
Summary of Current Water Quality Monitoring Programs in the Delta



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- Assessing the overall environmental health of the Delta, and
- Evaluating long-term trends in receiving water quality.

Data Availability

There is currently no single online access point for Delta surface water data. Many, but not all, Delta water quality data are available online in one of the five primary databases: Bay-Delta and Tributaries Project (BDAT), California Environmental Data Exchange Network (CEDEN), California Data Exchange Center (CDEC), Water Data Library (WDL), and National Water Information System (NWIS). All of these databases are public. Data from some other efforts, such as the Sacramento CMP, are made available by request. Some programs have strong public outreach components and prioritize making data broadly available and accessible, including the IEP EMP, MWQI, the San Francisco Bay RMP, and NAWQA. Compliance monitoring data from the NPDES programs (wastewater and stormwater) are currently not available online. Data from the ILRP are available on the Central Valley Water Board's ILRP website. Overall, a comprehensive search for Delta water quality data will require accessing several databases and making specific request for additional data sources that are not available online. In addition, different programs use different methods and have different conventions for parameter names, site names, and methods. They may even use different geospatial reference systems and different basin or watershed boundaries. All these issues combined make it difficult to obtain timely access to monitoring results or combine the data for broader analyses.

Conclusions and Next Steps

Probably all users of Delta water quality information would benefit from a better picture of system-wide baseline conditions and trends. However, environmental management and policy support currently plays a secondary role as a driver for Delta water quality monitoring, compared to the other two main drivers, regulatory compliance and source water protection.

An initial step for shifting existing monitoring resources toward a more integrated approach will be to develop a set of shared, regional monitoring objectives, with the goal to developing a better system-wide picture that will then better inform policy and management decisions. Existing sites representing the main in- and outflows of the Delta may be the “lowest hanging fruits” for coordinating existing monitoring and could be an initial focus for data integration efforts and a regional monitoring pilot program.