

Monitoring Monday – Let’s look at beneficial uses.

Join us each Monday as the Clean Water Team shares information and resources on water quality monitoring. This Monday we look at beneficial uses, somethings to be thankful for.

The Water Boards is responsible for the protection of resources, such as fisheries, wildlife, aesthetics, and navigation, which are held in [trust for the public](#). The Water Boards must consider these responsibilities when planning and allocating water resources, and protect public trust uses whenever feasible. The Water Boards must consider these public trust values in the balancing of all [beneficial uses of water](#).

State policy for water quality control in California is directed toward achieving the highest water quality consistent with maximum benefit to the people of the state. To achieve this, one of the Water Boards’ charges is to ensure that the State’s waters are put to the best possible use, and that the public interest is served. In making decisions, the Water Boards must keep three major goals in mind, to: develop water resources in an orderly manner; prevent the waste and unreasonable use of water; and protect the environment. This is consistent with the [California Constitution Article X Section 2](#).

So what is a [beneficial use](#)? Beneficial uses are goals the Water Boards designate to ensure Californians have access to the highest water quality and can use it for maximum benefit. Currently recognized beneficial uses included, but may not be limited to:

(AGR) Agricultural Supply; (AQUA) Aquaculture; (ASBS) Areas of Special Biological Significance; (BIOL) Preservation of Biological Habitats of Special Significance; (COLD) Cold Freshwater Habitat; (COMM) Commercial and Sport Fishing; (CUL) Native American Culture; (EST) Estuarine Habitat; (FLD) Flood Peak Attenuation /Flood Water Storage; (FISH) Subsistence Fishing; (FRSH) Freshwater Replenishment; (GWR) Ground Water Recharge; (IND) Industrial Service Supply; (LREC-1) Limited Water Contact Recreation; (LWRM) Limited Warm Freshwater Habitat; (MAR) Marine Habitat; (MIGR) Migration of Aquatic Organisms; (MUN) Municipal and Domestic Supply; (NAV) Navigation; (POW) Hydropower Generation; (PROC) Industrial Process Supply; (RARE) Preservation of Rare, Threatened or Endangered Species; (REC-1) Water Contact Recreation; (REC-2) Non-Contact Water Recreation; (SAL) Inland Saline Water Habitat; (SHELL) Shellfish Harvesting; (SPWN) Spawning, Reproduction and/or Early Development; (WARM) Warm Freshwater Habitat; (WET) Wetland Habitat; (WILD) Wildlife Habitat; (WQE) Water Quality Enhancement

- [Beneficial Use Definitions](#)
- [Beneficial Uses by Regions](#)
- [Tribal Beneficial Uses](#)

The Water Boards protect all these beneficial uses of surface waters, groundwaters, marshes, and wetlands from pollution and nuisance that may occur as a result of waste discharges. It is

these beneficial uses that serve the basis for establishing [water quality objectives](#) and discharge prohibitions to protect these beneficial uses.

[Water quality control plans](#) (basin plans) may designate beneficial uses and establish water quality objectives for waters of the State. For waters within a specified area, a basin plan designates or establishes: (1) beneficial uses to be protected; (2) water quality objectives; and (3) a program of implementation to achieve the water quality objectives ([Water Code §13050](#)). Basin plans commonly designate beneficial uses in addition to those uses identified for water rights in [CCR §659-672](#).

In addition to water quality objectives, beneficial uses are also protected by an [Antidegradation Policy](#) (Statement of Policy With Respect to Maintaining High Quality of Waters in California).

“The Antidegradation Policy states, in part:

1. Whenever the existing quality of water is better than the quality established in policies as of the date on which such policies become effective, such existing high quality will be maintained until it has been demonstrated to the State that any change will be consistent with maximum benefit to the people of the State, will not unreasonably affect present and anticipated beneficial use of such water and will not result in water quality less than that prescribed in the policies.
2. Any activity which produces or may produce a waste or increased volume or concentration of waste and which discharges or purposes to discharge to existing high quality waters will be required to meet waste discharge requirements which will result in the best practicable treatment or control of the discharge necessary to assure that
 - (a) a pollution or nuisance will not occur and
 - (b) the highest water quality consistent with maximum benefit to the people of the State will be maintained.”

Monitoring and data assessments measure our ability to attain these beneficial uses. Reports and information websites provide the public and the legislature detailed progress towards protecting or re-establishing lost beneficial uses. This helps to not just ensure we are managing for those beneficial uses, but that the public is informed and can be engaged in the process.

Altogether it is a lot to take in. Unfortunately, the laws, programs, and people that protect beneficial uses are often overlooked and taken for granted; especially non-profit organizations, community-based organizations, and grassroots efforts. The Clean Water Team is very thankful for all the volunteers and programs working for healthy watersheds in California, especially during this challenging year.

RESOURCES:

Beneficial Uses: California Perspective Water Quality Standards

<https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/academy/courses/wqstandards/materials/mod3/cabenuses.pdf>

Beneficial Uses of Water, Pertaining to Water Rights

[California Code of Regulations \(CCR\) §659-672.](#)

California Basin Plan Mapping Project

The California Water Boards have released the Basin Plan Mapping Project, a GIS dataset that contains information about beneficial uses and waterbody segments as identified in regional Basin Plans (which are also known as water quality control plans). Please check out the [Basin Plan Portal](#) for more information about the Basin Plan Mapping Project! The portal is home to:

- The [Basin Plan Mapping Project \(BPMP\) Map](#) - a clickable, zoomable map that allows the user to select a waterbody and display the beneficial uses in a pop-up window or download in a tabular format
- The [Basin Plan Mapping Project Story Map](#) - an interactive guide for those wanting to learn more beneficial uses, why they matter and how to use the BPMP Map
- Data download via the [California Basin Plan GIS Library](#) - includes a statewide map image layer, regional feature layer datasets, regional geodatabase downloads, and statewide web applications
- For additional documentation and contact information, questions or comments please email dwq-bpmap@waterboards.ca.gov.

