2021 Water Hub social media report
Sharing data insights and themes that resonated with reporters and the water movement

Overview
After going through the exercise of looking back on our data for the year, the Water Hub team wanted to share our takeaways to help with others’ 2022 goal setting and plans. We hope these insights support the water movement community and inspire you all with data-informed content strategy recommendations.

Platform strategy
To-date, Water Hub’s priority social media channel has been Twitter, as the best place to reach out target audience of journalists, decisionmakers, and water thought leaders.

Theme-spotting
We found that content that discussed the current political climate and infrastructure negotiations did well along with water affordability topics. We also learned that keeping a finger on the pulse of emerging water news helps to grow credibility. See more below on what themes rose to the top in 2021.

- Water policy: legislation updates and investments, infrastructure
- Events: drought briefings, infrastructure spending implementation, water cultural talks
- Advocacy: elevating water affordability/access/safety disparities, Indigenous and other community-driven leadership
- Solutions: at both community and government level from green infrastructure projects like wastewater recycling plants to tapping TEK
- Research: voter polling, data visualization

Post formats that worked
We tested different content formats on Twitter throughout 2021. Once we started analyzing what worked, we applied similar strategies to different key moments with positive results.

See our hot tips below:
1/ Peru is tapping into #Indigenous land and water management practices. Now a climate response and #WaterResilience leader, the country is one of the first in the world with laws mandating utilities to invest in #NaturalInfrastructure.

NEW BLOG ➞ We talk how CA responds to a shrinking water supply, Human Right to Water & #WaterAffordability in the latest @MavensNotebook column ft. @csgonzaa & Jennifer Clary from @cleanh2oaction

Click here to read more --> bit.ly/2YxvQMX

It's 🌿 time, #WaterTwitter. Show us your #WaterMemes.

Federal water spending has dried up, delaying updates to our aging waterworks and leaving 2 million Americans without safe #DrinkingWater and sanitation. The time to act is now. #WaterWeek2021
Threads: This post about Peru’s use of traditional Indigenous knowledge as a water and climate solution was our most popular post of the year. We applied a similar strategy—threaded tweets with experts and keywords tagged throughout—to other long-form articles. Not only did we gain more followers and high engagement, we also told more accessible stories.

Data visualization: One of our big campaign moments this year was #WaterAtWork. We had the opportunity to partner with a designer, Innosanto Nagara, who helped us make a jobs case for water infrastructure spending. The post promoting it landed as the second most engaging of the year.

Quote graphics: One of the things that gets us up in the morning is celebrating water leadership across communities. We found that when we took the extra step to create a graphic with a quote and a headshot, there was higher engagement.

Memes: Late in 2021, our digital director, Jessica, was scrolling through Twitter laughing at wonky water memes, so we decided to try our hand at it. The post landed in the top five posts of the year. Our takeaway? Lean into levity. Water is a dense topic to wrap minds around, so it can be refreshing to see the movement loosen up to communicate in less traditional ways to still get a point across.

Live tweeting: One of our top performing post formats was when we’d live tweet events. Not only is it good to show up for your partners, live tweeting also helps break down complicated report releases or other information shared. Pro tip: mix up your posts with screenshots of interesting presentation slides, speakers, or even play with GIFs to keep people engaged— and don’t forget to keep pointing people back to key landing pages to show your support. You’ll notice that event hosts, participating organizations, and others will share the content helping you boost the message and grow your own audience.

Data takeaways
We grew our Twitter following to 1,142, and saw nearly 15k engagements and 700k impressions on the 1,000+ posts we shared in 2021. The new followers hailed from a wide range of sectors, including the water world, the greater environmental justice movement, the communications realm, higher education, and more. This is fantastic for the water movement because it shows that we’re communicating in a way that is accessible for more than just the “water wonks” like ourselves.

The biggest jump in followers occurred in quarter two which also claimed the most “top posts” of any quarter. The surge is a nod to the launch of our Water at Work campaign and engaging content highlighting Indigenous leadership (ex: Peru’s TEK, Julia Fay Bernal’s appearance on the Climate One Podcast, #StopLine3 support, and Ean Tafoya).
One observation: Be spontaneous! The meme breaking down the cons of desalination plants and the last-minute decision to live tweet of a California Natural Resources event landed in our top 10 most engaged tweets of 2021. This is a note to all of us, to continue to think outside of the box, to share the ideas, and to just try things!

KPIs:
- Audience total: 1,142: Goal KPI: 10% audience growth; Actuals: 23% audience growth rate per quarter
- Engagement rate: 2.2% average (industry average is 1.6%); average # of monthly engagements: 3,696 / overall: 14,784
- Average # of monthly impressions: 173,073 / overall: 692,290
- Total # of mentions: 2.6K
- Total unique authors: 934
- Top 10 posts: (at least half of the top posts are about infrastructure!)
  - May 19 thread of Peru’s use of TEK as a water and climate solution
  - April 26 infographic showcasing the decline in water infrastructure investment from 1980-now
  - May 26 promotion of the new Water at Work website
  - December 27 meme emphasizing the negative impact of desalination plants
  - April 10 op-ed by Ilhan Omar and Tara Houska on Line 3 oil pipeline
  - January 14 highlight of green infrastructure as a resilient solution with 3 prominent tags (Allison Harvey Turner, Randall Kempner, Ridgway White) and a link to Water Foundation’s funding article (included a graphic from our polling results).
  - February 11 promotion of the Color of Water Valentine’s Day campaign with an infographic featuring Arohi Sharma
  - October 8 promotion of a blog featuring Cristal Gonzalez and Jennifer Clary from Clean Water Action. The piece focused on affordable water access and low-income utility programs.
  - October 21 event promo of a Water Equity and Climate Resilience Caucus/The Shape of Us event with Imagining America featuring tags for We The People Detroit, Benny Starr, US Water Alliance, and Policy Link
  - July 13 live tweet of California Natural Resources Agency’s Speaker Series event covering the drought in CA
- Top 5 authors sharing our content:
  - March 31: National Resource Defense Council (344k followers) RTed our tweet calling for plumbers and pipefitters to replace lead pipes for Biden’s America’s Job Plan
  - November 30: Ari Shapiro (228k followers) RTed our tweet highlighting the disparities of stormwater management in low-income communities of color in Michigan
- **March 31:** Pat Fuller (94k followers) RTed our tweet with the infographic showing voter agreement on public water systems being a threat to drinking water safety
- **January 21:** Fresno Bee (94k followers) RTed our tweet calling on VP Harris to champion equitable water solutions
- **October 1:** Movement for Black Lives (86k followers) RTed our tweet with an infographic detailing the discrepancies in water affordability