California Water Quality Monitoring Council

Strategic Plan Summary
2020

Message from the Chair Mogus

Welcome to the California Water Quality Monitoring Council (Monitoring Council) Strategic Plan update 2020.

This updated plan builds on the Monitoring Council's and the working group's accomplishments over the past decade and aligns our activities to the goal of building a comprehensive and accessible statewide monitoring and data network for California. Nearly 30 leaders in the water quality monitoring arena contributed to this plan. With this plan, the Monitoring Council sets its sights on building a world class monitoring program for California and commits to steps needed to get there.

Much has happened since the Monitoring Council was formed in response to California Senate Bill 1070 (Kehoe, 2006). Not long after the Monitoring Council's inception, the state faced extreme economic challenges, which are now anticipated to recur due to the wide-ranging effects of the COVID-19 crisis.

As a result, the 2020 Strategic Plan establishes realistic goals and objectives recognizing these realities. Despite these challenges, data and the information developed from it remain critical for decision-making and the Monitoring Council remains committed to monitoring thoughtfully and responsibly by working across all water quality sectors to meet our goals.

To achieve our mission the 2020 Strategic Plan has six strategic goals:

1. Assess performance of water quality and ecosystem monitoring.
2. Develop guidance on data quality.
3. Identify where data interpretation thresholds are needed.
4. Identify emerging monitoring methods and technologies.
5. Turn data into accessible information.
6. Build partnerships to increase participation and outreach among the public and media.

Together we can monitor, and together we will inform to build a world-class water quality and ecosystem monitoring network for California.

I invite you to join this effort.

Monitoring Council Strategy Map

The major elements of the Monitoring Council's Strategic Plan are summarized in a one-page visual Strategy Map, which illustrates the Monitoring Council's story of service to customers in alignment with goals and values.

The background of the Strategy Map is a representation of the people the Monitoring Council serves – our Stakeholder Community. Many different stakeholders make up the Monitoring Council's Stakeholder Community, which is illustrated in more detail in the Stakeholder Community Map.

The Vision describes the kind of organization the Monitoring Council aspires to be. This is where the Monitoring Council is going.

- **Vision**: A world class water quality and ecosystem monitoring network for California.

The Mission states at the highest level why the Monitoring Council exists. Everything the Monitoring Council does should contribute to achieving the mission.

- **Mission:** Enhance water and associated ecosystem health monitoring programs by providing a venue for coordination and developing guidance and recommendations to build a comprehensive statewide network for Californians.

To achieve the Mission and Vision, the Monitoring Council has established six Strategic Goals. Within each of these, we have identified more specific actions or objectives we can take to help achieve those goals for 2020 and beyond.

Strategic Goals:

1. Assess performance of water quality and ecosystem monitoring programs.
2. Develop guidance on data quality and method comparability.
3. Identify where data interpretation thresholds are needed.
4. Identify emerging monitoring methods and technologies.
5. Turn data into information for stakeholders and decision makers.
6. Build partnerships to increase participation and outreach.

