

# Boundary Waters: Online news as a place for public participation in decision-making

## Driving Questions

- What are people saying in the “public sphere” about the proposed Twin Metals mine near the Boundary Waters Canoe Area?
- What role do online news sites play in socio-technical decision-making?

## Background

### Socio-technical decision-making

Topic involves technical subject matter and social dimensions, i.e complicated stuff that affects people. Resulting decision will affect people differently.

### Places of participation

- Print/TV news
- Social media
- Advocacy websites
- Gov websites
- Online news sites

There are many places in which information and opinions circulate. For this project, we focused on news articles, opinions, and editorials published online.

## Methods

- We used combinations of search terms to find artifacts about the proposed mine near the Boundary Waters Canoe Area
- We collected **288 artifacts published online in news outlets between November 2017 and January 2020**
- We then collected metadata and conducted an initial content analysis to identify themes.

## Results: Public discourse spikes when regulatory decision are made

*Artifacts published by week, by genre*

Article

Editorial

Opinion

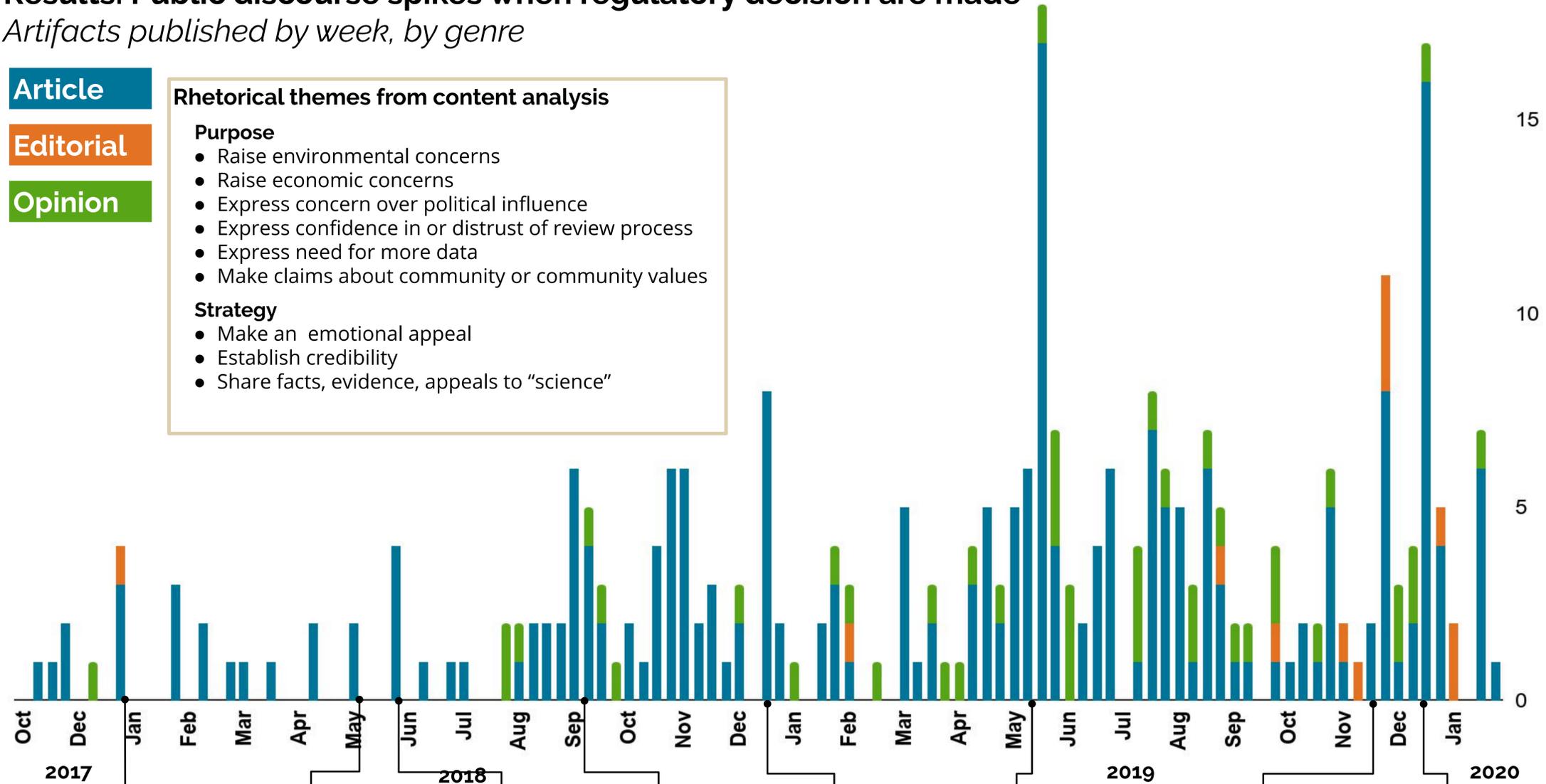
### Rhetorical themes from content analysis

#### Purpose

- Raise environmental concerns
- Raise economic concerns
- Express concern over political influence
- Express confidence in or distrust of review process
- Express need for more data
- Make claims about community or community values

#### Strategy

- Make an emotional appeal
- Establish credibility
- Share facts, evidence, appeals to “science”



12/22/17

Department of the Interior moves to renew leases for the mining operation.

5/2/18

Department of the Interior reinstates Twin Metals mineral leases & its application for new leases.

5/21/18

Twin Metals announces plans to build oil-processing facility closer to the Boundary Waters.

9/6/18

U.S. Department of Agriculture cancels the study on potential environmental impacts of mining near the BWCA.

12/20/18

Bureau of Land Management announces it will formally renew Twin Metal's mineral leases. Public comment period until Jan 22.

5/12/19

Bureau of Land Management renewed two mineral leases held by Twin Metals.

11/22/19

MN officials announce the state will conduct its own environmental review of the proposed mine.

12/15/19

Twin Metals submits official mining plan to state and federal regulators.

