California Water Quality Monitoring Council

Council Meeting Notes

September 29, 2009 – 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM

Large Conference Room
Southern California Coastal Water Research Project (SCCWRP)
3535 Harbor Blvd., Suite 110, Costa Mesa

Monitoring Council Members and alternates in attendance:

Sarge Green	Sam Mowbray	Steven Steinberg	Stephen Weisberg

Monitoring Council Alternates in attendance:

Valerie Connor	Terry Macaulay

Others in attendance:

Brock Bernstein, SB 1070 Consultant	J.T. Lui, DTSC
Bob Brodberg, OEHHA	Phil Markle, LACSD
Mike Curtis, MBC Applied Env. Services	Jon Marshack, SWRCB
Jay Davis, SFEI (phone)	Ted Peng, DTSC
Amanda Dillon, SCCOOS	Bruce Posthumas, San Diego RWQCB
Terry Fleming, USEPA	Carolyn Remick, Water Center, UC Berkeley
Fred Gonzalez, LACDPW	Chris Stacklin, OCSD
Jack Gray (phone)	Eric Stein, SCCWRP
Joe Gully, LACSD	Julie Thomas, SCCOOS
Mary Elaine Helix, MARINe (phone)	Eric Uumaachf, SHU
Brian Lewis, DTSC	Colleen Wisniewski, Reef Check

ITEM:	1	Approx. Time:
Title of Topic:	**INTRODUCTIONS AND HOUSEKEEPING**	15 minutes
Purpose:	1) Introductions 2) Review notes from July 27, 2009 Council meeting 3) Review agenda for today's meeting	
Desired Outcome:	1) Approve July 27, 2009 Monitoring Council meeting notes 2) Adjust today's agenda, as needed	
Attachments:	Notes from July 27, 2009 Council meeting	
Contact Person:	Jon Marshack	jmarshack@waterboards.ca.gov, (916) 341-5514
Decisions:	July 27, 2009 Council Meeting notes approved without edits	

ITEM:	2	Approx. Time:
Title of Topic:	**ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPDATES**	45 minutes

Purpose:	1) State budget update (Jonathan Bishop)
	2) Progress of outreach to state government organizations (all)
	3) Data management-focused outreach and proposal of an data management group to coordinate IT functions (Brock Bernstein)
	4) Progress on My Water Quality web portal deployment (Jon Marshack)
Desired Outcome:	a) Information
	b) Approval to develop data management group
Attachments:	a) Data Management Group Proposal
	b) OEHHA Concerns Regarding Safe-to-Eat Portal presentation
Contact Person:	Jon Marshack jmarshack@waterboards.ca.gov, (916) 341-5514
Decisions:	Standing item for future meetings – outreach to state government organizations
	Web Portal
	The Monitoring Council reiterated its web portal philosophy as including:
	a) Phrase questions the way that the public would likely ask them
	b) It is acceptable to ask questions that cannot now be answered directly
	c) Inform the public, decision makers, legislators, and scientists about what we know and don't know
	d) Present multiple ways to view existing data through the assessments made by appropriate organizations/agencies
	e) Monitoring Council directs new assessments (ones not formally made by agencies/organizations) through the workgroups
	f) Raise issues regarding the shortcomings of existing data and assessments to spur improvement by responsible agencies/organizations
Action Items:	**Data Management Group**
	a) Brock will invite representative of California's Office of the Chief Information Officer to next Monitoring Council meeting
	b) Brock will flesh out data management group paper (max 3 pages) with list of questions to be addressed
	c) Invite a subset of Data Management Group to attend next Monitoring Council meeting for a structured discussion of organizing principles, mission, and tasks.
	d) Add Armand Ruby to Data Management Group
	e) Add Data Management Group positions for the Department of Water Resources and Department of Fish and Game plus a few outside members (e.g., SCCOOS, UC Berkeley Water Center)

Web Portal

The Monitoring Council's instructions for the Safe-to-Eat portal:

a) Correct any unresolved technical issues with map and page displays prior to portal release

b) Delete the Recent Conditions map for the initial public release, as it does not represent a formal assessment from any existing agency/organization. If a report card style assessment is to be included in the portal at a later date, then the BOG will need to take ownership and obtain agreement among all the entities involved, similar to the process used to develop Heal the Bay's Beach Report Card website (http://www.healthebay.org/brcv2/default.aspx). A test-phase map could be included in the portal prior to full agreement if it is clearly labeled as such with a mechanism inviting comments/suggestions.

c) Add a new filter to the Data & Trends map for the various thresholds (OEHHA's ATLs and FCGs, and maybe others), allowing the user to apply the thresholds in which they are interested. At the same time, the explanations of the thresholds and what they represent will need to be improved in terms the public can understand.

d) Clearly communicate who is responsible for the monitoring and the assessments presented in each map and why each assessment has been made.

e) Up front, the portal should communicate that it is a work in process, initially showing what data are readily available, with the goal of adding as more are made available. An invitation to provide comments should be included.

