GOTTLIEB STRATEGIC RESEARCH

Social Media Audit

October 24, 2018

Prepared for:

Center for Western Priorities

WINNING THE WEST

Driving the conversation

The Center for Western Priorities commissioned a first-of-its-kind review of social media activity and sentiment on the theme of public lands. This provides insights into the way in which Westerners incorporate public lands into their lifestyle, the events that drive social media around lands, and the way that certain organizations and leaders drive online conversations.

- *Visits to scenic and recreation areas.* Part of the location-based and photo heavy use of social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram.
- *Controversies around new development.* Social media chatter around new drilling or mining was almost always negative over the last two years.
- *Actions by social media influencers.* Outdoor companies like Patagonia took a much more active role and this is heavily reflected in the sentiment results.

The analysis

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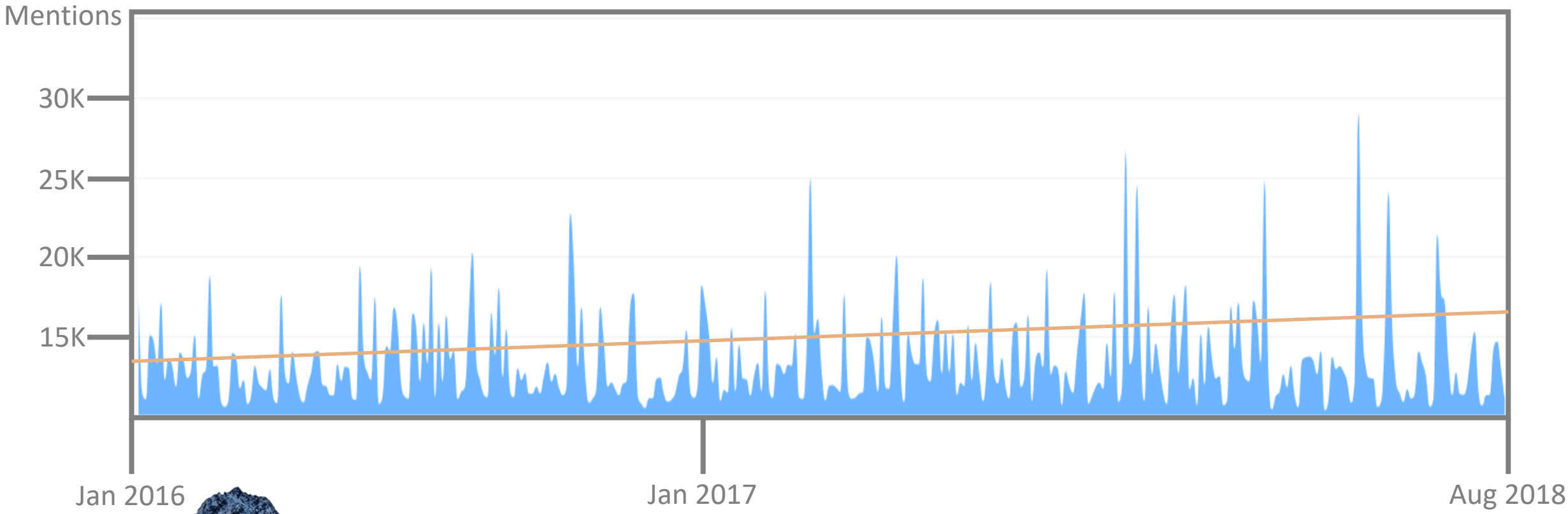
This analysis looks at the pool of relevant social media conversations dating back to January 2016 that have taken place in the Winning the West campaign's five target Western states: Arizona, Colorado, Montana, New Mexico, and Nevada. This identified over two million mentions.

The Analysis: Across the six policy proposals—increased land available for oil and gas, increased access for hunting and fishing, less regulation for oil and gas development, reducing national monument size, and expanding uranium mining near the Grand Canyon—conversations were divided into areas such as state and sentiment in order to better understand things such as topic volume by location. Each sentiment analysis has been hand coded and assigned values based on both the tone and intensity of the post, which when combined gives a more accurate overall sentiment reading. While some numbers have been rounded to approximation, the overall margin of error is less than 2%.

Methodology: The social media analysis was performed in accordance with industry standard best practices by developing multiple subject matter keyword topics, which are tested and optimized for maximum volume and subject continuity. Each topic is created using Boolean language and includes a mixture or primary terms, derivatives, slang, and exclusions that return reliable representative samplings of relevant conversations online.

Two million mentions of public lands issues

From January 2016 to present, there have been over two million mentions from the five targeted Western states as it relates to public land conversation in the U.S. Each quarter since January 2016 has seen conversation volume growth.



How social media users talk about Western lands generally

With regard to public lands as a general conversation topic, publicly available social media data suggest that people are most concerned with protecting the land that we have and making sure that limitations on use are held in place. Data suggests that conversations geared toward the administration account for approximately 66% of public lands conversation while the remaining 34% is geared toward recreational use of public lands.