The Monitoring Council will manage our work and continuously assess progress toward achieving the goals and objectives by developing a set of Key Performance Indicators
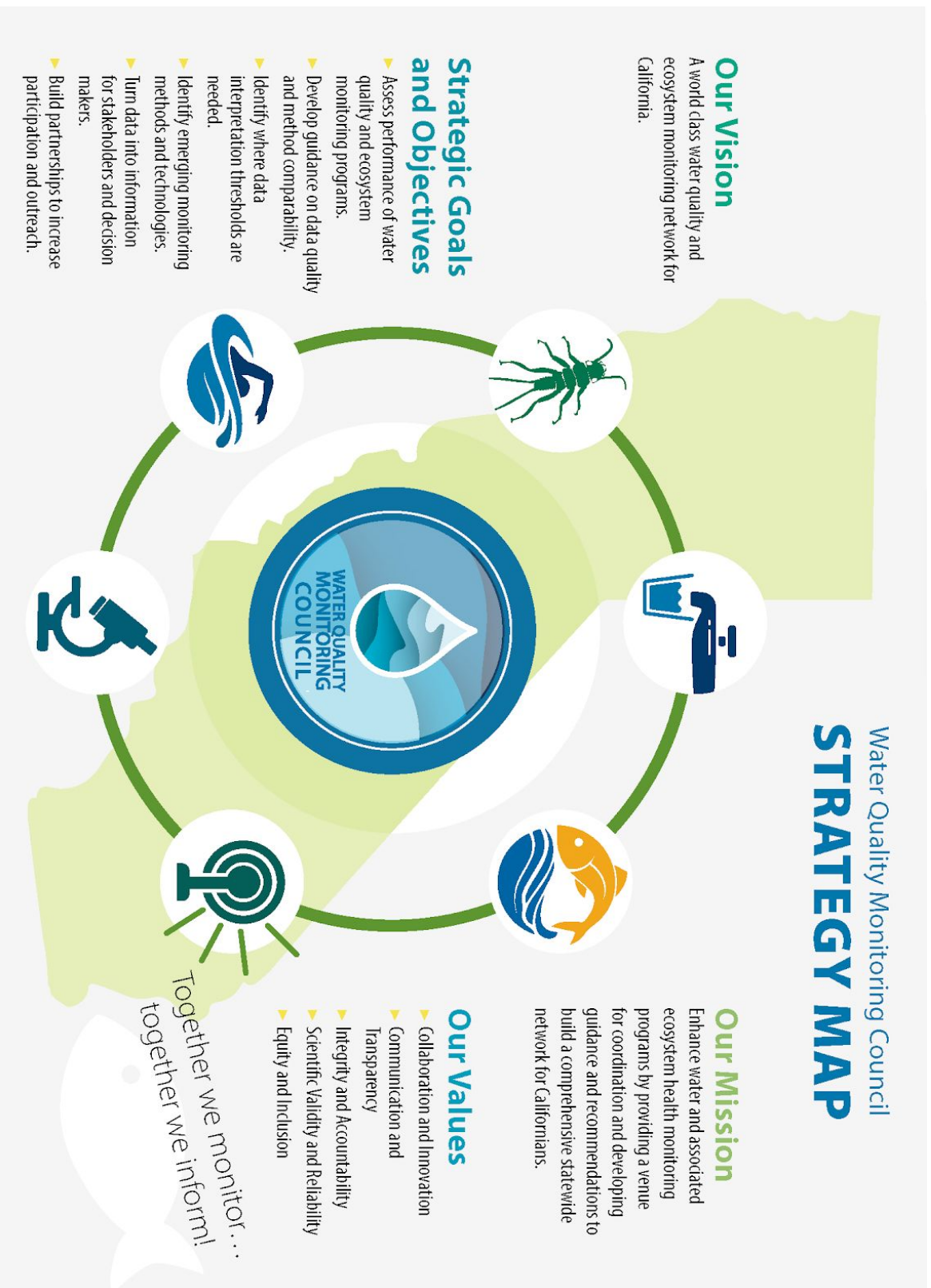
and reporting out on them through a Performance Dashboard. The Monitoring Council will optimize services to our customers through our Service Portfolio and will strive to improve our services by implementing a Prioritized Project Portfolio.

How we treat each other is just as important as what we achieve. The Monitoring Council's Core Values set the standards for how we will act along the way.

Core Values:
- Collaboration and Innovation
- Communication and Transparency
- Integrity and Accountability
- Scientific Validity and Reliability
- Equity and Inclusion

Our overall rallying cry is "Together we monitor, together we inform" It is a simple way for us to remind each other of the commitments we are making in our Strategic Plan.

Water Quality Monitoring Council
STRATEGY MAP

Our Vision
A world class water quality and ecosystem monitoring network for California.

Strategic Goals and Objectives

▼ Assess performance of water quality and ecosystem monitoring programs.

▼ Develop guidance on data quality and method comparability.

▼ Identify where data interpretation thresholds are needed.

▼ Identify emerging monitoring methods and technologies.

▼ Turn data into information for stakeholders and decision makers.

▼ Build partnerships to increase participation and outreach.

https://mywaterquality.ca.gov

Our Mission
Enhance water and associated ecosystem health monitoring programs by providing a venue for coordination and developing guidance and recommendations to build a comprehensive statewide network for Californians.

Our Values

▼ Collaboration and Innovation

▼ Communication and Transparency

▼ Integrity and Accountability

▼ Scientific Validity and Reliability

▼ Equity and Inclusion

Together we monitor…
together we inform!