f) The BOG should endeavor to evaluate existing assessments and provide general comments on the web portal [not needed for initial public roll-out] and more detailed critique going to target agencies. The benchmarks provided in the December 2008 Monitoring Council recommendations report should be used in the evaluations. Evaluations would be presented to the Monitoring Council prior to release.

g) Obtain BOG buy-in on revised portal content

h) Demonstrate the revised portal at the December 7 Monitoring Council meeting and obtain approval prior to public release

ITEM:	**3**	**Approx. Time:**
Title of Topic:	**COMPREHENSIVE STATE WATER QUALITY MONITORING PROGRAM STRATEGY**	2 hours
Purpose:	Monitoring Council approach to the comprehensive long-term monitoring program strategy required by SB 1070. A draft of the strategy will be presented for review and comment.	
Desired Outcome:	Direction on developing the proposed strategy. 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](). An update of the SWAMP strategy could be coordinated with the Monitoring Council's comprehensive long-term monitoring program 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:	a) [Draft Comprehensive Monitoring Program Strategy]() b) [December 2008 Recommendations Report - full]() c) [Senate Bill 1070 - Chaptered]() d) [SWAMP Monitoring and Assessment Strategy]() e) [SWAMP Overview]()
Contact Person:	Brock Bernstein [brockbernstein@sbcglobal.net](), (805) 646-8369
Notes:	a) Brock received positive feedback on his draft strategy document b) Eric Stein discussed problems with wetlands data management that was highlighted during development of State of the State Wetlands Report; no single entity empowered to make agencies play together i) Inconsistent approach to data management ii) Lack of common system to compile data iii) Accuracy of data difficult to ascertain iv) Lack of georeferencing may lead to double-counting Highlights need for data management group to resolve (minimum stds.)
Decisions:	Potential issue resolution process: a) Workgroup attempts to resolve

	b) Workgroup raises unresolved issues to Monitoring Council
	c) Monitoring Council deliberates and develops recommendations
	d) Monitoring Council agency representative(s) brief agency secretary(ies)

Action Items:	a) Strategy Report:
	
	   i) Add abstract / executive summary
	
	   ii) Add Monitoring Council governance (decision-making, empowerment, resolution of disagreements, leverage to implement decisions)
	
	   iii) Add funding mechanisms for Monitoring Council oversight costs
	
	   iv) Add relationship of comprehensive strategy (Monitoring Council's product) to SWAMP strategy update (Water Board product) and EPA 10 elements
	
	     (1) Val Connor and Linda Sheehan to meet and discuss
	
	   v) Process:
	
	     (1) Share draft strategy with Cal/EPA and Resources Agency Secretaries, and Legislature
	
	     (2) Meet with agency secretaries and legislature on Monitoring Council's role, relationship to agencies, and governance
	
	     (3) Delay strategy until feedback from (1) and (2) and experience from development of all four portals can be incorporated (Spring 2010)
	
	b) SB1070 progress report to agency secretaries by end of 2009

ITEM:	4	Approx. Time:
Title of Topic:	**AQUATIC ECOSYSTEM HEALTH**	2 hrs, 45 min

Purpose:	a) Short introductory presentations to the following existing aquatic ecosystem monitoring and assessment programs:
	  • Southern California kelp forests (Michael D. Curtis, MBC Applied Environmental Sciences)
	  • Shallow marine reefs (Colleen Wisniewski, Reef Check)
	  • Multi-Agency Rocky Intertidal Network (Mary Elaine Helix, MARINe)
	  • Benthic invertebrates and sediment quality objectives (Steve Weisberg, SCCWRP)
	  • SWAMP Healthy Streams Initiative (Val Connor, State Water Board)
	
	b) Discussion of how to organize and manage the aquatic ecosystem health theme
	  • What sub-themes should be covered?
	  • What level of detail for each?
	  • How dependent or independent are the sub-themes?
	  • Should some sub-themes be lumped together?
	  • Who are the players in each sub-theme?
	  • Are there established work groups?	

	• What are the low-hanging fruit? • What kinds of data should be included (water quality, ecosystem)? • How to handle good data that covers only a portion of the state?
Desired Outcome:	Direction on how this theme should be handled

Background:	Aquatic ecosystem health is one of the five main themes proposed for development in the Monitoring Council's December 2008 recommendations report. Appendix A1 of the report proposed the following set of sub-themes for aquatic ecosystem health:
	• Wadeable streams
	• Rivers
	• Lakes
	• Coastal waters
	    o Shallow marine reefs
	    o Intertidal
	    o Subtidal benthos
	    o Enclosed bays and estuaries
	• Wetlands
	• Fisheries
	    o Anadromous fish
	    o Freshwater fish
	    o Marine fish
	• Invasive species
	• Harmful algal blooms
	
	Appendix 3 of the Monitoring Council's December 2008 recommendations report presents a theme-by-theme evaluation the current status of existing monitoring programs for each theme and sub-theme and the extent to which they meet the criteria for effective portals. The aquatic ecosystem health portion of Appendix 3 provides a basis for discussion.
	
