California Water Quality Monitoring Council

Council Meeting Notes

May 22, 2009 – 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM

Southern California Coastal Water Research Project
3535 Harbor Blvd., Suite 110, Costa Mesa, CA

Monitoring Council members in attendance:
Jonathan Bishop, Sarge Green (by phone), Sam Mowbray, Armand Ruby, Linda Sheehan, Steven Steinberg, Stephen Weisberg

SB 1070 Work Group members in attendance:
Brock Bernstein, Terry Fleming (by phone), Jon Marshack

Others in attendance:
Edward Belden (LA & San Gabriel Rivers Watershed Council), Eric Berntsen (SWRCB, DWQ by phone), John Borkovich (SWRCB, DWQ), Gerald Bruun (CIWMB by phone), Oliver Galang (LA County DPW), Brian Lewis (DTSC), J.T. Lui (DTSC), Eric Stein (SCCWRP), Scott Warren (DTSC)

ITEM:	1		Assigned to:	Time:
Title of Topic:	**INTRODUCTIONS AND HOUSEKEEPING**		Jon Marshack	9:00 – 9:15
Purpose:	1) Introductions 2) Approve notes from April 2, 2009 Council meeting 3) Review agenda for today's meeting			
Desired Outcome:	1) Approve April 2, 2009 Monitoring Council meeting notes 2) Adjust today's agenda, as needed			
Attachments:	notes_040209.pdf			
Contact Person:	Jon Marshack	jmarshack@waterboards.ca.gov, (916) 341-5514		
Notes:	Representatives of the Department of Toxic Substances Control and the Integrated Waste Management Board attended in response to the outreach letter to boards, departments, commissions and offices.			
Decisions:	Notes from April 2, 2009 meeting approved with amendments.			

ITEM:	2		Assigned to:	Time:
Title of Topic:	**ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPDATES**		Jon Marshack	9:15 – 10:00
Purpose:	1) State Budget update (Jonathan Bishop/Val Connor) 2) Support for geographic-based Monitoring efforts (Val Connor) 3) Progress of outreach to state government organizations (Jon Marshack)			

	4) Revised Safe-to-Eat Fish and Shellfish web portal mockup (Jon Marshack)
	5) Beach Water Quality Workgroup update (Eric Berntsen)
	6) Water Boards' Performance Report (Jonathan Bishop)
Desired Outcome:	1) Information
	2) Match Monitoring Council Members with departmental directors for direct contact
Attachments:	outreach_to_bdcs.pdf safe_to_eat_portal_mockup_051309.pdf
Contact Person:	Jon Marshack	jmarshack@waterboards.ca.gov, (916) 341-5514
Notes:	1) State Budget There is concern that it is unlikely for the Monitoring Council to get any additional funding to implement its vision. Cuts should not be a problem for existing SB 1070 funding. For existing contracts, there is no expected cut if the funds are fully encumbered. Unencumbered contract fundss may be lost. The Monitoring Council strategy may want to say that implementation will begin once new funding is able to be obtained. 2) Geographic-based Monitoring Efforts A series of web-based seminars ("webinars") will be started soon to provide support for regional and citizen monitoring efforts. 3) Government Organization Outreach The PowerPoint, questions to pose, and information on what the Monitoring Council can offer will be emailed to Monitoring Council members for use in meetings with directors. Val Connor and Jon Marshack are available to help. 4) Web Portals Advertising is needed. The portals should roll out one each month to maximize exposure for this effort. DTSC (Brian Lewis) has a list of contacts that may be useful. 5) Beach Water Quality Workgroup This workgroup, with assistance from members of the Central/Northern California Ocean and Bay Water Quality Monitoring Group has agreed to shepherd the management of the Safe-to-Swim web portal and underlying monitoring and assessment activities. These workgroups were presented with 4 options for managing beach water quality data and the Safe-to-Swim web portal and voted to endorse Option 4, which moves those functions to SCCWRP and eliminates the BeachWatch database at the State Water Board. State Board will still need to verify the accuracy and completeness of the data before submittal to USEPA. The L.A. and San Gabriel Rivers Monitoring Council has data relevant to swimming safety in freshwater bodies that could feed into the workgroup's effort. Jonathan Bishop expressed the desire to involve all of the regional data centers in swimming safety data management, with local data feeding in through the nearest data center. 6) Water Boards Performance Report The State Board is becoming more performance based. Jonathan Bishop

	presented a draft website that would present Water Board performance measures and would be linked to and from the Monitoring Council's web portals. Terry Fleming indicated that USEPA needs to see measures that are focused on actual water quality outcomes, such as the number of miles of streams that are impaired. Overall measures of success need to be developed, with Monitoring Council guidance. Water quality related performance measures relevant to other BDOs should be included.
Decisions:	As part of the long-term strategy, statewide and regional perspective performance measures should be built into the Monitoring Council's web portals.