Stakeholder Community Map

The Community Map is a simple, summary illustration of the key types of stakeholders we serve.
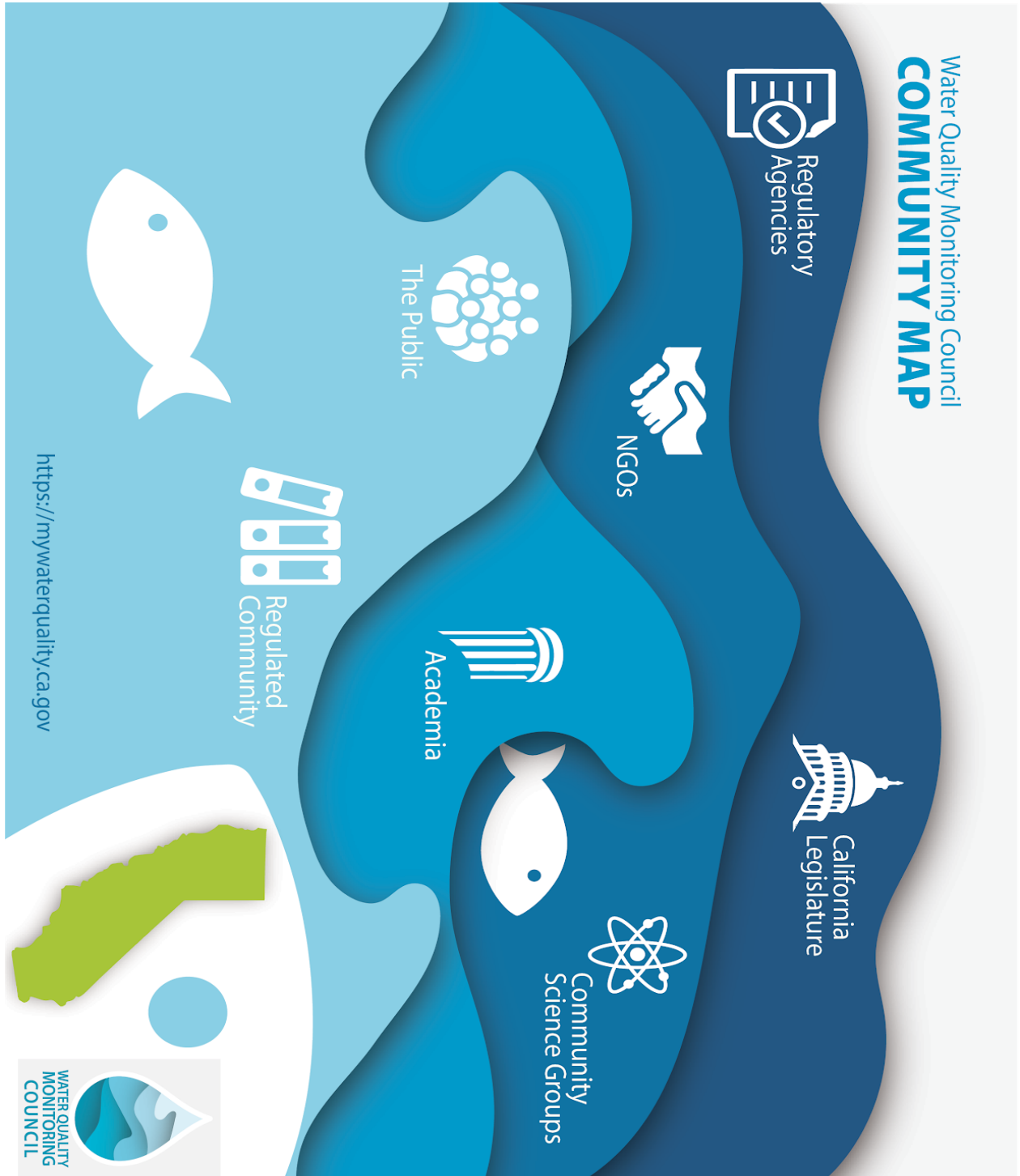
Customer/Stakeholder Types	Description and Example Organizations
Direct Customers	Water quality and associated ecosystem health managers and decision makers. Entities interested in the information produced using the monitoring data our partners and suppliers collect..
Partners and Suppliers	Academia, federal agencies, State agencies, tribes, non-governmental organizations, environmental groups, community science groups, the regulated community, members of the public.
Indirect Customers	Californians and neighboring states.
The Core Team	The Monitoring Council Theme-Specific Workgroups, the Monitoring Council Members and the sectors they represent. The CalEPA and CNRA Secretaries.

Strategic Goals and Objectives

Our strategic goals and objectives describe our long term categories for achievement. Within each of those goals, we define more specific, short term actions, or objectives. These objectives describe the major outcomes we are striving for and will be reviewed on an annual basis. We will set specific, quantifiable targets referred to as key performance indicators (KPIs) and track our progress against these objectives in our Performance Dashboard. We will adjust how we manage our work through our Services and Projects to achieve these actions.

1) **Assess performance of water quality and ecosystem monitoring programs.**
   a) Provide an inventory of the known monitoring programs within the specific workgroup themes to help inform where data gaps and overlaps exist.
   b) Review these programs to ensure that they are designed and implemented to answer specific monitoring questions.
   c) Provide guidance and recommendations for improving monitoring programs by comparing them to other states and countries to help achieve a world class standard.
   d) Identify monitoring programs that are not participating or not providing their data.

