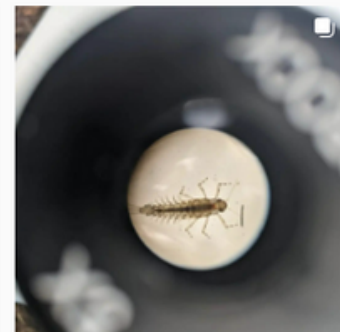
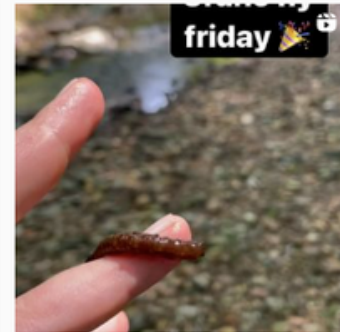
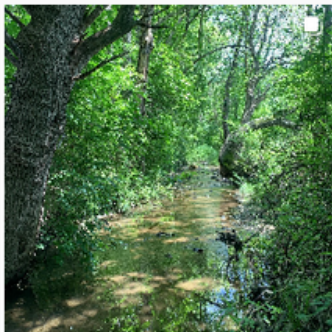
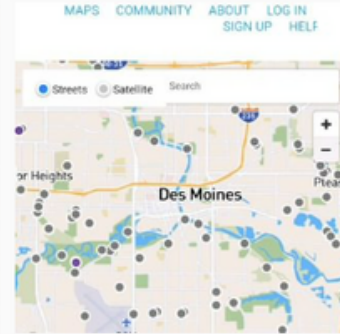




