



California Water Quality Monitoring Council



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Secretary for

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December 28, 2010

Ms. Linda S. Adams
Secretary for Environmental Protection
California Environmental Protection Agency
1001 I Street, 25th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

Mr. Lester Snow
Secretary for Natural Resources
Natural Resources Agency
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Agency Secretaries:

**SUBJECT: COMPREHENSIVE MONITORING PROGRAM STRATEGY FOR
CALIFORNIA AND 2010 ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT**

On November 26, 2007, the Secretaries of Cal/EPA and Natural Resources signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) establishing the California Water Quality Monitoring Council (Monitoring Council), as required by CA SB 1070 (Kehoe, 2006). Pursuant to the legislation, the Monitoring Council on December 1, 2008 sent to you its initial recommendations for maximizing the efficiency and effectiveness of existing water quality and associated ecosystem data collection and dissemination, and for ensuring that collected data are maintained and available for use by decision makers and the public. This letter summarizes progress in the past calendar year and presents the Monitoring Council's recommended Comprehensive Monitoring Program Strategy that will guide the Monitoring Council's activities into the future.

The Monitoring Council's Philosophy Is Working

The formation of theme-specific workgroups has developed alliances between key agencies and organizations both within and outside state government. Their actions, under the oversight of the Monitoring Council, are resulting in coordinated action and are beginning to have an influence on policy. For two years, the Monitoring Council has worked with limited resources and the cooperation of other agencies and programs to implement its vision, convening a number of theme-specific workgroups and creating the *My Water Quality* website (www.CaWaterQuality.net) and three prototype internet portals of water quality and associated ecosystem information. Earlier this year, we briefed you on this progress and are grateful for your enthusiastic support.

California Environmental Protection and Natural Resources Agencies

2010 ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

During the past year, the Monitoring Council and its theme-specific workgroups have made substantial progress toward our goals. The following is a summary of accomplishments:

Theme-Specific Workgroups and Internet Portals

- The California Wetland Monitoring Workgroup released the California Wetlands Portal, the third *My Water Quality* internet portal.
- The California Wetland Monitoring Workgroup released their Wetland and Riparian Area Monitoring Program (WRAMP) to not only support the State Water Board's development of a Wetland and Riparian Area Protection Policy, but to also provide the degree of standardization necessary for future assessments of the extent and condition of California's wetland resources. In June, the Monitoring Council endorsed WRAMP implementation by all organizations within Cal/EPA and the Natural Resources Agency. Preliminary agreement on WRAMP implementation has been achieved for the riparian mapping effort that will support development of a Central Valley Flood Protection Plan.
- The recently released *State of the State's Wetlands* report acknowledges the inability to fully assess wetlands at the present time and the efforts of the Wetland Workgroup to coordinate wetland mapping and condition assessment under the Monitoring Council's oversight in order to correct this situation.
- Formal guidelines for theme-specific workgroups and internet portals were adopted to provide greater consistency between the *My Water Quality* portals and to aid the workgroups in becoming successful Monitoring Council partners in the effort to accurately portray the best available information on water quality and the health of our aquatic ecosystems.
- The Healthy Streams Partnership was formed as a workgroup to the Monitoring Council dedicated to promote the improvement of water quality in California streams by informing and encouraging changes in perspectives for resource management decisions and actions. The Partnership produced a mockup of their Stream and River Ecosystem Health portal, which was approved by the Monitoring Council for development and public release in 2011.
- The Bioaccumulation Oversight Group completed their assessment of contaminants in sport fish from California lakes and reservoirs with the publication of their second year report and addition of these data to the Safe to Eat Fish and Shellfish portal.
- The Delta Regional Monitoring Program, the Interagency Ecological Program, and the State and Federal Contractors Water Agency have agreed in principle to form a new California Estuary Monitoring Workgroup that will develop a California Estuaries internet portal initially focusing on the health of the San Francisco Bay-Delta estuary.

Interagency Coordination

- The relationship between the Monitoring Council and the Water Boards' Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program (SWAMP) has been firmly established, with SWAMP providing leadership for two theme-specific workgroups addressing stream and river ecosystem health and the accumulation of pollutants in fish and shellfish that people eat. In addition, SWAMP provides numerous tools that benefit these programs and other

Monitoring Council workgroups, including a rigorous quality assurance/quality control program, the California Environmental Data Exchange Network to share ambient water quality data between Water Board programs with other agencies and organizations, and a system of Regional Data Centers to assist data generators with data comparability and management.

- Greater engagement and improved participation by organizations within the Natural Resources Agency has been achieved as the result of direction provided by Natural Resources Agency Secretary Snow, following a June briefing on the Monitoring Council's strategy. Also in 2010, Secretary Snow appointed Dale Hoffman-Floerke from the Department of Water Resources as the new Monitoring Council Co-Chair representing the Natural Resources Agency. Councilperson Hoffman-Floerke has been instrumental in bringing the wide variety of Natural Resources Agency monitoring programs to the attention of the Monitoring Council.

Data Management

- The California Environmental Data Exchange Network (CEDEN) was publicly launched to provide a mechanism for bringing monitoring data together from a wide variety of sources. While initially focusing on State and Regional Water Board data sources, CEDEN will soon provide access to data from citizen and regional monitoring efforts and the federal Water Quality Exchange (WQX) network and will serve these data to the public through the *My Water Quality* portals.
- A new BeachWatch database is nearing completion that will improve the flow of bacterial and beach closure data from coastal county environmental health departments to the Water Boards, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Heal the Bay, and the Safe to Swim internet portal via CEDEN.

