is more risk to our Chesapeake and fewer guaranteed resources to restore it.

Without community members like you, who will fight for the Bay, its rivers and streams, and the wildlife and people that depend on them?

Please don't let the Bay down, Beaconfire. It's counting on you. [Can we count on you, too?](#)


Emmy Nicklin
Director of Digital Communications



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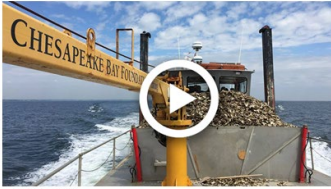
Dear Beaconfire,

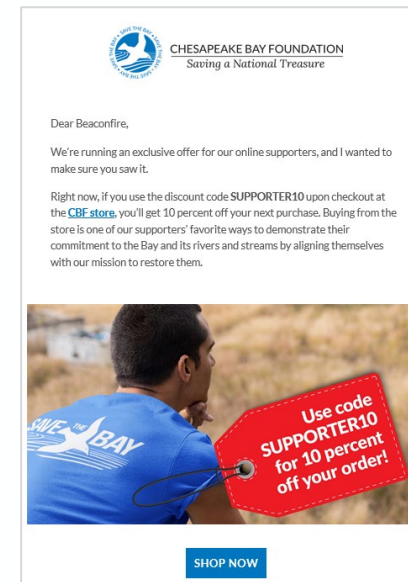
I still remember a bluebird day on the Bay when I had the pleasure of motorizing out on the *Patricia Campbell*, CBF's oyster restoration vessel, with Captain Karl Willey.

We were on our way to plant four million water-filtering oysters on a sanctuary reef in the Little Choptank River on Maryland's Eastern Shore. Perhaps it was the rare glimpse of the sun that day, or perhaps, more likely, it was the sight of millions of oysters brimming from metal bins on the bow just waiting to find their new home in the Bay—either way, everyone aboard was beaming.

The support of people like you is what makes this invaluable work of growing and then planting oysters in the Bay and its rivers possible.

So get ready to be inspired! [Watch this video of our oyster restoration in the Little Choptank and see your support in action.](#)


WATCH THE VIDEO




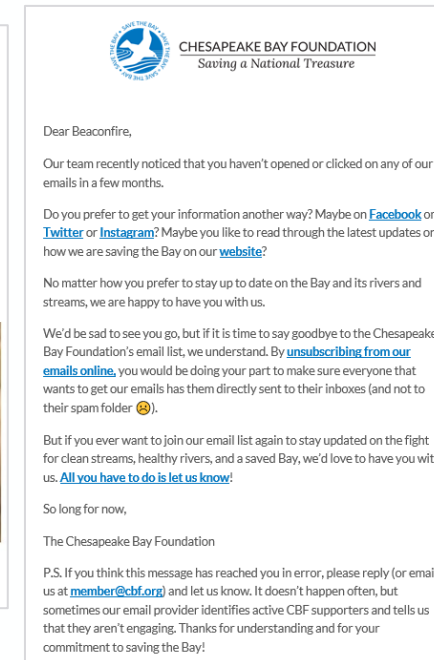
CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION
Saving a National Treasure

Dear Beaconfire,

We're running an exclusive offer for our online supporters, and I wanted to make sure you saw it.

Right now, if you use the discount code **SUPPORTER10** upon checkout at the [CBF store](#), you'll get 10 percent off your next purchase. Buying from the store is one of our supporters' favorite ways to demonstrate their commitment to the Bay and its rivers and streams by aligning themselves with our mission to restore them.


SHOP NOW



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION
Saving a National Treasure

Dear Beaconfire,

Our team recently noticed that you haven't opened or clicked on any of our emails in a few months.

Do you prefer to get your information another way? Maybe on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#) or [Instagram](#)? Maybe you like to read through the latest updates on how we are saving the Bay on our [website](#)?

No matter how you prefer to stay up to date on the Bay and its rivers and streams, we are happy to have you with us.

We'd be sad to see you go, but if it is time to say goodbye to the Chesapeake Bay Foundation's email list, we understand. By [unsubscribing from our emails online](#), you would be doing your part to make sure everyone that wants to get our emails has them directly sent to their inboxes (and not to their spam folder 😊).

But if you ever want to join our email list again to stay updated on the fight for clean streams, healthy rivers, and a saved Bay, we'd love to have you with us. [All you have to do is let us know!](#)

So long for now,

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation

P.S. If you think this message has reached you in error, please reply (or email us at member@cbf.org) and let us know. It doesn't happen often, but sometimes our email provider identifies active CBF supporters and tells us that they aren't engaging. Thanks for understanding and for your commitment to saving the Bay!

REVIEW EMAIL SOURCES & ROI OF INVESTMENTS

- In order to prevent these issues from happening again and to improve overall list hygiene CBF regularly reviews all sources of emails to measure engagement:
 - Care2
 - Facebook
 - Events
 - Advocacy actions
 - Organic website signups
- While email list growth is important for any organization, the quality of emails being added to the list is more important than quantity.

Summary

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DELIVERY & DELIVERABILITY BEST PRACTICES

- Confirm IP authorization
- Use quality or engagement scores to find your most engaged email recipients and throttle sends to those supporters
- Use an email verification service to confirm the validity of email addresses add to your list
- Implement recaptcha or double authentication to prevent fraudulent email addresses or spam addresses from being added to the list
- Remove deadwood email addresses from your list. If they never open emails why send them?



DELIVERY & DELIVERABILITY BEST PRACTICES

- Use marketing automation to get (and keep) supporters engaged:
 - Welcome series
 - Re-engagement series
 - Renewal series for donors
- Evaluate sources of new email addresses
 - Do the people added engage with emails?
 - How quickly do they become inactive or unsubscribe?
- Discuss with leadership the **importance of email quality over quantity**.
 - Everyone wants to grow, but be sure you are investing in high quality subscribers who will continue to engage with you over time.



THANK YOU!



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