# CALIFORNIA WATER QUALITY MONITORING COUNCIL
## Planning Subcommittee Meeting Notes
### Monday, November 16, 2015 – 9:00 to 12:00 Noon
First Floor, Training Room 1 East/West
Joe Serna Jr. Cal/EPA Headquarters Building
1001 I Street, Sacramento

Monitoring Council Members and (Alternates) in attendance:
(Greg Gearheart)          Phil Markle
Sarge Green               (Stephani Spaar)

Others in attendance or (on the phone):
Gordon Burns, Undersecretary for Environmental Protection
Val Conner, State Water Resources Control Board
Kelsey Cowin, State and Federal Contractors Water Agency
Randal Friedman, Navy Region Southwest
Kris Jones, Water Quality Monitoring Council, Department of Water Resources
Jon Marshack, Water Quality Monitoring Council, State Water Resources Control Board
Chris Marquis, State Water Resources Control Board, Nonpoint Source Program

| ITEM: | 1 |
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| **Title of Topic:** | **INTRODUCTIONS AND HOUSEKEEPING** |
| **Purpose:** | 1) Introductions<br>2) Review meeting agenda<br>3) Brief announcements of Monitoring Council Members and others |
| **Desired Outcome:** | a) Preview what will be covered today and overall meeting expectations<br>b) Adjust today's agenda, as needed<br>c) Provide opportunity for brief announcements |
| **Attachment Link:** | Meeting Notice |
| **Decisions:** | Agenda Item 3 was heard before Item 2. |

| ITEM: | 3 |
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| **Title of Topic:** | **PERSPECTIVE OF THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY** |
| **Purpose:** | CalEPA Undersecretary Gordon Burns provided his agency's perspective on the Monitoring Council's strategy and first audit report findings and where CalEPA envisions the Monitoring Council moving forward |
| **Desired Outcome:** | Information and feedback from the Council.  Potential for Agency assistance. |
| **Background:** | During in-person briefings, both CalEPA and the Natural Resources Agency |

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| | have expressed appreciation for the efforts of the Monitoring Council and its workgroups. Council Co-Chairs and staff have been meeting with CalEPA Secretary Rodriquez and Undersecretary Gordon Burns to explore the structure and focus of the Monitoring Council and potential Agency support for future Council actions. Discussions emphasized the need to tie future Council actions to high-profile activities that already have state administration support. |
| **Attachment Link:** | • [Monitoring Council meeting notes of August 27, 2015](#) (see Item #7) <br><br> • [Monitoring Council's Comprehensive Monitoring Program Strategy (2010)](#) <br><br> • [First Triennial Audit of Implementing the Monitoring Council's Strategy (2014)](#) |
| **Notes:** | Gordon Burns opened by commending the Monitoring Council for their good work. He mentioned that he and Secretary Rodriquez agreed that they wanted to have a continued dialogue to discuss options for how the Monitoring Council's efforts could be better supported and tied into high profile initiatives (e.g., the California Water Action Plan, the Water Bond etc.). Gordon stressed that there are many high level initiatives that require access to good quality data in order to make informed management decisions. He suggested that we think about how we can support efforts that are of high importance to the governor and legislature, e.g., Water Action Plan, EcoRestore, Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan Phase II, climate change. For example, are data easily available for adaptive management purposes? He encouraged the Council to make the argument that the success of these high level initiatives is dependent on having access to data and the coordination of relevant monitoring efforts. He added that we need to clearly demonstrate to relevant agencies how the Council can help fix these issues. Taking this approach would most likely help with future funding requests. <br><br> While this year's funding request was not successful, the Council was urged to return next year with a stronger proposal and to work with other agencies to gain support or to pursue a multi-agency funding proposal with linkages to key projects and themes. <br><br> Sarge Green mentioned the importance of having the attention of high level representatives from various agencies, and asked whether it was reasonable to request a meeting with John Laird (Secretary for Natural Resources). Gordon indicated that he thought that this was a reasonable request. However, he strongly encouraged the Monitoring Council to keep the message compelling and concise, to clearly lay out the case in a way that demonstrates its usefulness—why is the work of the Monitoring Council imperative for these high level initiatives. He also suggested that we come with top managers from supporting governmental organizations. Once this message is clearly crafted, he suggested that the Monitoring Council should reach out and work directly with someone under the Secretary (e.g., at the Undersecretary level). <br><br> Gordon offered that a letter of support from CalEPA for the Monitoring Council was possible, once the Council had decided on its new direction. |