SAVE OUR STREAMS

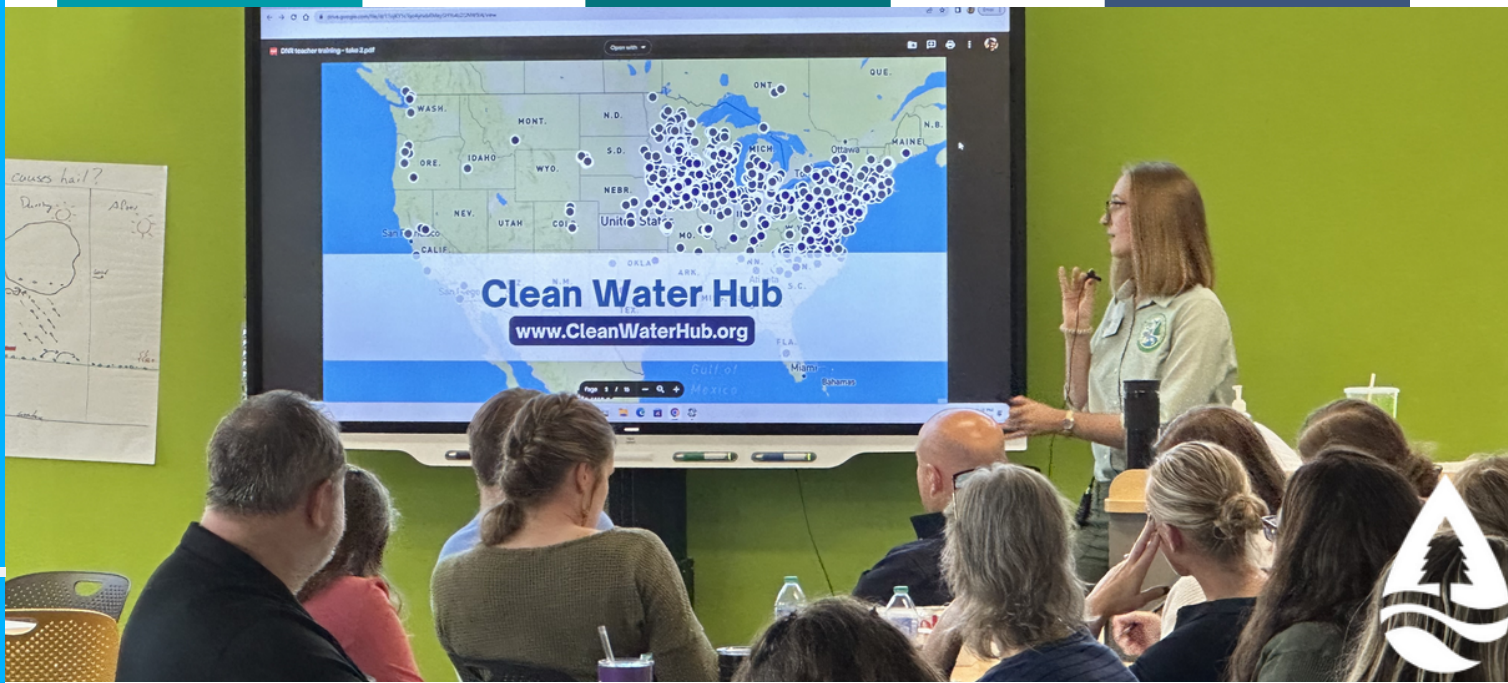
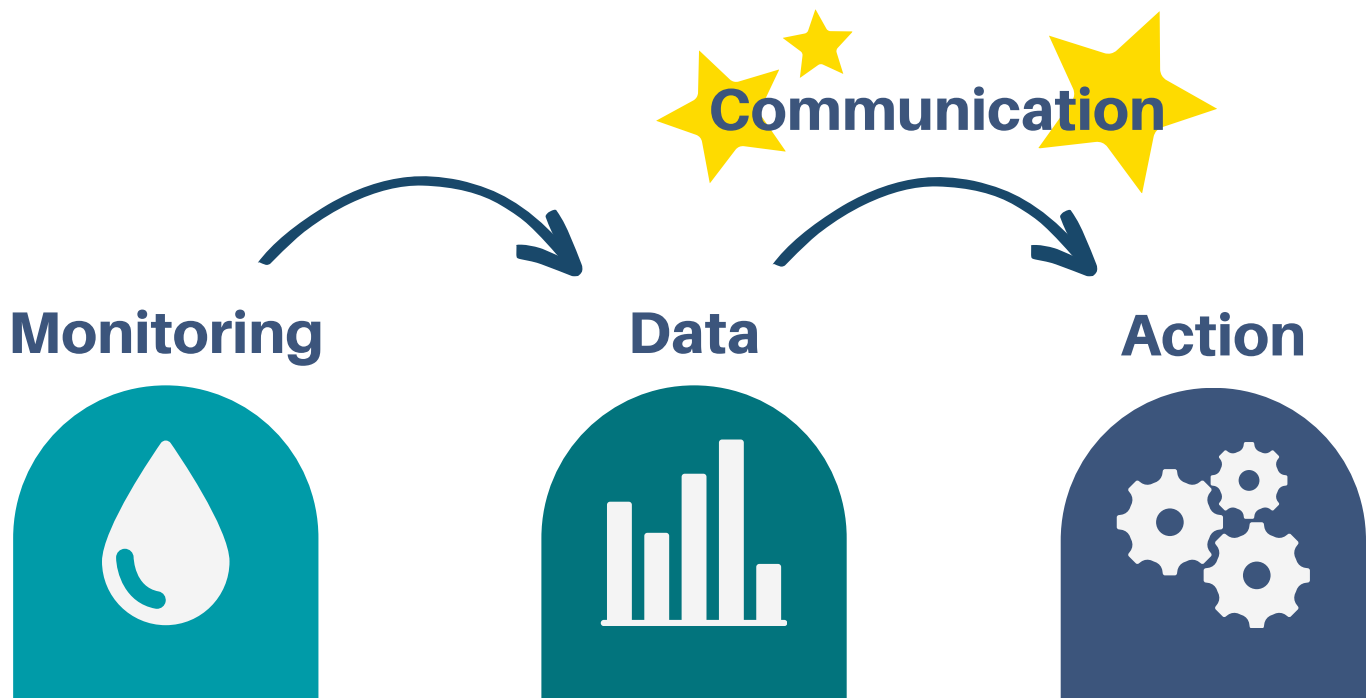
IZAACK WALTON LEAGUE OF AMERICA

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO WATER QUALITY COMMUNICATION



WATER QUALITY COMMUNICATIONS

For most organizations and monitoring groups, water quality monitoring is a means to an end. At the Izaak Walton League, we are always interested in turning water quality data into productive action. When it comes to translating water quality results into actions that will benefit the environment, it helps to get the word out! Effective communication is a crucial component when educating and engaging stakeholders and the public about water quality issues.



