Coordinated monitoring of the Piney Point wastewater discharage into Tampa Bay: Data synthesis and reporting

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From March 30th to April 9th, 2021, an estimated 215 million gallons of wastewater from the Piney Point phosphogypsum stacks were released into Tampa Bay to avoid catastrophic failure of the holding ponds. Ammonium concentrations in the wastewater were measured in excess of 200 mg/L and it was estimated that ~205 tons of total nitrogen were exported to Lower Tampa Bay, exceeding typical annual nitrogen load estimates in a matter of days. In response to these events, a coordinated environmental monitoring effort consisting of multiple government, university, and private sector partners began to assess conditions of surface waters around Piney Point to understand conditions prior to, during, and after the wastewater release. These efforts included sampling of surface water chemistry, surveys of algal community response, assessments of wastewater contaminants, and biological surveys of seagrass, macroalgae, benthic, and nekton communities. This resulted in many disparate data sets coming from multiple sources, which required the use of robust synthesis methods for assessment of current conditions, comparisons with the decades of baseline data available in Tampa Bay, and development of forward-facing reporting products to convey results of field sampling in near real time. This talk will discuss the open-source tools that were used to synthesize the environmental monitoring data, the online dashboard that was developed to report the data, and how these products were used to inform management response to rapidly changing environmental conditions. The specific challenges in combining data, both from a technical and philosophical perspective, will also be discussed as lessons learned from the Piney Point experience to inform future event-based monitoring responses, both in Tampa Bay and elsewhere.

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# Introduction

* Piney Point background
* Monitoring response
* Challenges with data synthesis and need for rapid assessment tools, TBEP commitment to OS
* Goals
  + Paper: describe data synthesis and communication using OS tools during 2021 Piney Point event
  + OS tools: organize/synthesize, contextualize, and communicate with specific focus on the dashboard

Test reference ([Greening et al. 2016](#ref-Greening16))

# Data collection and synthesis

* Monitoring details - effort, agencies, methods, TBEP coordination, refer to MPB paper for details
* Synthesis workflow
  + Challenges - multiple streams, messy AF
  + Solutions - centralized data uploads, R tools for synthesis (import, testing, app integration)
  + Sorta unified data structure (but see metadata section)
* Repository setup - synthesis and app

# The Piney Point Dashboard

## Setup

* App creation and hosting
* App structure - backend
  + R/dat\_proc.R to data folder, logs
  + Testing why and how (testthat, GitHub Actions)
  + Rmarkdown w/ flexdashboard: Dependencies/globals, reactives, UI setup with text descriptions and dynamic inputs
  + CSS styling
  + Google Analytics js
* App structure - frontend
  + Landing page
  + Current data
    - Water quality results
    - Algal surveys
    - Seagrass/macroalgae
    - Contaminants
    - Benthic
  + Baseline data
    - Water quality
    - Seagrasses

## Analytics

* Analytics and where it was linked (e.g., DEP, myfwc), not analytics did not start until May 13th, 2021
  + Average time spent on app, mobile vs desktop (go to analytics to get this)
  + Total users over time (from Google Analytics), Figure 1
  + Users by geographic location (country, state, city)

# Data Archive

* Rationale, maybe make relative to past PP events (no data) and highlight importance of metadata
* Workflow and GitHub repository
* EML, KNB location, download stats

# Discussion

* Added value of the app
  + analytics speak for themselves, but not the whole picture. How did users get to our dashboard (some of this info is in Analytics, but which of our comms products drove the bus)? How was it used (e.g., screenshots for pres, K. Hubbard pers. comm.)?
  + how can we better assess the value of these tools more holistically? What is the true measure of success in terms of behavior change or driving policy, if any?
* Relevant considerations
  + What worked - use of OS tools, but still very time-consuming (e.g., R/dat\_proc.R is thousands of lines of code)
  + Need for unified datasets, use of tidy principles, etc. Also mention that this relied on partners sending us data/putting data on GDrive, not everyone did that (note issues with the latter, i.e., access from elsewhere can be unreliable, but we also didn’t have all the data). Highly value of partnerships - data collection and sharing.
  + Value of historical data and contextualized summaries
  + Exposure of additional data needs (e.g., macroalgae)
* Future of Piney Point, next steps, etc.