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| **ITEM:** | **2** – *Note: This item was heard after Item 3.* |
| **Title of Topic:** | **CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND FOR DISCUSSION** |

| **Purpose:** | Jon Marshack provided background for discussion items that appear later in the agenda, drawing from the Council's discussion on August 27. |
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| **Desired Outcome:** | Information and comment |
| **Background:** | The following topics arose from the Monitoring Council's August 27 meeting:<br><br>• What has been successful?<br><br>   o Wetland Monitoring Workgroup – funding, outreach, standardized methods for monitoring/assessment/reporting, federal agency support<br><br>   o Bioaccumulation Oversight Group – statewide survey of sport fish and resulting action by the Water Boards to develop a statewide mercury TMDL<br><br>   o Estuary Monitoring Workgroup – development of tools and dashboards useful to agency staff and decision makers (e.g., for adaptive management purposes)<br><br>   o Healthy Watersheds Assessment for California<br><br>• What has been less than successful?<br><br>   o Relying on grassroots efforts to move the mission forward<br><br>   o Safe to Swim Workgroup and portal progress<br><br>   o Ocean Ecosystem Health Workgroup formation<br><br>   o SWAMP / Monitoring Council strategy implementation<br><br>   o Portals as the driver to improve monitoring and assessment<br><br>   o Improvements in IT infrastructure – data management systems, web, GIS<br><br>   o Safe to Drink Portal – getting construction started<br><br>   o Data Management Workgroup – participation and developing recommendations<br><br>   o Participation by certain governmental organizations<br><br>   o Data sharing across organizations<br><br>• Opportunities for Monitoring Council and workgroup progress<br><br>   o California Wetland Monitoring Workgroup and Wetland and Riparian Area Monitoring Plan (WRAMP)<br><br>   o California Estuary Monitoring Workgroup: SF Bay-Delta actions<br><br>      ▪ Merger of Bay-Delta Live and Estuary Portal – dashboards for managers<br><br>      ▪ Delta Plan Interagency Implementation Committee (DPIIC): High-Impact Science Actions<br><br>      ▪ Bay-Delta Science Synthesis Team Proposal<br><br>      ▪ Delta Restoration Project Tracking (Delta Conservancy; Wetland Monitoring Workgroup, Estuary Monitoring Workgroup)<br><br>   o Healthy Watersheds Workgroup and Surface Water Ambient Monitoring |

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Program
<ul>
<li>o California CyanoHAB Network monitoring and response actions guidance</li>
<li>o Delta Council's Data Summit White Paper and Data Management Workgroup</li>
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• Challenges that need to be addressed for the above opportunities to be successful

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<li>o State governmental organization approval for using tools developed by outside organizations, such as SFEI and MLML.</li>
<li>o State governmental organization willingness to allow their staff to participate</li>
<li>o Improving state agency participation in the Data Management Workgroup, particularly by staff who are willing and able to make broad-based recommendations for improving data infrastructure</li>
<li>o Developing and maintaining strong workgroup leadership</li>
<li>o Funding and IT support for portal maintenance and development and willingness to use newer and evolving technologies for data visualization</li>
<li>o Increased integration between SWAMP and workgroup actions</li>
<li>o Continued/increased outreach to foster participation and use of workgroup tools by a greater number of organizations</li>
<li>o Support for Monitoring Council and workgroup efforts from state agencies and the legislature</li>
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<tr><td><strong>Attachment Links:</strong></td><td>

• [Context and Background for Discussion](#) – presentation by Jon Marshack

• [Monitoring Council meeting notes of August 27, 2015](#) (see Item #7)
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<tr><td><strong>Notes:</strong></td><td>