WATER QUALITY COMMUNICATIONS

Here are some important things to keep in mind as you hone your message and communicate about water quality issues:

- **Use your data.** The data you collect can bolster your cause. Being transparent with your data gives your credibility, but manipulating or hiding data will harm that credibility.
- **Understand community needs.** Every community has unique needs and concerns. Is your community concerned about development? Agriculture? Road salting? Identify where your mission can align with existing environmental concerns.
- **Identify reasonable asks.** Not every campaign or action is appropriate for every audience. Figure out what actions your audience can take, and what actions they can't. An individual landowner can't stop a salt truck, but they can sign a petition to reduce road salt use and attend public meetings.
- **Build partnerships.** It's likely there are already watershed or environmental groups in your area. Find ways they can help amplify your voice and how your data can help their cause. Partnerships will help you reach a wider audience and show the breadth of your issue.
- **Educate.** Many people may not know about local threats to clean water. Don't assume that everyone has the same level of knowledge as you. Likewise, don't assume that they are uninterested or don't care.
- **Listen.** Most importantly, listen to the citizens, businesses, and committees you reach out to. Everyone is entitled to clean water for all kinds of reasons, from access to drinking water to outdoor recreation. Your reasons may be different than your neighbors'. By listening and acknowledging the views of your community, you can identify effective ways to make positive change.



Science Communication Basics

The goals of science communication are to:

- Engage your audience
- Share information
- Provoke a change in opinion or behavior

Know Your Audience

Having a general understanding of who your audience is can help your communication efforts succeed. Here are some pointers:

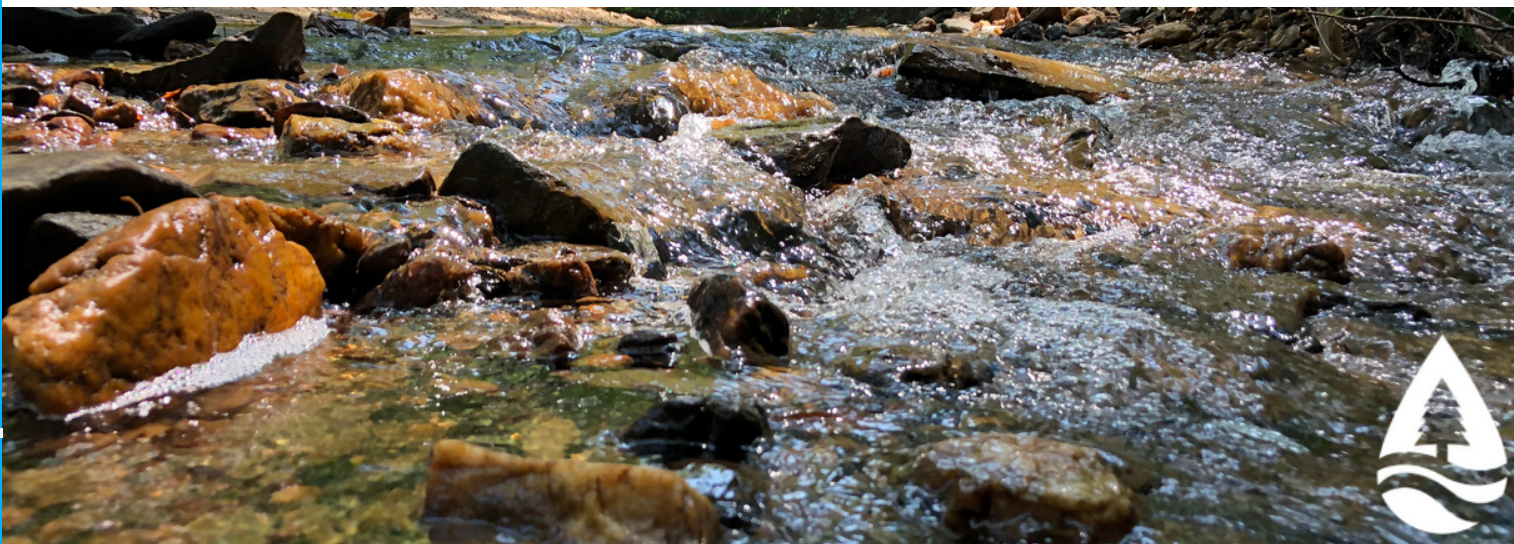
- **Tailor your content.** Use what you know about your audience to communicate more effectively. Think of your audience when you are choosing your communication media, what types of information to share, and what language to use.
- **When in doubt, keep it broad & accessible.** If you are lucky, your audience will be diverse in age, race, and background. Make sure not to alienate portions of your audience in your communications. We recommend using inclusive language and communicating via a variety of outlets.
- **Don't make assumptions about prior knowledge.** There is a lot to know when it comes to water quality. Never assume that your audience is up-to-date on complicated science topics. Even if they are, it never hurts to hear something explained twice!