ITEM:	**3**	**Assigned to:**	**Time:**
Title of Topic:	**COMPREHENSIVE STATE WATER QUALITY MONITORING PROGRAM STRATEGY**	Brock Bernstein	10:00 – 11:30
Purpose:	Monitoring Council approach to a comprehensive long-term strategy for implementing the Council's December 2008 recommendations. A detailed annotated outline of the strategy will be presented for review and comment, which will provide the basis for drafting the report describing the strategy.		
Desired Outcome:	Direction on drafting a proposed strategy and integration with the SWAMP monitoring and assessment strategy.		
Background:	In its December 1, 2008 recommendations report, the Monitoring Council committed to provide recommendations for this strategy to the agency secretaries, as part of a December 2009 progress report.		
	SB 1070 added Water Code Section 13181(a) and (e), which provide direction for this effort.		
	In 2005, the Water Boards' Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program (SWAMP) developed a *Comprehensive Monitoring and Assessment Strategy to Protect and Restore California's Water Quality* that focuses on USEPA's 2003 *Elements of a State Water Monitoring and Assessment Program*, which identifies 10 basic elements of a state program. At the February 2 Monitoring Council meeting, Val Connor provided an overview of progress on the SWAMP strategy. The SWAMP strategy and the Monitoring Council's December 2008 recommendations could provide a foundation of the Monitoring Council's recommendations for its comprehensive long-term strategy.		
	In its 2008 recommendations, the Monitoring Council consolidated EPA's 10 elements into 6 performance measures: • Program strategy, objectives, and designs • Indicators and methods • Data management • Consistency of assessment endpoints • Reporting • Program sustainability		

Attachments:	annotated_strategy_outline.pdf sb_1070_full_report_final.pdf sb1070chptrd.pdf cw102swampcmas.pdf swamp_overview.pdf	
Contact Person:	Brock Bernstein	brockbernstein@sbcglobal.net, (805) 646-8369

Notes:	Brock Bernstein reviewed the latest annotated outline for the comprehensive monitoring program strategy.
	
	1) Funding ideas
	   a) Discharger assessment – % of each monitoring budget goes to regional/statewide monitoring and assessment effort
	   b) Cost savings – data actually being used
	   c) New value added to existing efforts
	
	2) Monitoring Council ongoing role
	   a) Develop plan for integration of agency efforts – continuous feedback
	   b) Oversee startup/development/management/maintenance
	   c) Continued refinement of tools
	   d) Need ongoing authority to compel government organizations to play
	
	3) Work Groups role
	   a) Data syntheses and interpretation
	   b) Develop assessment tools
	   c) Develop standards for data types
	   d) Expand work groups – add new entities as needed
	
	4) Need more than one staff person to keep agency and workgroup interactions going.
	
	5) Citizen monitoring programs need support – database structure; oversight and management of databases, GIS, etc. People need comparable data statewide and downloadable maps and graphs.
	
	6) Data nodes need ongoing support & funding stream
	
	7) Need common platforms for data display, including GIS platforms. The State Geospatial Information Officer has yet to publish standards to which state agencies will need to comply.
	
	8) When web portals point out water quality problems, the legislature will ask "what are we going to do about it?" and "what will it cost?"
	
	9) Table 1 – make higher level list (agencies and organizations); leave out priorities (internal to Monitoring Council)
	
	10) Monitoring Council is staffed by State Water Board staff. It is not a Water Board function, but is broader.