Jon Marshack made a [presentation](#) regarding the Monitoring Council's background, its successes and failures. This item was meant to set up discussion for Items 4 and 5 (below). The subcommittee generally agreed that pursuing efforts opportunistically was more feasible than maintaining a statewide/all waters/all uses focus. Members felt that focusing on high profile issues may be where the workgroups could make the most progress and potentially get the most support (e.g., in the form of staff and resources). Synthesis efforts were discussed and highlighted as a potential way of addressing high level questions of interest to managers (e.g., no net loss of wetlands, drought effects, etc.); it was noted that some of these questions may be more regionally focused rather than statewide. In response to Undersecretary Burn's comments regarding the Council and its workgroups supporting high profile initiatives, the subcommittee highlighted efforts such as the Delta Stewardship Council's White Paper (Data Management Workgroup), harmful algal blooms (CyanoHAB Network), and groundwater issues (Safe-to-Drink Workgroup) as high level issues where we could gain traction. The subcommittee felt that efforts such as these could elevate the Monitoring Council and its workgroups, and help with linkages between potential partner agencies. Related to these points, Jon Marshack highlighted the work of the CyanoHAB Network, which is currently developing a draft guidance document that would help coordinate county health and lake/reservoir managers in their response to harmful algal blooms.
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| ITEM: | 4 |
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| **Title of Topic:** | **MONITORING COUNCIL GOVERNANCE** |
| **Purpose:** | Discuss current and future Monitoring Council membership and structure |
| **Desired Outcome:** | Recommendations on future structure and function of the Monitoring Council |
| **Background:** | Current Monitoring Council membership includes representatives from the State Water Board, the Department of Water Resources, the Division of Drinking Water, citizen monitoring groups, regulated publicly owned treatment works, stormwater and agriculture, water supply interests, the scientific community, and the public. A liaison from U.S. Environmental Protection Agency regularly participates.  While this diversity of interests had helped to shape the Monitoring Council's strategy and planning efforts, many state governmental organizations critical to implementation are not represented. Providing representation from those organizations could help foster support for the Monitoring Council, as well as increase participation and support for Council and workgroup actions. |
| | Discussion at the August 27 Monitoring Council meeting (see Item #7) explored the concept of transforming the current Council into an executive advisory group and to develop a new council comprised of governmental organization managers to lead implementation by the workgroups. |
| | Questions for discussion include: |
| | • Should the Monitoring Council membership and organizational structure remain the same or should it be modified? |
| | • If the Council should be modified, in what manner? |
| | • What structure and membership would improve chances for success? |
| **Attachment Link:** | Current Monitoring Council Governance document |
| **Notes:** | The idea of changing the governance to a two level structure was discussed, and could consist of: 1) A Steering Committee that would consist of the current Monitoring Council members; and 2) a Council, composed of high level governmental organizational representatives. Subcommittee members felt that this structure could help bring in additional agency partners, provided that we receive top down support from the Agency Secretaries to stimulate such involvement.  Giving additional governmental organizations a seat at the table would provide them with greater influence over Monitoring Council and workgroup activities, potentially encouraging greater staff involvement and encourage additional resources to be brought to the table.  An outreach plan would need to be developed to increase awareness and provide departmental managers with a sense of "what's in it for them." |
| | The subcommittee members suggested that Jon Marshack and Kris Jones research the governance structures of other groups, which could serve as models (e.g., Southern California Coastal Water Research Project) and report back to the full Monitoring Council at the next meeting. Examining the governance structure of other programs (i.e., their strengths and weaknesses) could help inform the decision regarding any potential changes in the governance structure of the Monitoring Council, and could help guide how such |

| | a change in governance might take shape. |
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| | The Subcommittee suggested we consider changing the name of the Water Quality Monitoring Council to be more inclusive of other related areas, e.g., ecosystem health, biological data, water quantity.  Since the name of the Council is written into SB 1070, Jon suggested that he consult with State Water Board's legal office to discuss any potential issues with such a change. |
| **Action Items:** | • Jon and Kris will research the governance structures of groups, which could serve as a model for the governance of the Monitoring Council and report back to the full Monitoring Council at the next meeting. <br> • Jon will consult with State Water Board legal to determine the feasibility of changing the name of the Monitoring Council. |

| **ITEM:** | **5** |
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| **Title of Topic:** | **FOCUS OF THE MONITORING COUNCIL AND ITS WORKGROUPS** |
| **Purpose:** | Discuss the existing focus of Monitoring Council and workgroup actions, as well as potential changes in the direction of those efforts. |
| **Desired Outcome:** | Recommendations for future focus of Council and workgroup actions |
| **Background:** | The Council's current focus is to foster improvement in monitoring, assessment and reporting of water quality and aquatic ecosystem health using a statewide perspective, dividing workgroup and portal efforts by beneficial use themes and water body types, as follows: <br><br> • Safe to drink <br><br> • Safe to swim <br><br> • Safe to eat fish and shellfish <br><br> • Aquatic Ecosystem Health <br>      o Wetlands <br>      o Estuaries (allowed to begin with SF Bay-Delta focus) <br>      o Streams, rivers, and lakes (recently changed to watersheds) <br>      o Ocean and coastal <br><br> • Stressors and processes that affect water quality <br>      o Harmful algal blooms and cyanotoxins <br><br> Two additional workgroups were formed outside of this structure: <br><br> • Data Management <br><br> • Collaboration Network <br><br> Questions for discussion include: <br><br> 1. Should a statewide focus be maintained, or should a more opportunistic focus be adopted that better addresses regional monitoring efforts and issues as they arise? |