Don't Undercut Your Message

There are enough factors working against water quality advocates. Do yourself a favor and don't undermine your own efforts by making any of these common communication mistakes:

- **Overusing jargon.** Avoid using overly technical language, acronyms, or abbreviations that the general public is not familiar with. If you must use a technical term, be sure to define it.
- **Confrontational tone.** It is easy to become emotional or even confrontational when talking about environmental issues, but this can diminish your credibility and alienate potential allies.
- **Lack of objective data.** If you are attempting to outline a water quality issue, be sure to have the data to back it up. Anecdotal data can be useful, but without numerical data it may not stand up to scrutiny.
- **Downplaying the legitimacy of your data.** Volunteers are capable of collecting high-quality data. Don't sell your efforts short!
- **Overstating the implications of your data.** Data analysis is a complicated topic, and it becomes even more complicated as we try to understand the drivers of a pollution problem. Remember that correlation is not causation.



WATER QUALITY COMMUNICATIONS

Look for Common Ground

There are so many forces influencing water quality and we all view environmental issues through a unique lens. Our perspectives on water quality issues may be shaped by our upbringing, educational background, career, and more.

This diversity of perspectives can be difficult to navigate, but it also creates ample opportunities to find common ground when communicating about water quality issues. If your audience is wary of pinpointing climate change as a contributing factor to water quality issues, they may still be receptive to discussing the effects of urbanization on water quality. Maybe your audience is not inspired to take action based solely on the environmental impact of water pollution, but the human health impacts are more compelling.

Approaching water quality issues from many angles can help rally audiences with varying perspectives around the common goal of cleaner water.



WATER QUALITY COMMUNICATIONS

Using Social Media

Social media is one of many outlets available to communicators, but it stands out for a few reasons:

- **Wide reach.** In 2022, there were 4.74 billion social media users around the world - this represents 59.3% of the global population
- **Cost effective and accessible.** Social media is low cost or even free to use, and it is accessible to organizations and individuals with no need for paid subscriptions.
- **Community building.** Social media platforms make it easy to find other individuals passionate about an issue and to connect with likeminded organizations.

Choosing Your Platform

When it comes to social media, there are many platforms and the landscape is always changing. It can be daunting to choose a social media platform, but remember this advice:

- You don't have to be on every platform
- Don't feel like you have to learn a new platform to be successful
- Pick a platform you are comfortable with and focus your efforts

For most groups, it makes sense to start on **Instagram** and/or **Facebook**.



...and many more!



WATER QUALITY COMMUNICATIONS

Instagram

- Instagram is a highly visual platform - high quality photos and graphics will help your posts do well.
- Short videos (called “reels”) are favored by the app’s algorithm.
- Captions should be kept brief and/or contain a catchy first line - the post preview shown on users’ feed will cut off longer captions.
- There is no option to share clickable links in the caption of a post. Use a service like LinkTree to share links from your page’s bio



Facebook

- Unlike Instagram, Facebook posts are not required to include photos/videos, but these visual elements are helpful in making your posts stand out
- Articles and other clickable links can be easily shared in a post
- Users can create and promote events on Facebook
- Facebook groups allow users with common interests to congregate and share posts



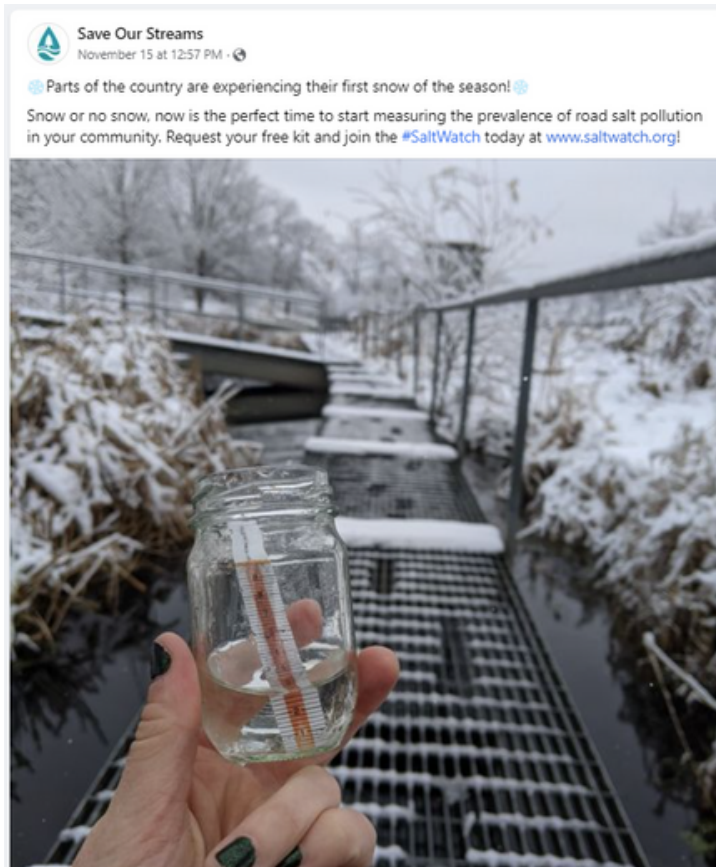
Bonus: Instagram and Facebook are owned by the same parent company, Meta, so cross-posting between platforms is easy.




