

“Safe to Swim” Workgroup 2011 Progress Report

The purpose of the group is to coordinate the monitoring and assessment of issues affecting swimming safety and also to report that information to decision makers and the public through the [Safe to Swim Water Quality](#) web portal.

The My Water Quality “Safe to Swim” Workgroup held three meetings in 2011: March 23, July 14 and November 28th. WebEx services were used during each meeting and allowed for meeting participation statewide via the internet and telephone.

BeachWatch Database

A new BeachWatch Database went online. The revised version is hosted directly at the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project (SCCWRP) and has created a more user-friendly and efficient upload platform for coastal county health agencies that are required to perform beach monitoring. It now incorporates more user requested features to encourage more frequent data entry and will directly upload beach data to US EPA on a more frequent basis than the annual requirement. By the end of this current calendar year this new database will feed data directly into the [California Environmental Data Exchange Network \(CEDEN\)](#) in addition to making CEDEN be the data source for the [Safe to Swim "My Water Quality"](#) web portal.

Workgroup Prioritizations

To ensure that the [Safe to Swim "My Water Quality"](#) web portal will best serve California, the workgroup decided to address two primary questions:

1. What do agency decision makers and the public really want to know about swimming safety on a local, regional and statewide basis?
2. How can we best inform decision making?

To assist the “Safe to Swim” Workgroup the “Data Management” Workgroup identified several specific questions which will help address how the primary two questions are answered

- What are the problems in data management?
- What data sets should be a priority for access?
- Where are the data gaps?
- What data restrictions currently exist?

The workgroup produced a priority list of information and tasks which will help address public desires. This priority list identified 13 items of interest amongst 3 separate “Safe to Swim” Categories: “What are the current threats to my beach water quality?”, “Is it safe to swim at fresh water beaches?”, “What water quality data is available?”

Prioritized Tasks

Near the top of the priority list was the inclusion of bacterial indicators of swimming safety from inland waters. The new data management system, including the new BeachWatch database, its data feed into CEDEN, and having CEDEN feed data to the [Safe to Swim "My Water Quality"](#) web portal will allow inland bacterial indicator data and inland water swimming safety to be evaluated and displayed in the portal. The workgroup will develop a plan to effectively evaluate and display inland water swimming safety data and assessment information.

Work towards addressing the top public priorities was initiated. Although the priority list gave the Workgroup a good start towards addressing the two priority questions, it was decided that

the Workgroup will initiate informational surveys to best determine agency and public resource manager needs, resources and mandates. Progress towards developing survey tools and addressing “what agency decision makers want to know about swimming safety on a local, regional and statewide basis and how to best inform decision making” was initiated and will continue into 2012.

“Safe to Swim” Workgroup Participation

There have been 15-20 active members of the workgroup. Members come from the county health agencies, the State and Regional Water Boards, NGOs, data center experts and US EPA. At the last meeting it was determined to increase the frequency of meetings so that the Workgroup can have greater efficacy in its mission. Workgroup committees/task groups have been identified and it is anticipated that additional committees/task groups will be created in 2012.

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