2) **Develop guidance on data quality and method comparability.**
   a) Review management questions that can be informed by multiple monitoring programs.
   b) Work with the data collectors to implement open data protocols and data standards in coordination with the Open and Transparent Water Data Act Consortium.
   c) Recommend where laboratory intercalibration studies could improve data comparability.
   d) Act as an informational resource for regulators and the regulated community.

3) **Identify where data interpretation thresholds are needed.**
   a) Identify monitoring gaps and programs that lack thresholds to make an informed conclusion regarding water quality or ecosystem health.
   b) Elevate needs to appropriate state agencies as recommendations to improve monitoring programs and communication of results.

4) **Identify emerging monitoring methods and technologies.**
   a) Work with the academic and scientific community to get updates on advancements and improvements to existing monitoring.

b) Recommend and support development of monitoring methods to improve the effectiveness of existing and future monitoring programs.

c) Support workgroups to help implement the data management strategies and protocols developed under Action 2.b as new technologies and methods are introduced and implemented.

5) Turn data into information for stakeholders and decision makers.

a) Provide support and guidance to the workgroups as they develop and maintain water quality portals to visualize data that answers an array of water quality and associated ecosystem health questions.

b) Leverage the data published by the Open Data and Transparent Water Data Act to improve existing data visualizations and to create new methods of storytelling with data and business intelligence tools.

c) Work with emerging data scientists to build and support the skills necessary for the workgroups and other stakeholders to create data visualizations to suit their needs.

d) Utilize feedback from the Monitoring Council Members to identify where information is needed most to prioritize this work.
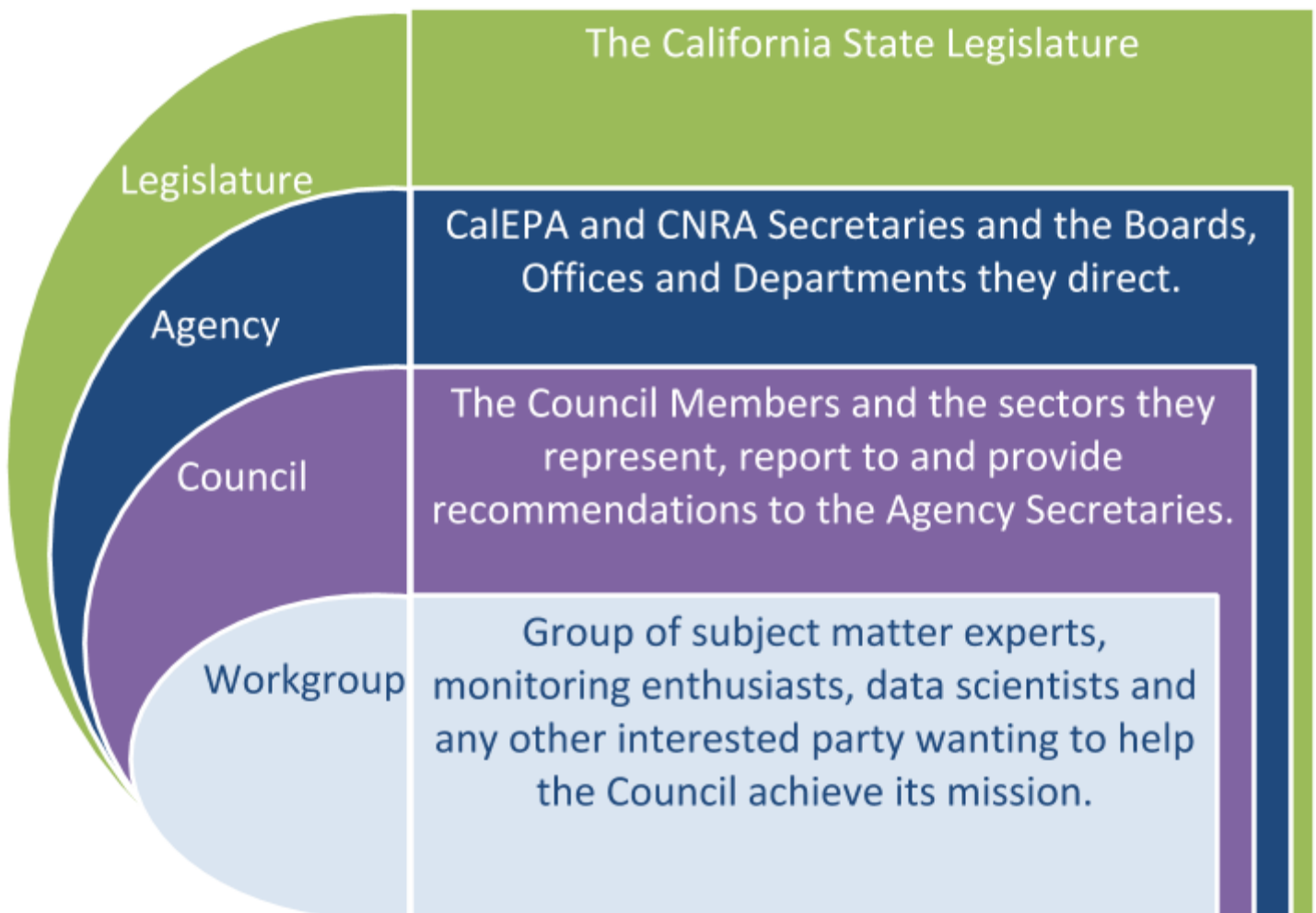
6) Build partnerships to increase participation and outreach .