Bringontheadventure @Bringontheadve1 · Jun 12 · 11:57 am

Here's a couple pics from one of our last trips to see Jacob Hamblin Arch in Southern **Utah** #coyotegulch #**hike** @SlingFin @klymit https://t.co/TVl6LXN7yu

Reach 147 · Engagement 19 — Positive

jhv1948 @jhv1948 · Jan 17 · 12:26 pm

There are plenty more examples of how **Trump**'s "Best People" are screwing up everything from protection from financial debacles to the environmental reforms **Trump** and Zinke doubling **National Park** fees to an insane $80 per vehicle is one of the most underreported outrages of the

Kasi C. @Pianobirdy · FRA · Sep 17 · 10:30 pm

9/11/18 SALT LAKE CITY— "The **Trump** admin today offered up more than 200,000 acres of public lands for fossil fuel development in some of #Utah's most picturesque landscapes, including on the doorstep of Canyonlands **National Park** & along the Green River." https://t.co/EU0nLMg4MD

Reach 973 · Engagement 0 — Neutral

Suzi Day @suziday123 · USA · Apr 8 · 4:59 pm

RT @RoadtripC: #Sunny #**Arizona**. Enjoyed a lovely #**Hike** #PinnaclePeak #Scottsdale #Travel. This is a well maintained #trail with views of Saguaro Cacti , Golf courses and small mountains. A small 3.5 mile **hike**. #hiking #desert #phoenix. @jpcacho @always5star @suziday123 @

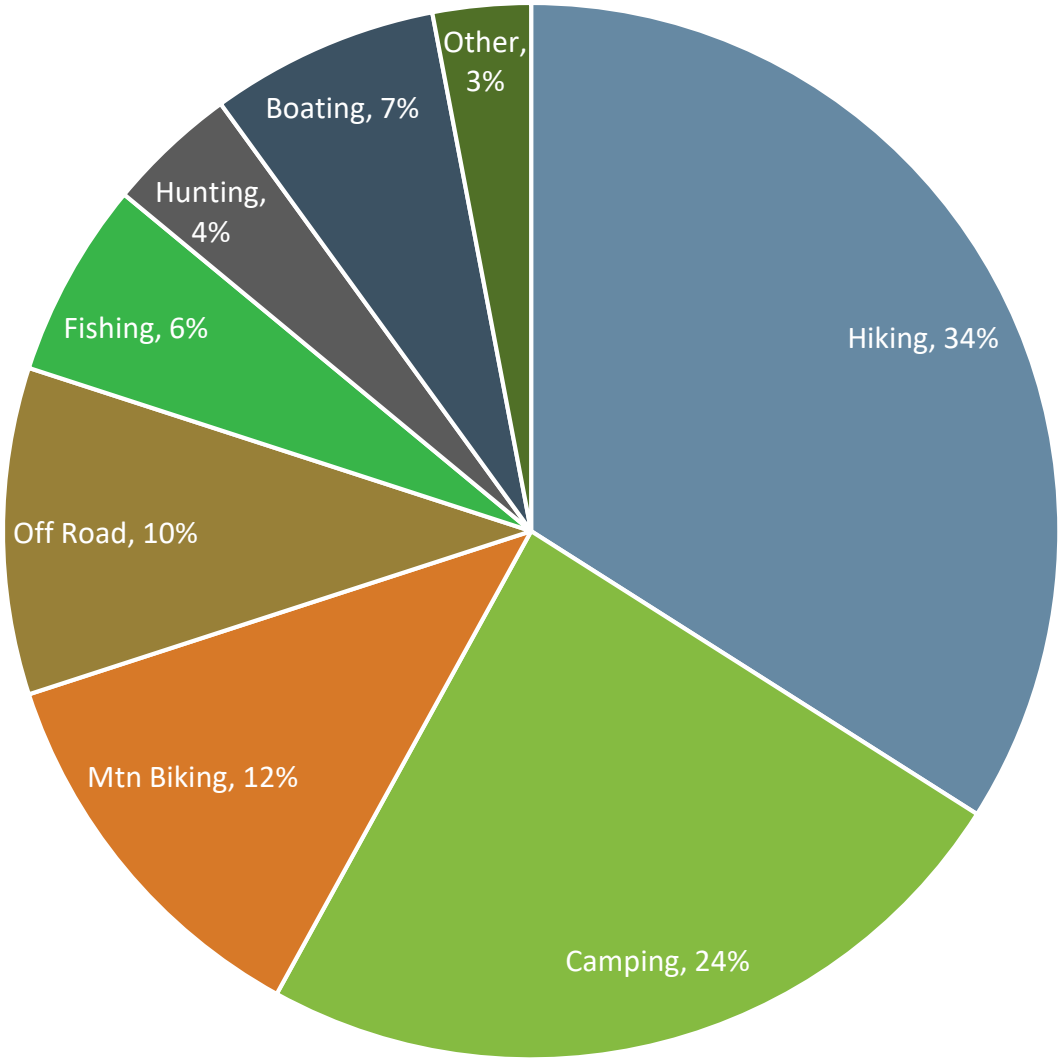
Reach 30k · Engagement 0 — Positive

Approx. 1.2m mentions

HOW SOCIAL MEDIA USERS MAKE USE OF THE LAND

Here we see a visual representation of approximately one million mentions of how social media users say they use the lands from 2016-18. Camping and hiking make up 58% of overall conversation, while mountain biking and off-roading are popular secondary topics. It is likely that the demographics of social media users play a factor here in that many older sportsmen and women may not be as active across social media in general.

