

**STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD  
BOARD MEETING SESSION – OFFICE OF INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND ANALYSIS  
JUNE 18, 2013**

**ITEM 8**

**SUBJECT**

UPDATE ON ACTIVITIES OF THE CALIFORNIA WATER QUALITY MONITORING COUNCIL AND ITS WORKGROUPS, AND PROGRESS ON CONNECTING DECISION MAKERS AND THE PUBLIC WITH WATER QUALITY AND AQUATIC ECOSYSTEM INFORMATION THROUGH THE *MY WATER QUALITY* INTERNET PORTALS

**DISCUSSION**

- *Is our water safe to drink?*
- *Is it safe to swim in our waters?*
- *Is it safe to eat fish and shellfish from our waters?*
- *Are our aquatic ecosystems healthy?*

These are the high-level questions addressed by a set of Internet portals being developed under the oversight of the California Water Quality Monitoring Council.

Senate Bill 1070 (Statutes of 2006) mandated that water quality and associated ecosystem monitoring and assessment activities be coordinated among organizations inside and outside California government, and that the resulting information be made available to decision makers and the public via the internet. As required by the statute, the California Environmental Protection Agency and the California Natural Resources Agency signed a Memorandum of Understanding that established the Monitoring Council in November 2007. The State Water Board has the responsibility to administer the Monitoring Council. In December 2010, the Monitoring Council sent its recommended *Comprehensive Monitoring Program Strategy* to the Agency Secretaries for coordinating water quality and associated ecosystem monitoring, assessment, and reporting efforts throughout the State and for making the resulting information available to decision makers and the public.

The Monitoring Council's comprehensive strategy endeavors to coordinate and enhance California's monitoring, assessment and reporting efforts by focusing first on providing a platform for intuitive, streamlined access to water quality and aquatic ecosystem information that directly addresses users' questions. Theme-specific workgroups, under the overarching guidance of the Monitoring Council, evaluate existing monitoring, assessment and reporting efforts and work to enhance those efforts so as to improve the delivery of water quality and associated ecosystem health information to the user, in the form of theme-based internet portals. To date, seven of these workgroups have been formed each addressing a high-level management question:

- ***Is our water safe to drink?***  
Safe Drinking Water Workgroup, led by the Department of Public Health
- ***Is it safe to swim in our waters?***  
Safe-to-Swim Workgroup, led by the State Water Board
- ***Is it safe to eat fish and shellfish from our waters?***  
Bioaccumulation Oversight Group, led by the State Water Board

- ***Are our aquatic ecosystems healthy?***
  - ***Wetlands***  
California Wetland Monitoring Workgroup, led by the Department of Fish and Wildlife, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project
  - ***Rivers and streams***  
Healthy Streams Partnership, led by the State Water Board
  - ***Estuaries***  
California Estuary Monitoring Workgroup, led by the State and Federal Contractors Water Agency and The Bay Institute
  - ***Ocean and coastal waters***  
California Ocean Ecosystem Workgroup, initiated by the State Water Board and currently seeking long-term leadership

Each workgroup is staffed by issue experts representing key stakeholders from both inside and outside state government. To date, four of these workgroups have launched Internet portals to present coordinated monitoring data and summary assessment information for use by agency decision makers, legislators, researchers and the public. All of the portals are accessible through the *My Water Quality* website, [www.MyWaterQuality.ca.gov](http://www.MyWaterQuality.ca.gov).

To assist each of the theme-specific workgroups with common data access, data management, geospatial analysis, and web development issues, the Monitoring Council formed a Data Management Workgroup in 2011. With the assistance of the State Water Boards' Clean Water Team, the Monitoring Council has also formed the Water Quality Monitoring Collaboration Network (WQMCN). The Network presents a series of monthly web-based seminars to allow members of the monitoring community, including local citizen monitoring organizations, to network and exchange information and ideas on topic of interest, including the sharing of technical and support tools for monitoring, assessment and reporting, information management and monitoring program development.

The Monitoring Council's strategy is about a lot more than just putting data up on the web. It is about forming lasting relationships between organizations and implementing a portal design that both require and motivate parties to solve monitoring and assessment coordination and data integration problems, with a focus on directly addressing management questions. The presence of these portals provides a conceptual structure that initiates dialogues between existing and emerging monitoring programs thereby providing the opportunity to think more broadly than they would otherwise do, and enabling broader-based assessments than were possible before.

#### **POLICY ISSUE**

None – The purpose of this item is to update the Board on the actions of the Monitoring Council.

#### **FISCAL IMPACT**

None – Informational item

#### **REGIONAL BOARD IMPACT**

None – Informational item

#### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

None – Informational item