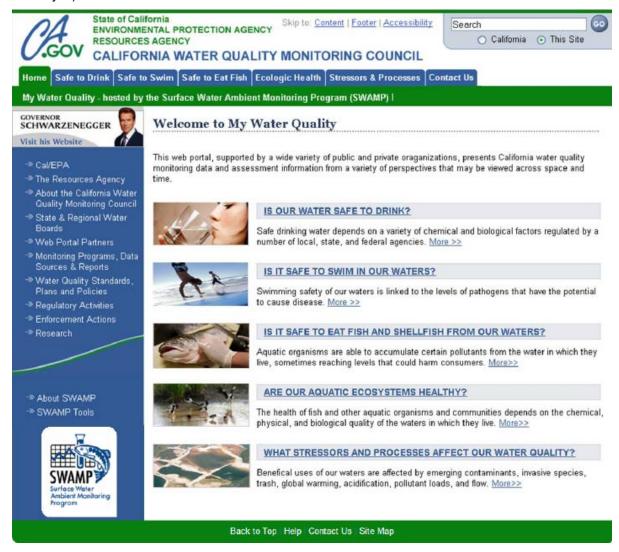
"My Water Quality" Website and Theme-Based Internet Portals Guidelines for Development

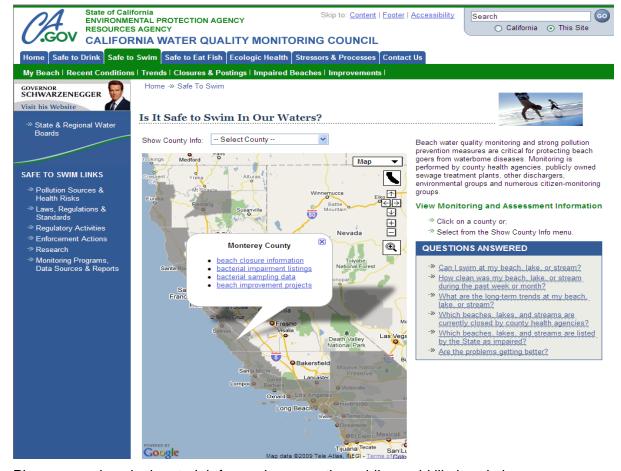
Focus and Content

1) The central theme of each portal should be phrased as a broad question, as presented on the My Water Quality home page (http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/mywaterquality/), shown below, or as a focus on a particular water body type under the heading of one of these main questions (e.g., a groundwater focus under the broader question of "Is our water safe to drink?" or a wetlands focus under the broader question of "Are our aquatic ecosystems healthy?")



- 2) Each portal should inform a wide range of audiences, including the general public, agency decision makers, legislators, and scientists.
- 3) The portal home page should present several more detailed questions that act as links to additional pages in the portal which present targeted assessments and summaries of monitoring data. See the "Questions Answered" box on the page

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/mywaterquality/safe_to_swim/, shown below. The California map on the portal home page may also serve to provide place-based links to these more detailed questions. For example, as shown below, the map provides links to these questions for each county, ecoregion, and/or other state division.



- 4) Phrase questions in the straightforward manner the public would likely ask them.
- 5) It is acceptable to ask questions that cannot currently be answered directly. In such cases, either present available monitoring and assessment information that is germane to the question or describe the nature of the data gap and what is being or could be done to fill it. Each portal should clearly identify what is known and not known about the water quality or aquatic ecosystem health theme, with the purpose of identifying, focusing, and motivating efforts to improve monitoring and assessment programs.
- 6) Present multiple ways to view and interpret monitoring data by including different assessments made by appropriate agencies and organizations (for example, report cards, numbers and trends of exceedances, derived risk measures, indices of habitat or ecosystem health, neutral data summaries). If multiple reputable assessment approaches or thresholds have been published, it is desirable to present these, as long as the portal includes explanations of these different assessment perspectives and their relevance to each of the portal's questions. This information should be provided in terms the public can readily understand.
- 7) Clearly communicate who is responsible for the monitoring programs and assessments presented in each portal map or data display, why each assessment has been made, its