Decisions:	1) Chapter 5 should be the big focus – a process and approach to solve problems and a work-plan to the legislature for implementation with bas-level funding for management/infrastructure. Cost information for each theme is not needed – the workgroups will determine those costs. Funding for workgroup/portal startup should be included.
	2) Legislature is the primary audience – need an abstract, including:
	a) Legislature was right – Data is scattered. Need Monitoring Council to coordinate functions and to tackle issues of duplication and data gaps.
	b) Monitoring Council is effective. The model works. See what we have done in the past year – effective gains. Case studies – focus on portals.
	c) Clear plan for next steps + cost, cognizant of present budget situation. What can be done with few resources? 10-year plan with eventual outcome and priorities along the way.
	3) Second audience is the public
	a) Show clear data and information, a product they want
	b) See why agency work is important and why they should be willing to pay for it.
	4) De-emphasize historical perspective and theme-by theme analysis.
	5) Many agencies have water quality data. All should flow to data nodes and be available through exchange networks. Apply new interpretations and assessment tools via portals.
	6) In the first figure, place management information on the left – support to manage the infrastructure.
	7) SB 1070, CWC Section 13181(f), identifying the full cost of the monitoring program strategy, is a State Water Board function. Monitoring Council strategy should include alternative strategies and options for funding of the incremental cost to provide coordination, data centers, CEDEN, maintenance, web portals. Include benefits to data providers.
	8) Web Portals Roll-Out
	a) Include contributing organizations and customers of data in outreach and portal roll-out efforts.
	b) Joint agency press release
	c) Roll-out one at a time and say others will be coming
	d) Highlight agencies involved
Action Items:	Legal Issues – obtain OCC interpretation
	1) Is the Monitoring Council covered by open meeting laws?
	2) Does the Monitoring Council have liability for data interpretations presented via its web portals?
	3) Is the Monitoring Council subject to conflict of interest financial disclosure?

ITEM: #	4	Assigned to:	Time:
Title of Topic:	**GEOTRACKER GAMA GROUNDWATER QUALITY ON-LINE SEARCH TOOL**	Jon Marshack	12:30 – 2:15
Purpose:	Review GeoTracker GAMA groundwater quality data web tool and how it will integrate with the Safe-to-Drink, Groundwater portal. Review concept for transition pages between Safe-to-Drink theme and GeoTracker GAMA. Explore alternative relationship between Monitoring Council and work group/portal development process.		
Desired Outcome:	Monitoring Council review and comment on design/function/content of GeoTracker GAMA and direction on integrating it into a Safe-to-Drink portal. Approval of transition pages concept. Direction on potential future access to data contained in GeoTracker GAMA database. The overall goal is to establish an alternative relationship and to foster and ongoing dialogue between the Monitoring Council and GAMA for their mutual benefit.		
Background:	GeoTracker GAMA presents a very different perspective on interaction with the Monitoring Council than do the other three initial work group and portal development efforts. The development of GeoTracker GAMA is governed by its own statute, AB 599, the Groundwater Quality Monitoring Act of 2001. AB 599 required that the State Water Board, in coordination with an Interagency Task Force (ITF) and a Public Advisory Committee (PAC) integrate existing monitoring programs and design new program elements, as necessary, to establish a comprehensive statewide groundwater quality monitoring program. The GeoTracker GAMA database and web interface was largely developed by a contractor prior to the development of the Monitoring Council's initial recommendations and is directed by staff of the State Water Board's Groundwater Ambient Monitoring and Assessment (GAMA) program. While the goal and effort are similar to the Monitoring Council's work group and portal development process, the GAMA approach to stakeholder involvement, data management, and data presentation diverges from the Monitoring Council's approach.		
Attachments:	gama_update040209.pdf ab_599_bill_20011005_chaptered.pdf drink_portal_mockup_concept.pdf gama_presentation.pdf		
Contact Person:	Jon Marshack	jmarshack@waterboards.ca.gov, (916) 341-5514	
Notes:	John Borkovich of the State Water Board, Division of Water Quality, GAMA Program gave a PowerPoint presentation on GeoTracker GAMA. 1) Partners in this effort include the Water Boards, USGS, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL), CDPH, the Department of Water Resources (DWR), and the Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR). Department of Toxic Substances Control contaminated site data could be added in the future.		

2) Due to national security issues associated with the locations of drinking water wells regulated by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), there will be two versions of the GeoTracker GAMA web tool, a secure one for regulatory agencies who have signed a non-disclosure agreement, and one for the public that omits the sensitive information. The public version, to be linked from the Safe-to-Drink Groundwater web portal, excludes specific well location information.

3) Another CDPH issue is that GeoTracker GAMA presents data on raw groundwater quality, not the quality of treated water delivered to consumers. Users of domestic well water are potentially exposed to raw groundwater, since domestic wells are not regulated by CDPH. This is explained in existing "My Drinking Water" Water Board web pages. GAMA wants this educational information displayed to users prior to gaining access to the GeoTracker GAMA web tool.