Approx. 1.2m mentions



How social media users talk about enjoying Western lands

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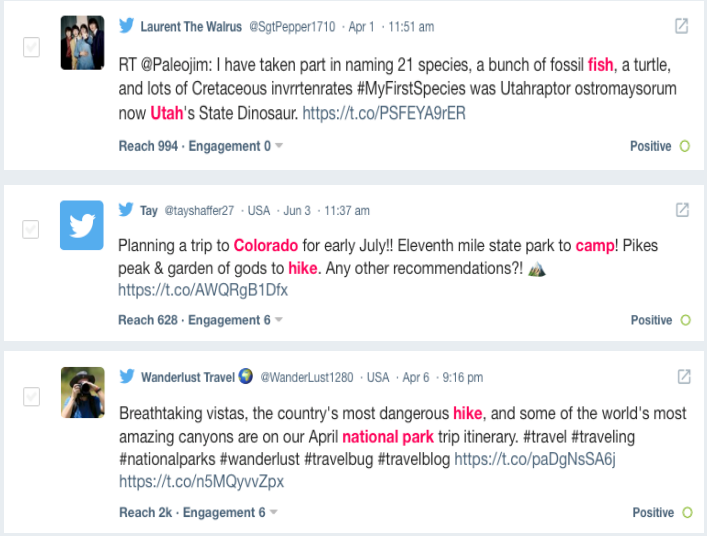
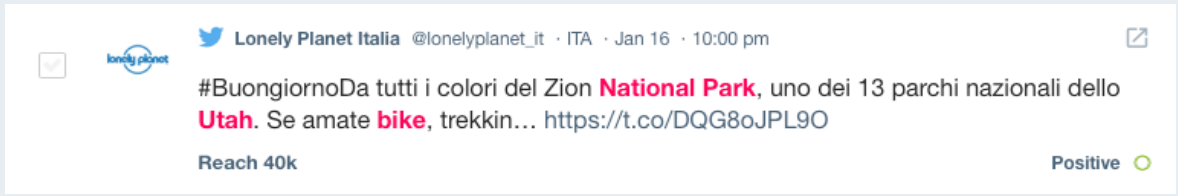
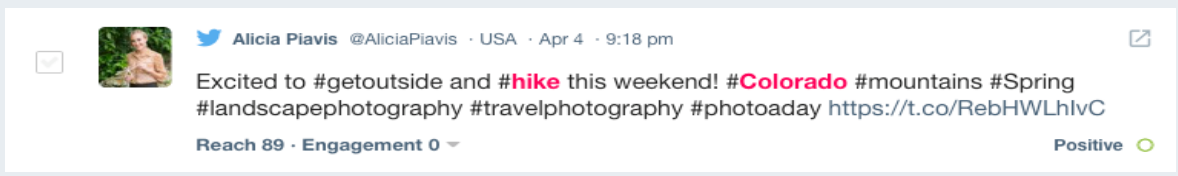
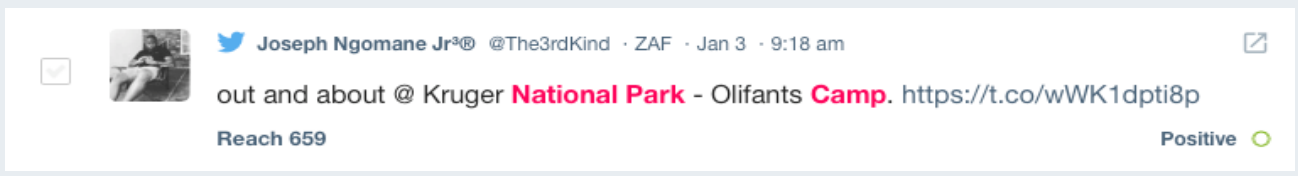
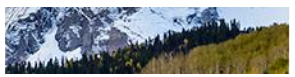
Here we see some samples of posts of how people use and enjoy public lands recreationally.