- relationship to each question in the portal, and what decisions the assessment supports (see #6, above). Displaying logos of the responsible organizations on the pages where their work resides is encouraged.
- 8) A statewide assessment perspective should be presented whenever possible, even when there are data gaps or uncertainties, as long as these are clearly described (see #5, above).
- 9) Each workgroup is to review existing assessments and their underlying monitoring programs in its theme area and provide critical review and comment (e.g., biases, data gaps, redundancies, comparability issues). A summary of those comments should be presented in the portal. A detailed critique should be sent to the agencies/organizations responsible for the assessments to encourage improvement over time. The performance measures provided in the December 2008 Monitoring Council recommendations report (see Section 2.1.2 and Appendix 3) should be used to structure the evaluations. Evaluations are to be presented to the Monitoring Council prior to release.
- 10) On the home page or in a prominent manner, each portal should communicate that it is a work in process, initially showing what data are readily available, with the goal of adding information as it becomes made available. An invitation to provide comments should be included. [The comment link is "Contact the SB 1070 Coordinator with your comments and suggestions." with "SB 1070 Coordinator" linked to mailto:SB1070Coordinator@waterboards.ca.gov.]
- 11) Provide definitions of technical terms in the form of pop-up definitions or links to the appropriate background information pages.
- 12) Include background information on applicable laws, regulations, standards, policies, guidelines, regulatory activities, enforcement activities, and research that are appropriate to the theme of the portal. In some portals, these are featured as left navigation bar links.
- 13) Include information about the sources of water quality and aquatic ecosystem health problems and the associated risks, threats and impacts on human health, natural resources, and/or ecosystems. In some portals, these are featured as left navigation links.

Layout and Format

- 14) The "Is it safe to swim in our waters?" portal (http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/mywaterquality/safe_to_swim/) should be viewed as a template for other them-based portals.
- 15) Beginning with the portal main or home page, maps and graphic representations of data and assessments should be emphasized in the main page content area.
- 16) Background information is featured as left navigation bar links and as hyperlinks within the main page content area.
- 17) Wherever possible, allow the user to access and download the raw monitoring data on which the assessments are based. For example, the Trends page on the "Is it safe to swim in our waters?" portal and the Data & Trends page on the "Is it safe to eat fish and shellfish from our waters?" portal

 (http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/mywaterquality/safe_to_swim/trends/ and http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/mywaterquality/safe_to_eat/data_and_trends/; user name = cwqmc; password = council) provide direct access to bacterial indicator data. Adding a link to download these data (e.g., as an Excel spreadsheet) for a selected beach or set of selected beaches would further improve this feature. Examples of such downloads are on

the SWAMP-Moss Landing website at http://swamp.mpsl.mlml.calstate.edu/online-data/year-1-lakes-fish-contaminant-study. Note that the spreadsheets provide filtering tools for each column heading.

- 18) Units, scales of measurement, and chemical names should be consistent throughout the portal.
- 19) Where possible, use page formats and colors similar to those of existing My Water Quality portals developed by other Monitoring Council workgroups to provide consistent look and feel.
- 20) The following core page features should be common to all portal pages:
 - a) A link to return to the main My Water Quality home page
 (http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/mywaterquality/) to provide access to the other portals.
 In the Safe-to-Swim and Safe-to-Eat portals, this is accomplished via the tabs across the top of the page. The My Water Quality button may be used for this function.



- b) A link to the workgroup information page (see http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/monitoring_council/index.shtml# workgroup). In some portals, this is done via the left navigation link "Monitoring Programs, Data Sources & Reports".
- c) A link to the Monitoring Council information page (http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/monitoring_council/). In some portals, this is accomplished via the words "CALIFORNIA WATER QUALITY MONITORING COUNCIL" in the banner at the top of the page.
- d) A link to the Contact Us page (http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/mywaterquality/contact_us/), which provides information on portal roll-out and a place to ask questions and provide comments. In the some portals, this is done via the right tab at the top of the page.

Process

- 21) Portals are products of the theme-based workgroups.
- 22) The Monitoring Council will review and approve questions, assessment products, and portal mock-ups prior to portal development. These should be presented to the Monitoring Council as a mock-up of main portal pages.
- 23) New assessments (ones not formally made by agencies/organizations) presented in a portal are products of the theme-based workgroup. Monitoring Council review and approval is required if new assessments are expected to be controversial. A test-phase assessment map or data presentations may be included in a portal prior to full workgroup agreement if it is clearly labeled as such with a mechanism inviting comments and suggestions from portal users.
- 24) Technical issues with the performance of maps and other web page displays are to be corrected prior to portal release. Address any GIS and web standards published by participating state agencies and the California Office of the Chief Information Officer.