	The California Wetland Monitoring Workgroup (CWMW) has agreed to tackle the Wetlands sub-theme, but has pointed out the extensive overlap with other sub-themes, including riparian areas. The CWMW presented information to the Monitoring Council about their monitoring and assessment activities at the May 22 and April 2, 2009 and October 15, 2008 meetings.
	
	The Healthy Streams Initiative of the Water Boards' Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program (SWAMP) includes efforts to integrate the Stream Pollution Trends (SPoT) program, the Perennial Streams Assessment (PSA), the Reference Condition Management Program (RCMP), and stream fish contaminant monitoring of the Bioaccumulation Oversight Group (BOG). SWAMP is also a critical player in the Water Boards' development of biologically-based water quality objectives (bio-objectives) for California. The relationship between SWAMP and the Monitoring Council was discussed at the April 2, 2009 meeting.
	
	The Interagency Ecological Program presented information to the Monitoring Council about their monitoring and assessment activities at the July 27, 2009 meeting.

Attachments:	a) Appendix 3, aquatic ecosystem health portion of the December 2008

	Monitoring Council Report	
	b) Southern California Kelp Forests presentation	
	c) Shallow Marine Reefs presentation	
	d) Multi-Agency Rocky Intertidal Network (MARINe) presentation	
	e) Benthic Invertebrates and Sediment Quality Objectives presentation	
	f) SWAMP Healthy Streams Initiative presentation	
Contact Person:	Jon Marshack	jmarshack@waterboards.ca.gov, (916) 341-5514
Notes:		

Decisions:	a) Kelp forest monitoring
	
	  i) Include in Monitoring Council strategy even though changes in kelp forests are not necessarily due to water quality changes
	
	  ii) Need tie in with statewide CDFG and Marine Protected Areas programs
	
	b) Shallow marine reefs
	
	  i) Needs benchmark / index
	
	  ii) Needs connections to other agencies and management community
	
	c) MARINe
	
	  i) Most ready for future portal development
	
	  ii) Assessment framework (questions) needed
	
	  iii) Need connection to agency decision making and funding
	
	  iv) Need public focus
	
	d) Soft-bottom benthic invertebrates and sediment quality objectives
	
	  i) Inconsistent data collection methods
	
	  ii) SQOs and data largely limited to bays, harbors and estuaries; needs extension to tidal-fresh and freshwater systems
	
	  iii) Needs data collection system (Regional Data Centers?) consistent with EMAP National Coastal Assessments
	
	  iv) Needs a workgroup to provide coordination (Chris Beegan?)
	
	e) Healthy Streams Initiative
	
	  i) Needs broader multi-agency focus – not currently low-hanging fruit	

Action Items:	a) Jon Marshack will develop standards and design principles for portal development b) Rocky Intertidal i) Terry Fleming will attend annual MARINe meeting in SF on October 2 to present potential relationship with Monitoring Council	

	ii) If MARINe agrees, develop mock-up web portal within 6 months for consideration by Monitoring Council
	c) Steve Weisberg will pursue relationship between Ocean Science Trust Marine Protected Areas, kelp forest program, and sub-tidal rocky reefs
	d) Healthy Streams Initiative – develop mockup web portal within 6 months
	e) Val Connor will contact Chris Beegan about organizing a workgroup and data management system for SQOs and benthic invertebrates

ITEM: #	**5**	**Approx. Time:**
Title of Topic:	MEETING WRAP-UP	15 minutes
Purpose:	a) Summarize meeting b) Plan agenda for next Monitoring Council meeting on December 7, 2009 in Sacramento c) Begin selection of Monitoring Council meeting dates for 2010	
Contact Person:	Jon Marshack	jmarshack@waterboards.ca.gov, (916) 341-5514
Decisions:	Stephen Weisberg is empowered to represent the Monitoring Council at the National Water Quality Monitoring Council Meeting in Denver in April 2010 and the Maryland Monitoring Council annual meeting	

Action Items:	a) Next Meeting:
	
	   i) Plan for sharing strategy with legislature and agency secretaries and obtaining their input
	
	   ii) Data Management – invite OCIO representative
	
	   iii) Safe to Eat Portal – presentation and approval prior to public release
	
	   iv) Cure schizophrenia between encouraging agency participation and presentation of problems in monitoring and assessments
	
	     (1) Public warning on 303(d) assessments
	
	     (2) Develop example/prototype of website pointer to location where problems discussed
	
	b) 2010 Meeting Schedule
	
	   i) 3rd Wednesdays of every other month
	     [later amended to 2nd Wednesdays]
	
	   ii) Begin with February meeting at SCCWRP
	
	   iii) Alternate between Cal/EPA and SCCWRP	

November 2, 2009
approved December 7, 2009