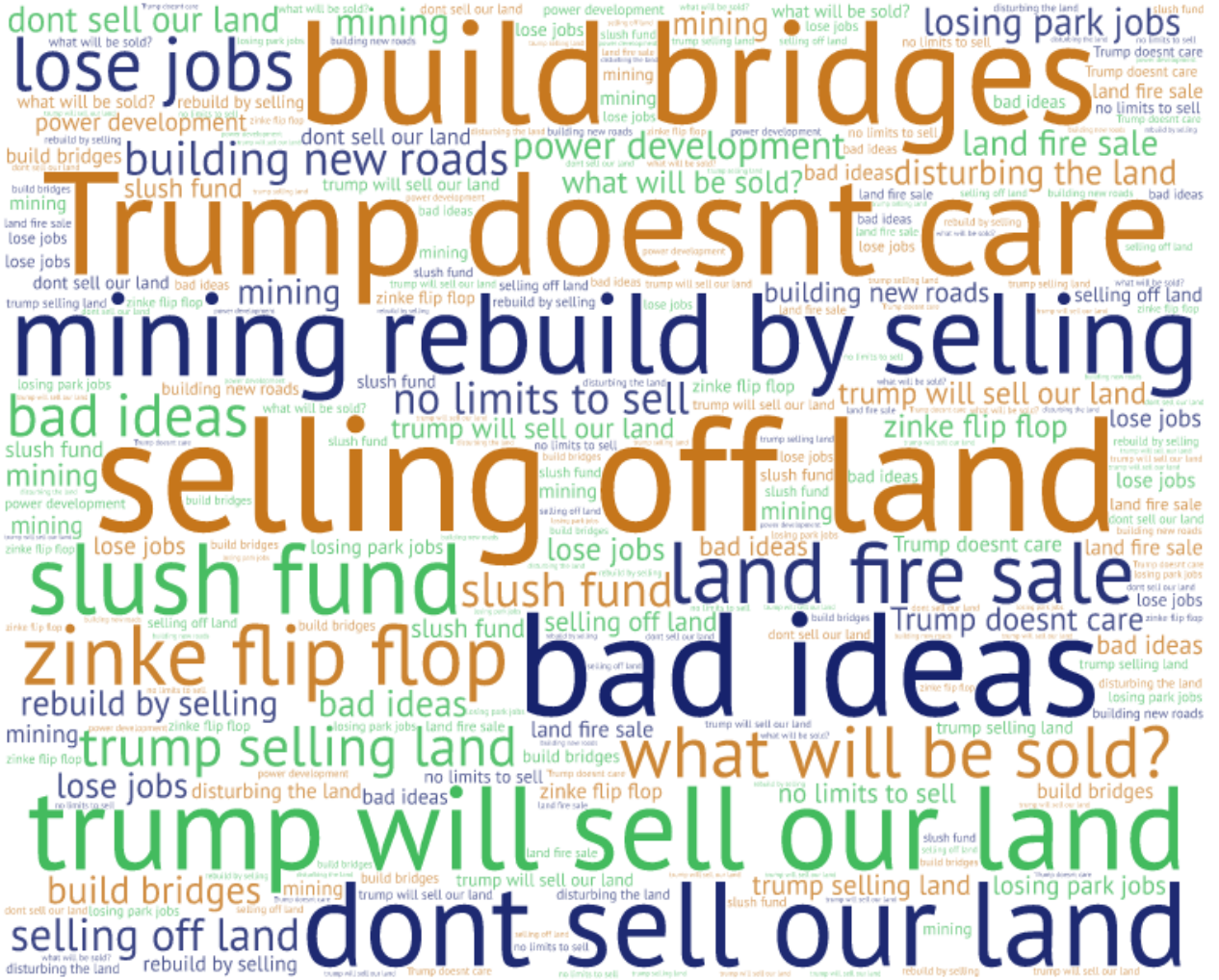




How social media users talk about Western lands politically

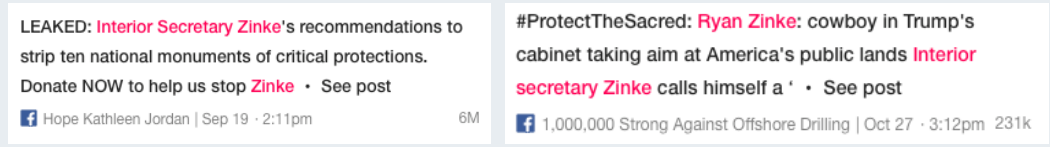
Looking at conversations around President Trump's proposals, most social media users focus on Trump's proposals to reclassify land and remove restrictions that would make public land easier to sell. While some users see a slight benefit that would come in the form of new roads and facilities, most users focus on the loss of recreation jobs and see an overall loss of public land as a negative.

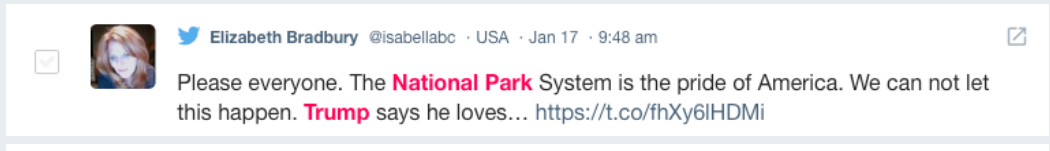
Approx. 687k mentions

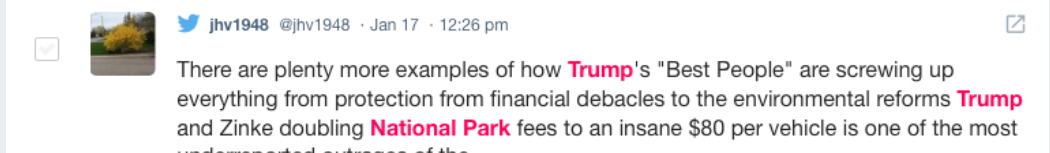


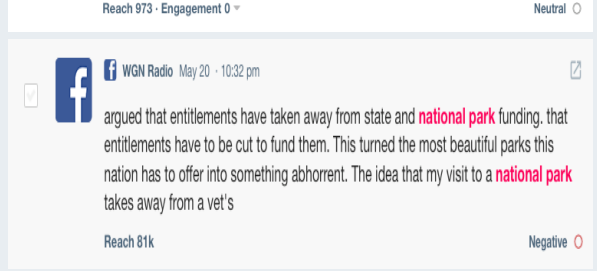
How social media users talk about Western lands politically

Here we see some samples of posts and rhetoric across the social landscape when social media users express thoughts about public lands as it relates to the way the administration has handled them.