Council Recognition

- Staff to Senator Kehoe, author of CA SB 1070, was briefed on the Monitoring Council's strategy, which was received with enthusiastic support. The Senator's staff is pleased with the progress to implement the legislation, which has been made in such a short amount of time and with limited resources.
- Greater publicity for the Monitoring Council's work and its internet portals was achieved through well received presentations at the 2010 National Water Quality Monitoring Conference in Denver, the California and the World Ocean Conference 2010 in San Francisco, and the 17th Annual California Aquatic Bioassessment Workgroup meeting at UC Davis and through the addition of the *My Water Quality* button to many Cal/EPA, Natural Resources Agency (e.g., Department of Water Resources), and non-governmental organization websites. Senator Kehoe has also added the button to her legislative website.

Council Governance and Relationships

- The Monitoring Council adopted a governance structure that describes the Council's deliberative process, including procedures for identifying and prioritizing issues, assigning tasks and tracking progress, and communication and outreach, as called for in the MOU. In addition, the governance structure describes the Monitoring Council's relationship with the Secretaries of Cal/EPA and Natural Resources, the theme-specific

RECOMMENDED COMPREHENSIVE MONITORING PROGRAM STRATEGY

Building on our 2008 Recommendations report and the initial success of our workgroups and web portals, we are pleased to deliver to you the recommended Comprehensive Monitoring Program Strategy for California called for in CA SB 1070. The enclosed strategy document was developed in coordination with staff of the State Water Resources Control Board, and includes an update of the SWAMP monitoring and assessment strategy, assessment framework and needs assessment, reflecting the benefits of increased coordination and integration of information from other agencies and information sources. Also included is the Monitoring Council's governance document discussed above. We believe that implementation of this recommended strategy by all relevant organizations within Cal/EPA and the Natural Resources Agency will create lasting benefits for the State's water quality and associated ecosystem management programs by improving the availability of data and information needed for sound decision making.

Chapter 4 of the strategy, beginning on page 50, presents the Monitoring Council's requests and recommendations. To effectively implement the goals of CA SB 1070, the Monitoring Council requests that you:

1. Endorse the Monitoring Council's vision of theme-specific workgroups that operate under the Monitoring Council's guidance and make data and assessment results available through a coordinated series of web portals
2. Endorse a central coordinating and facilitating role for the Monitoring Council that will be continued over the long term
3. Continue to support the Monitoring Council's activities and require the boards, departments, offices, and commissions within your agencies to actively participate in relevant workgroups
4. Support the acquisition of long-term funding needed for implementation of the Comprehensive Monitoring Program Strategy

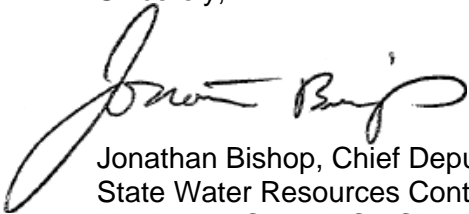
In addition, the Monitoring Council recommends that:

1. The Department of Public Health be invited to sign the existing MOU between Cal/EPA and the Natural Resources Agency
2. The monitoring and assessment efforts of SWAMP be integrated into the Monitoring Council's recommended Comprehensive Monitoring Program Strategy, as presented in the strategy document
3. The monitoring of state- and federally-funded water quality and ecosystem improvement projects be coordinated and enhanced to ensure that the effectiveness of such projects is evaluated and that the generated data are available for use in larger-scale assessments

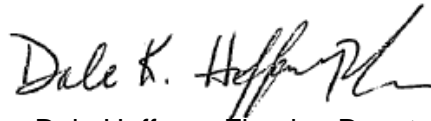
4. The Monitoring Council continue to coordinate our efforts with those of the National Water Quality Monitoring Council
5. The Monitoring Council work with its member agencies, the Control Agencies, the Governor's Office, and the Legislature to identify ways to address the contracting and implementation constraints summarized in Section 3.3.3 of the strategy.

We look forward to working with you and the organizations within your agencies to continually enhance the monitoring and assessment of California's water resources and aquatic ecosystems and the reporting of this information to decision makers and the public via the internet.

Sincerely,



Jonathan Bishop, Chief Deputy Director
State Water Resources Control Board
Monitoring Council Co-Chair
Representing Cal/EPA



Dale Hoffman-Floerke, Deputy Director
Department of Water Resources
Monitoring Council Co-Chair
Representing the Natural Resources Agency

Enclosure

cc: Members of the California Water Quality Monitoring Council
Senator Christine Kehoe, State Capitol
Senator Elaine Alquist, State Capitol
Organizations within Cal/EPA and the Natural Resources Agency (see attached list)

Organizations copied:

Within the California Natural Resources Agency

Office of the Secretary for Natural Resources
Department of Water Resources
Department of Fish and Game
Department of Parks and Recreation
Department of Boating and Waterways
Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
Department of Conservation
California Coastal Commission
State Lands Commission
Delta Protection Commission
San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission
Parks and Recreation Commission
California Boating and Waterways Commission
California Water Commission
California Energy Commission
Wildlife Conservation Board
Colorado River Board of California
Central Valley Flood Protection Board
Board of Forestry
Fish and Game Commission
California Tahoe Conservancy
Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy
San Diego River Conservancy
San Gabriel & Lower Los Angeles Rivers & Mountains Conservancy
San Joaquin River Conservancy
Sierra Nevada Conservancy
State Coastal Conservancy
Delta Stewardship Council
Ocean Protection Council

Within the California Environmental Protection Agency

Office of the Secretary for Environmental Protection
State Water Resources Control Board
All Regional Water Quality Control Boards
Department of Pesticide Regulation
Department of Toxic Substances Control