4) Release of public GeoTracker GAMA is being delayed to resolve how CDPH well data is displayed on maps. Current 2-mile squares block view of other information.

5) The GeoTracker GAMA web site does not directly answer the question, "Is my water safe to drink?"

6) GAMA has a number of related projects

    a) Priority Basins – basin-specific assessments performed by USGS; bond fund freeze has halted this effort

    b) Special Studies – performed by LLNL, including vulnerability assessments,

    c) Domestic Well Project – focuses on sampling domestic wells in potential problem areas, such as Tulare County

7) Monitoring Council Comments

    a) GAMA has done a lot that is useful to the Monitoring Council efforts. OK to link to GeoTracker GAMA from Safe-to-Drink portal.

    b) Because GeoTracker GAMA was built around a program, GAMA may not be able to alter their data reporting approach to meet Monitoring Council needs, in the near term. Query tools are limited. Staff should work with the GAMA program to make their data available for other assessments.

    c) Need greater GAMA data integration in the future, through regional data centers.

    d) In the longer term, work with GAMA to adjust their interface to meet more assessment needs and to gain greater exposure.

    e) Links to land use information, drinking water treatment costs, and consumer confidence reports would be useful.

8) Process steps for working with existing data sources and reporting tools:

    a) Link to existing data sets

    b) Work with data sources to display data more directly and in new ways

    c) Develop more data export/display tools and interfaces for more

	complex assessments.

Decisions:	1) See Notes (6)(a) to (d) and (7), above.
	
	2) Safe-to-Drink Groundwater Portal
	
	   a) Layout our questions first
	
	      i) Is the water I drink safe? Show grade scores based on MCLs, PHGs, etc.
	
	      ii) Where does my water come from?
	
	      iii) How clean are the water supply sources?
	
	   b) Add higher level statistics from GAMA program and others (e.g. nitrate data).
	
	   c) Add water treatment plant to drinking water sources graphic.
	
	   d) Add What is being done to improve groundwater quality?
	
	3) Need for dialogue between Monitoring Council and GAMA group over portal concept and data management issues.

Action Items:	Provide more detailed mock-up of Safe-to-Drink portal to Monitoring Council for comment and approval. Define questions and existing data sources.

ITEM: #	5	Assigned to:	Time:
Title of Topic:	**AQUATIC ECOSYSTEM HEALTH-WETLANDS WEB PORTAL**	Jon Marshack	2:15 – 3:30
Purpose:	Review proposal for web portal for wetlands sub-theme of "Are our aquatic ecosystems healthy?" by the California Wetlands Monitoring Workgroup (CWMW). Discuss proposal by CWMW and SFEI to provide an aquatic ecosystem health portal main web page and to offer query and mapping tools to other ecosystem health workgroups working on other water body types.		
Desired Outcome:	Monitoring Council review, comment, and approval of proposed Aquatic Ecosystem Health, Wetlands portal. Direction from Monitoring Council on expansion of Wetlands portal concept and/or tools to broader Aquatic Ecosystem Health theme.		
Background:	The development of an aquatic ecosystem health web portal focused on wetlands is evolving from the workgroup's existing Wetland Tracker website. The CWMW discussed the fact that much of the data compiled by the wetland portal and many of the associated tools are not limited to wetlands, but apply to questions about the health of all aquatic ecosystems. Furthermore, many other aquatic ecosystems (e.g. lakes, streams) include wetland elements. Therefore, the CWMW recommends that the California Water Quality Monitoring Council pursue an "Aquatic Ecosystem Health Portal", of which wetlands is one element. This would allow for more seamless sharing of information and tools across multiple habitat types.		

Attachments:	wetlands_presentation.pdf
Contact Person:	Jon Marshack jmarshack@waterboards.ca.gov, (916) 341-5514

Notes:	Eric Stein of SCCWRP gave a PowerPoint presentation on the work of the CWMW to develop a wetland monitoring strategy and an Ecosystem Health web portal specific to Wetlands.
	
	1) 15 agencies are involved in the CWMW
	
	2) Agreement on tools and a framework for a state wetlands monitoring program
	
	3) Portal concept has a good foundation in earlier work on Wetland Tracker
	
	4) Consistency between development of a wetland monitoring strategy and the Monitoring Council's comprehensive monitoring program strategy
	
	5) Questions:
	
	    a) Where are the wetlands and how much do we have?
	
	    b) How healthy are they?
	
	    c) Are our wetland policies, programs, and projects working?
	