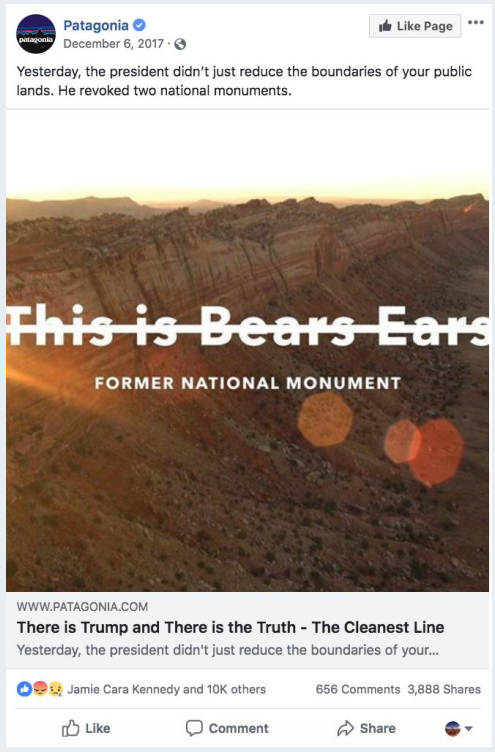


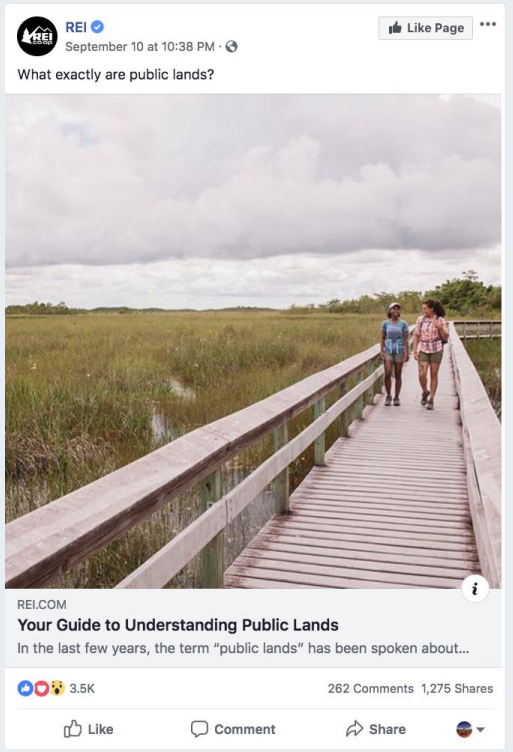




Big brands influencing the conversation

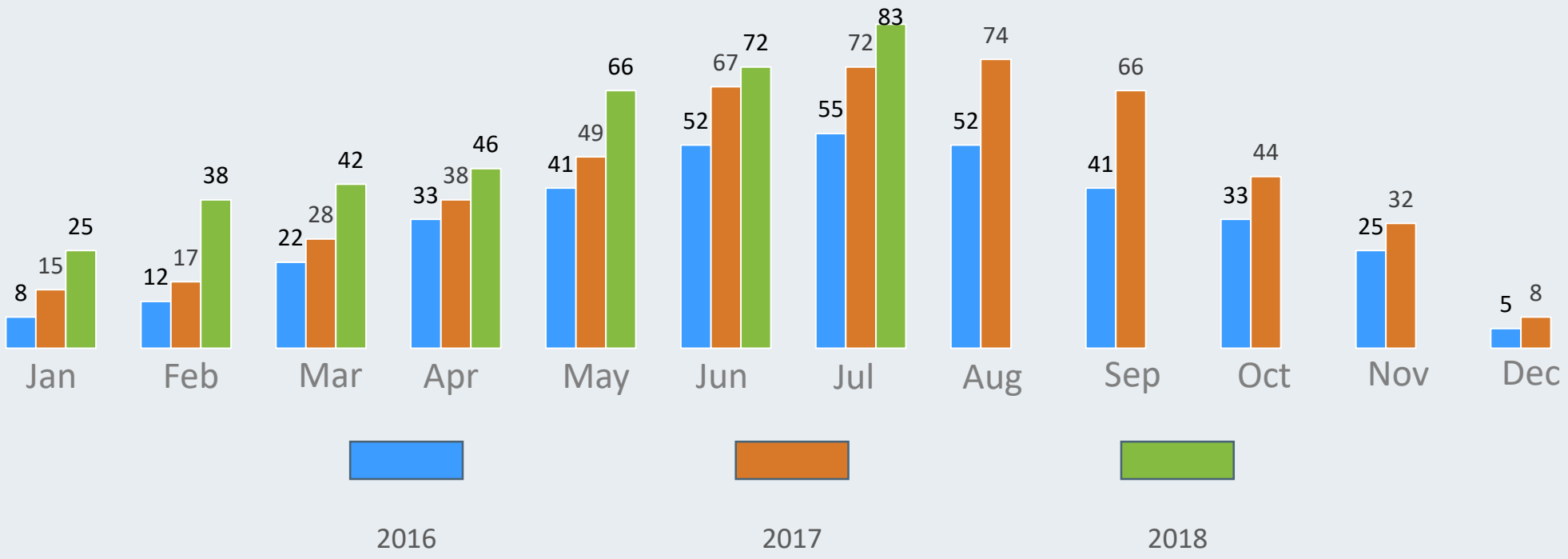
Several large outdoor brands have gotten involved in the conversation on social media through the use of influencers or through their owned channels. Patagonia has played a key role in pushing opposition to the administration in general, but has been particularly involved in creating content in opposition to public lands proposals. Since 2016, Patagonia has played a role (by way of net new posts or shares of owned channel posts) in creating approximately **60,000 posts** about public lands in opposition to the administration.