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| | 2. Should monitoring, assessment, and reporting improvement efforts continue to be divided into theme areas by beneficial uses and water body types? |
| | 3. Should the Council continue to pursue efforts in all of the above theme areas, or should the focus be narrowed to those shown to be successful? |
| | 4. Should the Council's efforts be expanded to include water supply information to better align with mandates of the Department of Water Resources and the State Water Board's Division of Water Rights? |
| | 5. Should portal development continue to be the Council's driver to improve monitoring, assessment, and reporting? |
| | 6. Who is the audience of workgroup and Council efforts? |
| |      o   Agency managers and decision makers |
| |      o   The public |
| |      o   Legislators |
| |      o   Scientists and researchers |
| | 7. How can the Monitoring Council and its workgroup efforts become indispensable to organizations that can supply funding? |
| | 8. Is new legislation needed to refine and bolster the Monitoring Council effort? |
| | 9. What can Council Members do to increase support for the Council's efforts? |
| **Attachment Links:** | • [Theme-specific workgroups and portals diagram](#) |
| | • [Guidelines for Workgroups and the Development of My Water Quality Theme-Based Internet Portals](#) |
| **Notes:** | During the meeting, subcommittee members discussed the existing focus of Monitoring Council and workgroup actions, as well as potential changes in the direction of those efforts. The following questions were discussed: |
| | *1. Should a statewide focus be maintained, or should a more opportunistic focus be adopted that better addresses regional monitoring efforts and issues as they arise?* |
| | The Subcommittee favored a mixture of approaches, depending on the situation.  See response for Question #2. |
| | *2. Should efforts continue to be divided into theme areas by beneficial uses and water body types?* |
| | The Subcommittee generally felt that the workgroups should be more deliberative and opportunistic and less restrictive in their focus.  Addressing regional efforts may be more realistic to attract workgroup involvement for some workgroups, while others may continue to use a statewide focus. |
| | *3. Should the Council continue to pursue efforts in all of the theme areas, or should the focus be narrowed to those shown to be successful?* |
| | Subcommittee members indicated that it was unnecessary to maintain workgroups and portals for all theme areas (or beneficial use type), if there is little interest in supporting them amongst agency staff or workgroup members.  For Safe to Swim, the emphasis should be to get the data out. |
| | *4. Should the Council's efforts be expanded to include water supply information* |

*(e.g., to better align with mandates of DWR and the State Water Board's Division of Water Rights)?*

The subcommittee agreed that water supply information could be incorporated, where relevant to the theme, e.g., Delta (Estuary Monitoring Workgroup), drought, cyanoHAB.

5. *Should portal development continue to be the Council's driver to improve monitoring, assessment, and reporting?*

The consensus among the Subcommittee members was that portal development has not proved to be a driver to improve monitoring, assessment, and reporting. The general sentiment was that portal development should not be the primary emphasis of the workgroups, especially if such efforts have been a constraint and where public interest in the information is not particularly high, e.g., wetlands. The development of dashboards or tools (e.g., Estuary Portal, EcoAtlas etc.) should be developed to address agency decision makers' specific management questions. Members agreed that developing these tools with a public focus would be valuable, but should also not be a constraint to workgroup progress.

6. *Who is the audience (e.g., agency managers and decision makers, the public, legislators, scientists and researchers)?*

The Subcommittee felt that the primary focus should be the highest level user of the information (e.g., agency staff, resource managers, and decision makers), and where possible, information and content should be accessible to a broad audience, including the public.

7. *How can the Monitoring Council and its workgroup efforts become indispensable to organizations that can supply funding?*

The Subcommittee did not have any solid recommendations relating to this question; however, members did discuss new data sharing requirements (e.g., AB 501) and the new Data Czar—efforts the Monitoring Council could help support. Members agreed that the Monitoring Council should pay close attention to these efforts and feed into them, where possible. Changes to Monitoring Council membership and focusing workgroup efforts to respond to agency decision makers' needs for information would also help.

8. *Is new legislation needed to refine and bolster the Monitoring Council effort?*

Jon Marshack reminded the council that SB 1070 was originally developed to provide recommendations, with the intention that follow-up legislation would provide resources to implement those recommendations. Jon added that the Monitoring Council has since lost its champion (Linda Sheehan) who served to support the Monitoring Council's efforts in the legislature. The subcommittee agreed that new legislation is needed to elevate the Monitoring Council and address its lack of resources.

9. *What can Council Members do to increase support for the Council's efforts?*

The Subcommittee indicated that a non-governmental Monitoring Council member is needed to reach out to key legislative committee members and their staff to increase attention and interest in the Monitoring Council's efforts and needs.

The Monitoring Council should address proposed changes in structure and focus through a strategic planning overlay to the Council's strategy document. Another

| | "Strategic Plan Committee" meeting should be calendared soon. |
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| **ITEM:** | **6** |
| **Title of Topic:** | **MEETING WRAP-UP** |
| **Purpose:** | Summarize main recommendations to the full Monitoring Council |
| **Action Items:** | In addition to the above notes, Kris Jones and Jon Marshack will summarize the main recommendations from this meeting to discuss with the full Monitoring Council. |

November 25, 2015
Approved, February 23, 2016