a) Sponsor and support civic and community engagement events including the Water Data Science Symposium, the Water Data Challenge, and other various water and community building events.

b) Leverage the relationships that the Monitoring Council Members and workgroups build to identify and foster new partnerships.

c) Create engaging tools for showcasing the work of the Monitoring Council and its workgroups and provide presentations at conferences, symposiums and other events to improve outreach and participation particularly among communities most highly impacted by water quality impairments.

d) Monitoring Council members will identify funding and resources opportunities for the workgroups and stakeholders and provide support towards applying for those resources through endorsements, letters, and other appropriate mechanisms.

Alignment with California Government

As a legislatively mandated entity under CA Senate Bill 1070 (Kehoe, 2006), the Monitoring Council plays a vital role in meeting the requirements outlined in Water Code Sections 13167 and 13181. The Monitoring Council relies on the volunteer efforts of its members and the theme specific experts and stakeholders that participate in the Monitoring Council Workgroups, which create the products and recommendations for the Monitoring Council to distribute and elevate. The Monitoring Council also is a member of a broader community of agencies that are tasked with informing decision makers at the highest level. The Monitoring Council leverages effective partnerships across all of these levels and with our sister state and federal agencies.

Legislature — The California State Legislature

Agency — CalEPA and CNRA Secretaries and the Boards, Offices and Departments they direct.

Council — The Council Members and the sectors they represent, report to and provide recommendations to the Agency Secretaries.

Workgroup — Group of subject matter experts, monitoring enthusiasts, data scientists and any other interested party wanting to help the Council achieve its mission.

Dynamic Strategic Management

Strategic Planning is an event. Strategic Management is an ongoing process. The Monitoring Council's Strategy Map is intended to be nimble and resilient by separating the stable components from the dynamic elements that will need to adapt along the way. The Monitoring Council implements the Strategic Plan through the following tool sets and disciplines. These are the tools that we will use to be good stewards of the public resources we've been entrusted to invest. As a management team, the Monitoring Council Members update and review this on a quarterly basis to hold ourselves accountable.We will post these on our [webpage](#).

- **Service Portfolio**: These are the services and functions the Monitoring Council, the Director, and Workgroups provide to the stakeholder community in order to fulfill the strategic Vision, Mission, and Goals. The Monitoring Council uses the Service Portfolio to identify resources and track progress.
- **Prioritized Project Portfolio**: This is a set of the active and upcoming projects being worked on by the Monitoring Council and Workgroups. A project is an effort that will either create a new service, change an existing service, or implement a service. The Monitoring Council uses the Project Portfolio to understand the demand for changes, determine relative priorities to guide resource allocation, and to track progress towards completion.
- **Asset Inventory**: This is an inventory of the resources available to and provided by the Monitoring Council. These resources include the knowledge, expertise, and time of the Monitoring Council Members and the Workgroup participants. As well as the partnerships and leveraged coordination. The tools and information provided through my water quality portals.
- **Communication Plan**: This is a set of standards and approved communication channels for keeping all members of the Monitoring Council connected and informed.

Acknowledgments

Our Strategic Plan was jointly created by approximately 30 leaders from a wide range of stakeholder interests. This process began in 2018 and has been an iterative process over the last two years. A subset of Monitoring Council members held smaller subcommittee meetings and larger meetings with workgroup leads and other stakeholders interested in seeing the mission and vision of the Monitoring Council succeed. Thank you all to those that participated and helped facilitate the creation of this document and the tools that support it.