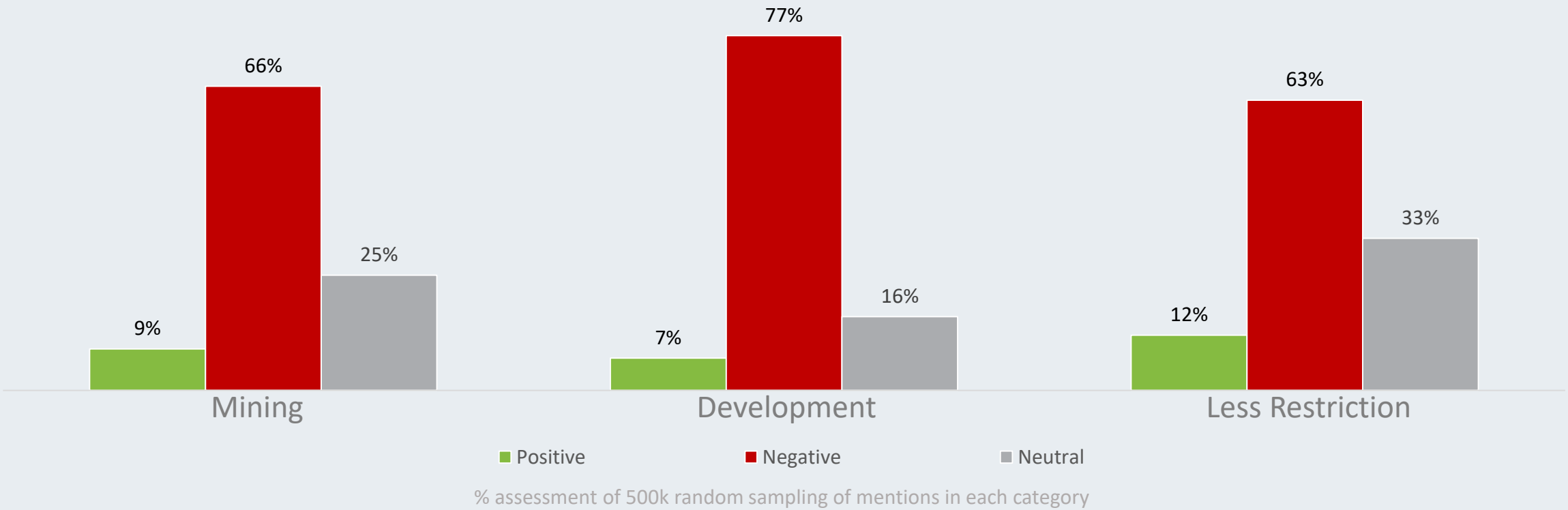
Conversation volumes by month

Environmental conversation trends show a pattern when looked at month-to-month and illustrate overall conversation growth from 2016 to 2018. Conversation volume does show a direct correlation to tourism increases throughout the year despite remaining politically-minded with regard to the administration's handling of public lands.



Conversations involving opening public lands to development are highly negative

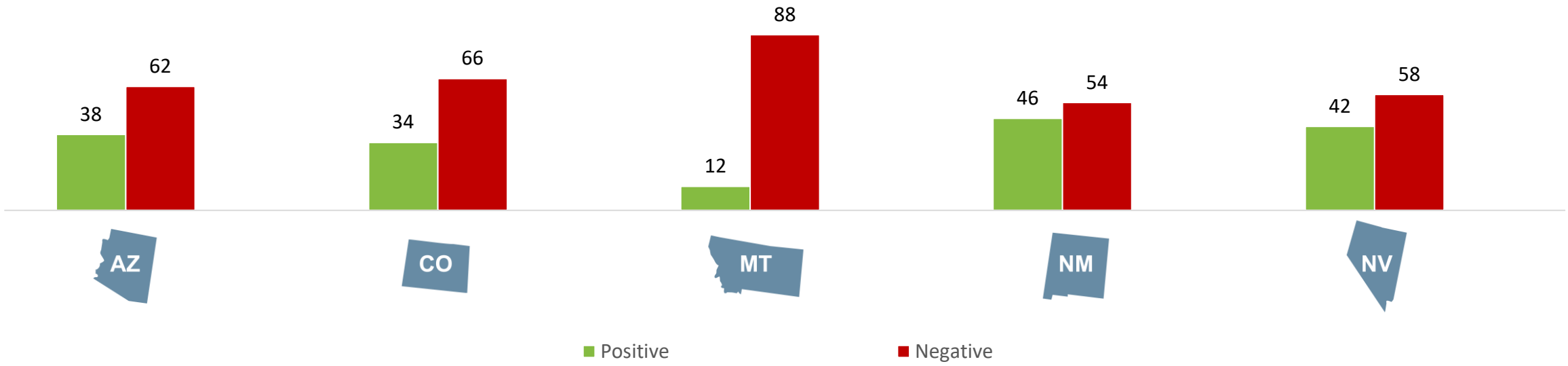
Here we segmented conversation into three keyword categories: mining, development, and (removing) restrictions. Keyword groups were built using topical analysis of the total conversation to extract key themes, then derivative keywords were added to each group according to relevance. Still, the overall theme is largely negative. The topic of less restriction is the topic most associated with hunting and fishing.



% assessment of 500k random sampling of mentions in each category

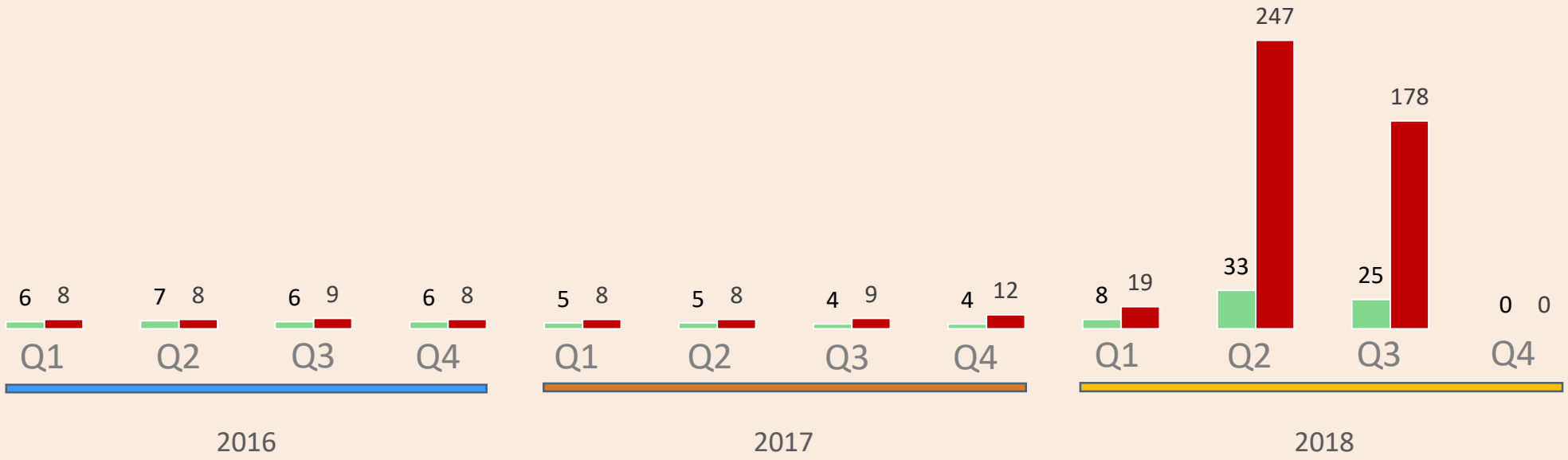
Administration approval rating on social media is negative in all 5 of the Western states

A hand-coded analysis of sentiment across publicly available social media conversations shows that, overall, the general public discusses the administration's handling of public lands in a negative way, which is directly linked to approval of the administration. It's interesting to note that the online conversation, by and large, concurs with the initial Winning the West opinion polling, especially in Montana.