# Figures

* Partner sampling map and parameters (different from MPB map)
* Synthesis workflow
* Dashboard screenshot and structure
* Users over time

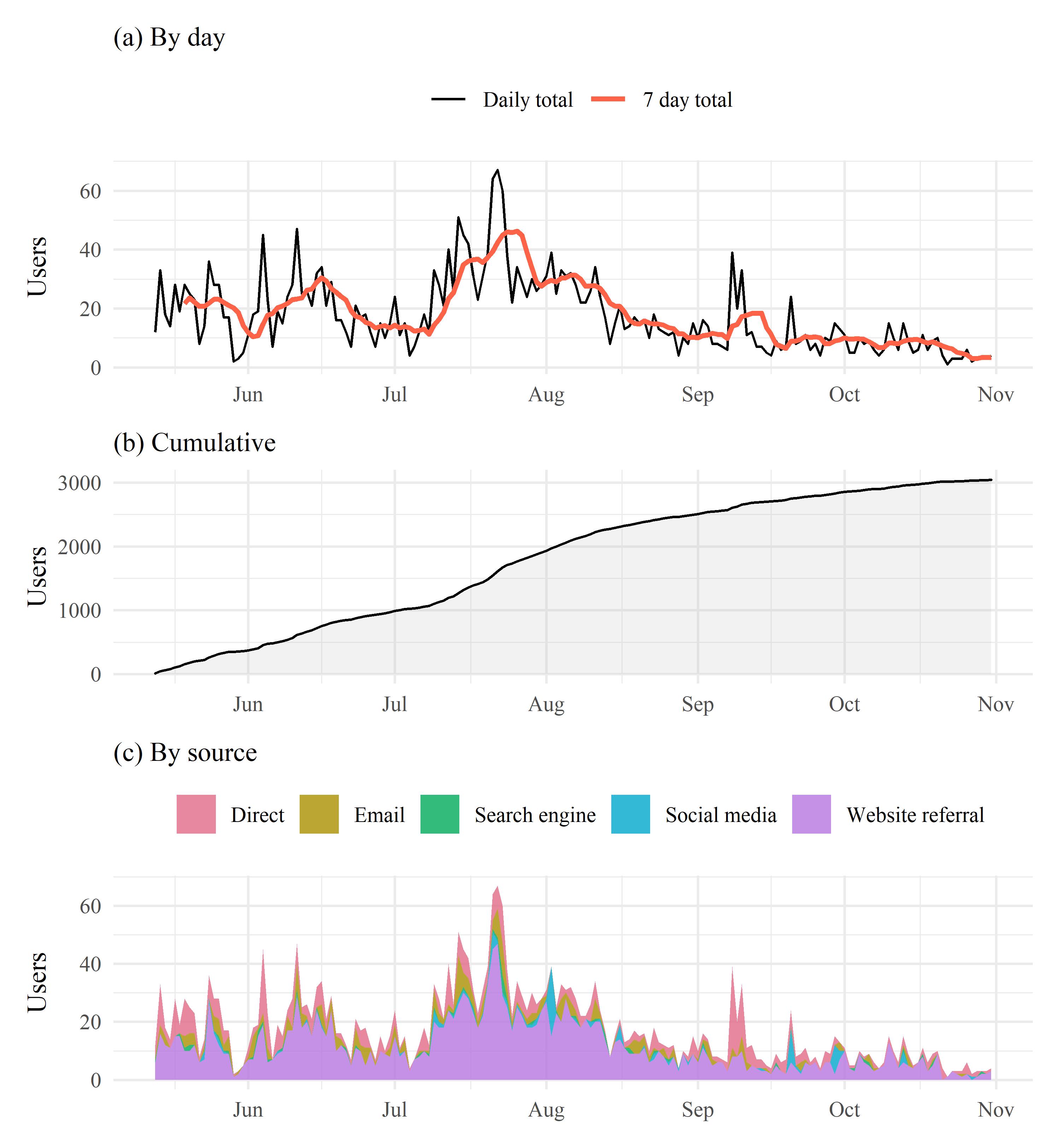


Figure 1: Dashboard users (a) by day, (b) cumulative over time, and (c) by source. Source refers to how users accessed the dashboard.

# Tables

* Data effort over time
* Analytics demographics breakdown (country, state, city)

# References

Greening H, Janicki A, Sherwood E. 2016. Seagrass recovery in Tampa Bay, Florida (USA), pp. 1–12 *In* Finlayson CM, Milton GR, Prentice RC, Davidson NC [eds.], The wetland book. Springer, Berlin, Germany.