WATER QUALITY COMMUNICATIONS

What makes a good social media post?

- **Eye-catching visuals.** Photos (especially photos of people), graphics, and videos will help draw attention to your post.
- **Clear, concise captions.** Attention spans are short! Social media users may not stop scrolling to read a long caption, so keep it brief.
- **Connect with your audience.** Call upon things that your audience cares about, like sustainability, environmental protection, or public health. Make water quality issues relevant to the reader.
- **Include a call to action.** Is there something that you want to reader to do? It could be as simple as asking them to click a link or answer a question, or it could be asking them to get involved in water quality monitoring.



 saveourstreams 🚨 Action Alert!
The EPA has proposed bringing back a version of the Clean Water Act that better protects streams nationwide - from the smallest creeks to the mightiest rivers. The proposal would also restore protections for up to 20 million acres of wetlands across the country.

Join @iwla_org in supporting this critical step by submitting your comments to the EPA by Monday FEBRUARY 7TH!

Click the link in bio to submit your comments now!

#cleanwateract #protectcleanwater #takeaction #conservation



WATER QUALITY COMMUNICATIONS

Social Media Tips

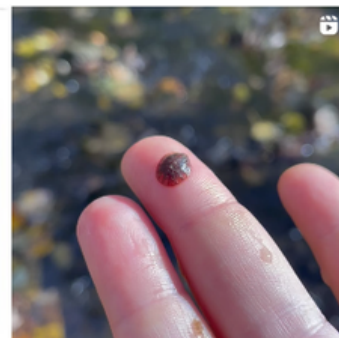
- **Be a good partner.** Tag partner organizations when posting about collaborative work (type “@” + the organization’s name). You can also re-post something shared by a partner organization to highlight their work and connect it to your own. This cross-promotion will increase the reach of both organizations’ posts and may earn you both some new followers.
- **Encourage interaction.** When possible, encourage readers to interact with your post. You can do this by asking questions, including a poll/quiz, and by responding to and liking comments.
- **Share photos.** Attention spans are short, and photos and videos help pull people in. Plus, showing pictures of people monitoring can help others to picture themselves doing the same.
- **Include graphics.** Graphics can make information easy to digest and share, allowing your captions to remain brief while still conveying lots of information. Free sites like Canva can help you create eye-catching graphics.
- **Keep it simple.** It is always best to keep social media posts short and to-the-point. Use simple language, cut filler words, and don’t try to do too much in your caption. If you have lots more to say, encourage readers to click a link to learn more.
- **Use #hashtags.** Hashtags (“#”) are search terms, and including them in your captions will make your posts appear in searches. Choose common terms for your hashtags, ideally things that users may actually search for.



WATER QUALITY COMMUNICATIONS

Social Media Tips

- **Create “share-worthy” content.** A worthy goal is to create the kind of content that other users will want to share. This could take many forms - sharing a personal story, important facts/data, great visuals, breaking news, etc.
- **You don’t always need to be serious.** Remember that people use social media for entertainment as well as education. Take a break from heavy content and calls to actions and make space for things like humor and nature appreciation.
- **Post with consistency.** To keep users engaged it is a good idea to post regularly. Find a schedule that works for you and stick with it. Your posts don’t need to be complicated (you can even share posts from other organizations) but it is important to maintain a presence online.
- **Explore analytics.** Facebook and Instagram make it easy to learn what people react to the most. If you manage an organization page, check out the Meta Business Suite for insights on your audience and what content they respond to.
- **Be yourself!** Don’t try to imitate the language or trends of another generation or group. Simply do what feels natural for you and your audience.





SAVE OUR STREAMS

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www.iwla.org/water | sos@iwla.org