Increasing land available for oil and gas

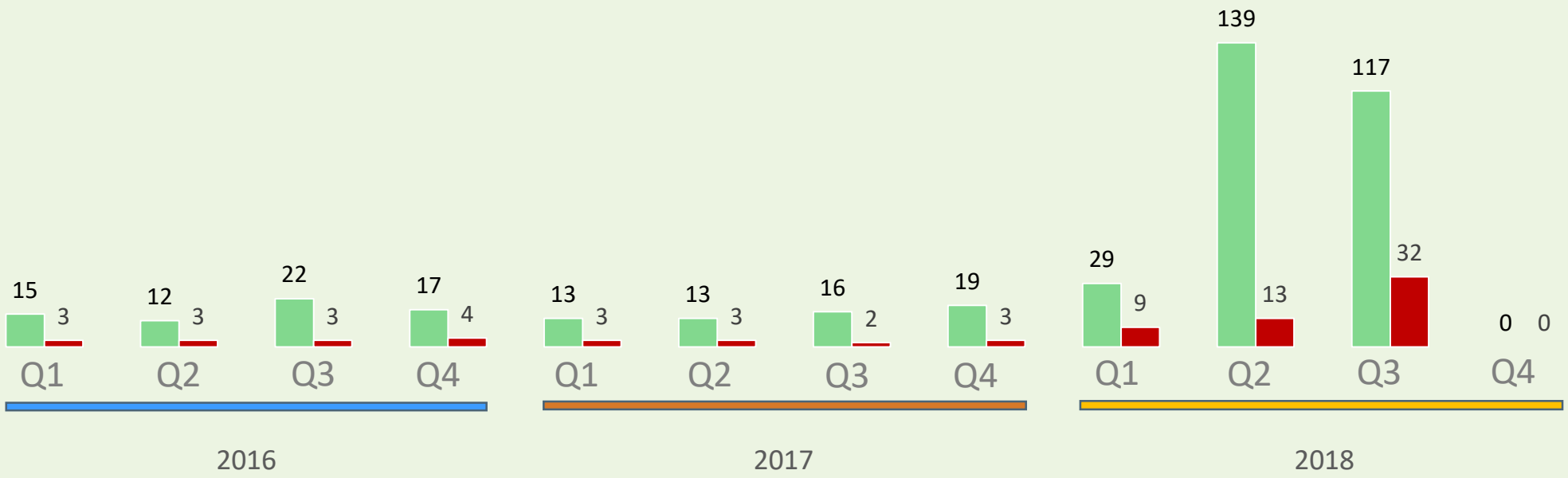
Here we see sentiment on the topic as broken down by positive and negative conversation volumes by quarter. Overall sentiment speaks to a stark lack of public approval for oil and gas procurement on public lands.



*Numbers quantified are mentions in thousands. Sentiment is based on 25% random sampling

Increased access for hunting and fishing

Here we see sentiment on the topic as broken down by positive and negative conversation volumes by quarter. While public land accessibility shows to always have constant conversation, the proposal announcement in Q2 of 2018 spurred positive sentiment online.



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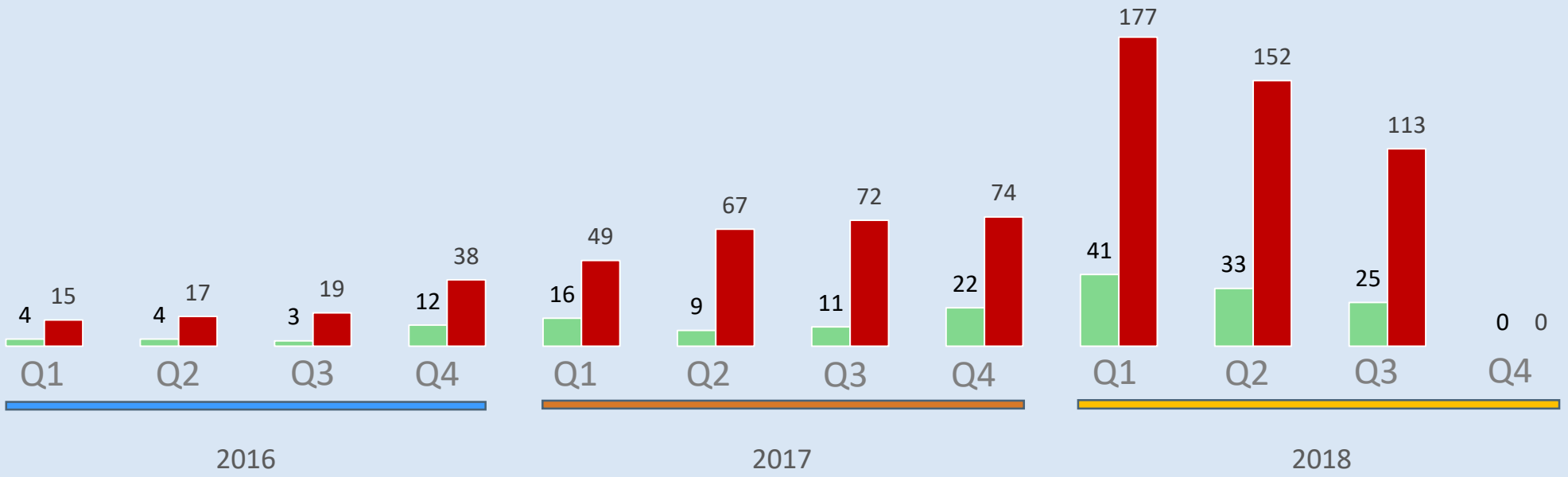
Less regulation for oil and gas development

Here we see sentiment on the topic as broken down by positive and negative conversation volumes by quarter. Oil and gas regulation is a hot topic across the board on social media, but conversation volume picked up in Q4 of 2016 during Trump's election and has continued to increase since then.