	6) Tenants of wetland monitoring strategy
	
	    a) Ongoing coordination
	
	    b) Common tools
	
	    c) Shared data management
	
	    d) Easy access to information by agencies and public
	
	    e) Incorporate into existing agency wetland programs
	
	7) CWMW will present their wetland monitoring strategy to the Monitoring Council for comment and incorporation into the Council's comprehensive strategy. This will achieve agency and stakeholder buy-in prior to State Water Board adoption of California wetland monitoring program, as part of the wetland protection policy.
	
	8) Portal development
	
	    a) Phase I – static site based on Where are the wetlands?
	
	    b) Phase II – more dynamic with user-defined questions; add wetland health
	
	    c) Future – add estuaries and streams (may need new work groups)

Decisions:	1) Monitoring Council agrees in general with CWMW wetland monitoring strategy development concept.
	
	2) Wetland portal
	
	    a) General direction OK
	
	    b) Questions OK – overall have fewer and focus on assessment (status / trends / improvement) rather than educational

	c) Too many words on pages		
	d) More consistent interface with Safe-to-Swim and Safe-to-Eat portals		

ITEM: #	6	Assigned to:	Time:
Title of Topic:	**FUTURE TOPIC – IT DATA MANAGEMENT GROUP**	Jon Marshack	3:30 – 3:45
Purpose:	Introduce the need for an IT Data Management Group to facilitate issues of data quality, management, analysis, and reporting (via the web) between the theme-based workgroups.		
Desired Outcome:	Information. Issue to be discussed in greater depth at a future meeting.		
Background:	The long term efforts of an IT Data Management Group will be guided by the portion of the comprehensive strategy covering data quality, management, analysis, and reporting. SWAMP, the Water Boards, and CEDEN are a small piece of the overall universe of monitoring and assessment entities involved in the SB 1070 effort. Other players (e.g., Wetlands Workgroup, GAMA) are working with very different perspectives and data management and reporting platforms. In a distributed, federated system, how much consistency can we expect and ask for? Do we need an overarching IT group to interact with the various theme-based workgroups and to make recommendations for consistency to the Monitoring Council? It is recommended that initially a limited IT group be convened to work with and inform the theme-based workgroups, to capture data management, GIS, and web development issues as they arise, and to develop options for dealing with them. It is likely premature to get locked into specific solutions. While the Monitoring Council is developing its long-term monitoring strategy, flexibility is needed to explore a variety of options and to learn from them. Standardizing too early could create a cascade of other unforeseen and undesirable constraints. For example, the State of California's Chief Information Officer (CIO) has just appointed a Geospatial Information Officer (GIO) to coordinate California's digital mapping efforts, and it is too early to know the direction that the GIO will provide to state agencies. We should be willing to learn by doing, to make mistakes along the way as we develop our initial workgroup and web portal development efforts. Adaptive management will allow the Monitoring Council to gain important experience to better inform the comprehensive monitoring program strategy.		
Contact Person:	Jon Marshack	jmarshack@waterboards.ca.gov, (916) 341-5514	
Notes:	Dialogue needed with Michael Byrne, State Geospatial Information Officer on GIS standards		
Decisions:	1) Concept OK at present 2) May need to move now on basic questions a) Portals need help to work together		

	b) Operating principles for data portability		

Action Items:	1) Identify potential players in data management group
	
	    a) Steve Steinberg from Monitoring Council
	
	    b) Shelly Moore from SCCWRP		

ITEM: #	**7**	**Assigned to:**	**Time:**
Title of Topic:	**MEETING WRAP-UP**	Jon Marshack	3:45 – 4:00
Purpose:	1) Summarize meeting 2) Plan agenda for next Monitoring Council meeting on July 27, 2009 in Sacramento		
Contact Person:	Jon Marshack	jmarshack@waterboards.ca.gov, (916) 341-5514	
Decisions:	1) Well done 2) Keep to 2 to 3 major items to allow sufficient time for interaction/discussion 3) Steve Steinberg will not attend on July 27		
Action Items:	1) Add presenter names to future agendas 2) Check with Rufus Howell on future meeting attendance		

July 1, 2009
Approved July 27, 2009