Welcome to My Water Quality

The California Water Quality Monitoring Council has brought together water quality information from a wide variety of organizations with special expertise. These Local, state and federal agencies and non-governmental organizations have all pitched in to answer your water quality questions. Is our water safe to drink?; Is it safe to swim in our waters?; Are our watersheds healthy?; and six more questions are addressed on 9 interactive water quality portals.

<https://mywaterquality.ca.gov/index.html>

How's My Waterway

[How's My Waterway](#) was designed to provide the general public with information about the condition of their local waters based on data that states, federal, tribal, local agencies and others have provided to EPA. Water quality information is displayed on 3 scales in How's My Waterway; community, state and national. More recent or more detailed water information may exist that is not yet available through EPA databases or other sources. Check out the [How's My Waterway Fact Sheet](#).

What will I find in How's My Waterway?

Community:

- Water quality in your local watershed.
- Information on swimming, eating fish and aquatic life.
- Restoration and protection efforts.
- Permitted discharger information.
- Identified Issues (impairments and discharge violations).
- Local drinking water information.
- Water monitoring information.

State:

- Information about a state's water program.
- Summaries of specific water assessments.
- A state-wide survey of water quality where available.
- State drinking water metrics.

National:

- The quality of water resources nationwide and their main challenges.
- National drinking water information and metrics.

Registration is now open for EPA's Watershed Academy webcast on How's My Waterway which will take place on Tuesday, December 15, 2020. .

Due to the high interest of the last webcast we held on this topic, we are excited to host an additional webcast for those that were unable to attend. This webcast is a live demonstration of the How's My Waterway tool and we ask that attendees please do not follow along in the tool while viewing the webcast, and instead visit the site at a later time.

Also, due to the high number of expected registrants for this webinar, the webcast may reach capacity. We suggest joining a few minutes early to get into the webinar. If you attempt to join the webcast and the attendance capacity has already been met, you will be added to a waiting list of attendees who wish to join. If you are ultimately unable to view the webcast, a recording will be available following the webcast. Thank you for your understanding, and for your interest in this webcast. For more information on this webcast and to register visit:

<https://www.epa.gov/watershedacademy/how-s-my-waterway-december-webcast>.

California Water Boards' Annual Performance Reports

The Water Boards' annual performance reports provide a mechanism to measure and evaluate both what we do and how the environment is responding to our actions, and is part of our overall effort toward developing as performance-based organizations. The Water Boards regulate more than 40,000 dischargers, and our core regulatory workload achievements for the fiscal year included review, update, or issuance of almost 500 individual permits and conducting roughly 8000 inspections. The report presents numerous performance measures for specific outputs and outcomes that are currently tracked through Water Board data systems. These performance measures are organized under key functional categories of Water Board work.

www.waterboards.ca.gov/about_us/performance_report_1920/index.html

TMDL - The Integrated Report: 303(d) List of Water Quality Limited Segments and 305(b) Surface Water Quality Assessment

Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act requires the identification of water bodies that do not meet, or are not expected to meet, water quality standards (i.e., impaired water bodies). The affected water body, and associated pollutant or stressor, is then prioritized in the 303(d) List. The Clean Water Act further requires the development of a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for each listing. In 2008, California began integrating the 303(d) List of Impaired Waters and the 305(b) Water Quality Assessment Report into a single report (Integrated Report).

www.waterboards.ca.gov/rwgcb5/water_issues/tmdl/impaired_waters_list/

Monitoring, Assessment and TMDLs: California

California's Water Resources Control Board and nine Regional Water Quality Control Boards are responsible for conducting monitoring, assessment, reporting under CWA Sections 303(d) and 305(b) and TMDL development for the State of California. The State Board and Regional Boards cooperate in developing Section 305(b) and Section 303(d) listing reports. TMDLs are normally developed by Regional Boards, and then approved by the State Board and State Office of Administrative Law before being submitted for EPA approval.

www.epa.gov/tmdl/monitoring-assessment-and-tmdls-california

What is a water footprint?

Everything we use, wear, buy, sell, and eat takes water to make.

The water footprint measures the amount of water used to produce each of the goods and services we use. It can be measured for a single process, such as growing rice, for a product, such as a pair of jeans, for the fuel we put in our car, or for an entire multi-national company.

The water footprint can also tell us how much water is being consumed by a particular country – or globally – in a specific river basin or from an aquifer.

<https://waterfootprint.org/en/>

"Water" You Thankful For?

The holidays are a time to pause and reflect on the things that we are thankful for—our family, friends and neighbors, our pets, our homes, good health and good fortune, and the meals before us. This week, many of us will gather around the table and give thanks for the things and the people that enrich and brighten our lives every day, especially when we might overlook them. But one of the most important things that so many of us are grateful for is something seldom mentioned at Thanksgiving dinner: water. It's something so basic and so often taken for granted. We don't think twice about it. For most of us, we never doubt that water will come out of the faucet or the shower head. We don't need to worry about what happens when we flush the toilet, because our invisible water infrastructure carries that burden for us.

<http://uswateralliance.org/resources/blog/water-you-thankful>

Erick Burres

[Clean Water Team Coordinator](#)

[California Water Quality Collaboration Network Facilitator](#)

[Safe to Swim Network Co-facilitator](#)

erick.burres@waterboards.ca.gov

213 712 6862 mobile