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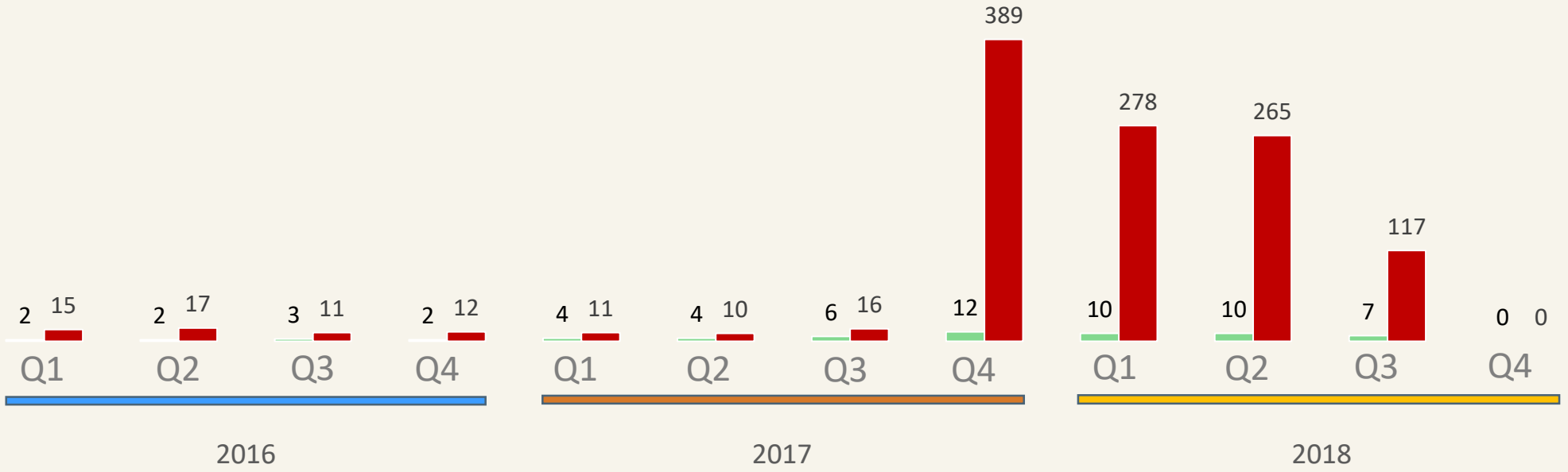
Reducing national monument size

Here we see sentiment on the topic as broken down by positive and negative conversation volumes by quarter. The majority of public social media users harshly disapprove of the administration's effort to reduce the size of national monuments. Among these critics are many public brands who have taken the charge in leading the conversation against the proposal.



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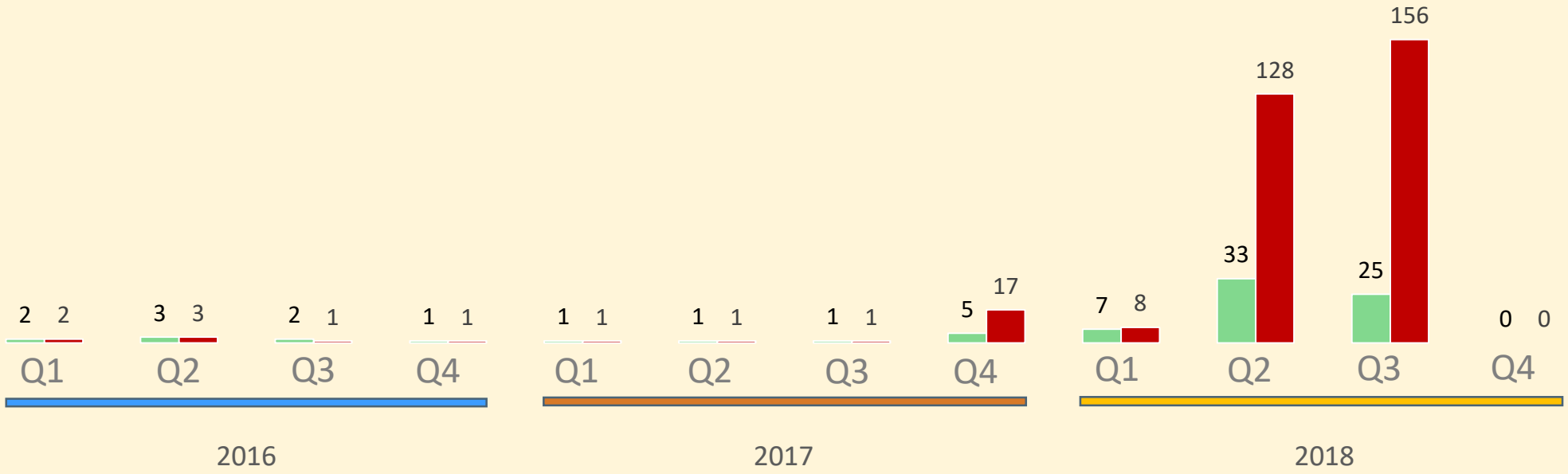
Expanding uranium mining near the Grand Canyon

Here we see sentiment on the topic as broken down by positive and negative conversation volumes by quarter. This conversation topic only established on social media at the end of 2017, but when the official proposal came out, harsh reactions came to dominate the conversation with many powerful brands and organizations joining the conversation and petitions being created against the proposal.



*Numbers quantified are mentions in thousands. Sentiment is based on 25% random sampling

Thank You!

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