



Update on Statewide Implementation Plan for Assessing Biological Integrity in Surface Waters



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Bio Integrity Plan Recap

- Project initially kicked off in 2010 as an effort to develop numeric Biological Objectives
- Stakeholder and Advisory groups were formed
- Technical work began
- 2011-2012 the project focused primarily on technical work
- In 2013 the technical work shared with stakeholders and implementation options were discussed.
- In 2014, the direction of the project shifted from developing objectives to developing an implementation plan
- A draft Policy framework was developed
- Work stalled due to staffing changes
- New staff assigned in late 2014

Progress Since Staff Change

- Large stakeholder re-kick off meeting in Jan. 2015
- Technical Webinar March 2015
- RAG meeting May 2015
- One-on-one meetings with stakeholders and Regulatory Program Staff
- Regulatory Program Round Table presentations (IR, TMDL, NPS, Basin Planning)
- Incorporating CSCI into Integrated Report
- Technical Team Meeting August 2015
- Met with San Diego Water Board Staff to discuss their efforts Sept. 2015

Goals of the Bio Integrity Plan

1. Consistent methods for conducting biological assessments and interpreting the data.
2. Identify streams in good condition and protect them from degradation.
3. Identify streams in poor condition and restore to them to reference conditions where feasible.

How do we achieve these goals?

- Goal 1- Done! The California Stream Condition Index (CSCI)
- What about the remaining 2 goals?
- What should our strategy be to achieve these goals?

Strategy Ideas for Achieving 'Protection' & 'Restoration' Goals

- Using the Integrated Reporting process as a way to determine which water bodies we want to protect and which water bodies should be potentially be restored.
- Placing water bodies with high CSCI scores and no other Beneficial Use impairment in Category 1.
- Include language in the Biointegrity Plan that requires the Water Board's regulatory programs to take into consideration that Category 1 water bodies should be protected as part of other regulatory activities.

Strategy Ideas for Achieving 'Protection' & 'Restoration' Goals

- List water bodies in Category 5 using bioassessment data (following the approach established by Los Angeles Water Board in 2010).
- Move to Category 4c if it is determined that a pollutant is not contributing to the biological impairment.

Strategy Ideas for Achieving 'Protection' & 'Restoration' Goals

- What about poor bioassessment scores w/o an existing impairment?
- Watchlist?
- New or redefined IR Category?
- Triggers additional monitoring or action in other programs (i.e. permits, NPS?)
- Other?

Specific Regulatory Program Ideas

TMDLs

- Prioritization
- Measuring TMDL implementation effectiveness

Nonpoint Source Program

- Measuring MM implementation/program management effectiveness
- Grant funding prioritization

Regulatory Program Ideas (cont.)

Stormwater Program

- Permit compliance
- Project approval determination
- Pre/Post project monitoring

401 Certification

- Higher level of scrutiny on applications for projects in water bodies with high CSCI scores
- Pre/Post project monitoring

NPDES

- Permit compliance
- Other ideas?

“Grassroots” Bio Integrity Work

- Water Quality Assessment Unit staff are working to put SWAMP reference water bodies into Integrated Reporting ‘Category 1’.
- Bioassessment data Lines of Evidence for the current Integrated Reporting cycle that used the IBI will be reassessed using the new CSCI (where possible).

Next Steps

- Continue to meet with individual regulatory program leads to discuss how Bio Integrity fits into their program and present ideas and solicit input at program Round Tables
- Coordinate (where possible) with other efforts. (i.e. Nutrient Policy, San Diego Water Board Bio Objectives)
- Further develop the language of the existing Draft Bio Integrity Plan.
- Release a revised Draft Bio Integrity Plan for Focus Group review and comment from outside stakeholder input in Spring 2016.

Acknowledgments

- Lori Webber
- Technical team
- Jim Harrington
- Toni Marshall
- Karen Larsen



Um, this is weird.
No one has ever
asked to take a
'selfie' with me
before!

Thank you!

Questions?

