



**California Wetland Monitoring Workgroup
CHARTER
Adopted on August 5, 2014, Updated on July 12, 2022**

Mission

To improve the monitoring and assessment of wetland and riparian¹ resources by developing and supporting implementation of a comprehensive wetland monitoring plan for California, through improved coordination and collaboration among local, state, and federal agencies, tribes, and non-governmental organizations and through coordination with other California Water Quality Monitoring Council workgroups.

Goals

The workgroup will strive to meet the mission through the following goals.

1. Support the Goals of the Water Quality Monitoring Council,
2. Develop and maintain tools to monitor, assess, and track data for wetlands and riparian areas throughout California,
3. Work with federal, state, tribal, regional, and local entities to implement consistent monitoring and assessment tools to improve compatibility among wetland programs, and
4. Outreach to and coordinate with agencies, programs, and partners that are involved in wetland management, regulation, or funding.

Need for the CWMW

The need for comprehensive wetlands monitoring and assessment was first articulated by the National Research Council's report on "Compensating for Wetland Losses under the Clean Water Act" (NRC 2001), which called for wetland managers to:

- conduct ambient monitoring and assessment;
- develop a consistent approach to assess project performance;
- create adaptive and performance-based assessment tools to assist regulatory and management agencies;
- provide mechanisms to engage all regulatory programs via consistent approaches and tools;
- conduct assessment to provide a regional context for decision-making, including evaluation of cumulative impacts; and
- provide a common framework and platform for data management and dissemination.

The need for close coordination on water quality monitoring and assessment is also recognized and incorporated into state law. In November 2007, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed by the Secretaries of the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) and the California Natural Resources Agency to establish the California Water Quality Monitoring Council (Monitoring Council). Water Code Sections 13167 and 13181 and the MOU require that the Monitoring Council develop

¹ Riparian refers to the areas adjacent to wetlands and other waters of the U.S. and State and to their effect on those wetlands and waters.

specific recommendations to improve the coordination and cost-effectiveness of water quality and ecosystem monitoring and assessment, enhance the integration of monitoring data across departments and agencies, and increase public accessibility to monitoring data and assessment information.

While various state government policies recognize this need yet, in California, no single agency has authority over aquatic resources. Regulation of wetlands and other aquatic resources falls under the authority of six state and federal agencies, and wetland management is conducted by innumerable agencies, entities, and private land owners. To add to this complexity, multiple programs within an agency may have authority or regulatory control over wetlands. A need exists to implement standardized monitoring and assessment tools and approaches within state and federal agencies in California. This will allow programs to leverage their efforts at compiling information on the extent and condition of wetlands in California, allowing us to answer the question, "Where are California's wetlands and how are they doing?" The resultant data can be used to better manage wetland and riparian resources, evaluate program efficacy, and facilitate improved coordination and communication within and between agencies.

Background and Description

The California Wetland Monitoring Workgroup (CWMW) evolved from a statewide steering committee formed to coordinate among agencies and advise on the development, implementation and routine use of standardized wetland and riparian monitoring and assessment tools. This assessment toolkit, standardized statewide, addresses the three-tiered framework advocated by USEPA in their Elements Paper: Level 1-- habitat inventory and landscape tools, Level 2-- rapid, field-based assessments of condition, and Level 3-- intensive measures of condition and functions. One of the first accomplishments of the CWMW was the 2010 publication of the Tenets of a [State Wetland and Riparian Monitoring Plan](https://mywaterquality.ca.gov/monitoring_council/wetland_workgroup/docs/2010/tenets_program.pdf) (https://mywaterquality.ca.gov/monitoring_council/wetland_workgroup/docs/2010/tenets_program.pdf) (WRAMP) which outlines a standardized approach for implementing the USEPA Level 1-2-3 framework for wetland monitoring and assessment in California. A plan for implementing the WRAMP Tenets has been outlined in the Five Year Coordinated Workplan for Development of a Wetlands Conservation Program (WCP). As state and federal agencies in California move toward implementation of the WRAMP toolkit and the WCP, improved coordination is needed to ensure smooth implementation and maximum utility of data collected.

The CWMW is a workgroup of the California Water Quality Monitoring Council, to provide the mechanism for coordination and collaboration among federal, state, local and tribal agencies and non-governmental science support organizations involved in tool development and implementation. The Monitoring Council has endorsed WRAMP. In addition to coordinating WRAMP implementation, the CWMW will also coordinate with the State Water Boards' Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program (SWAMP), other Monitoring Council Workgroups, and other related efforts, as appropriate.

Membership and Representation

Representatives from state, tribal and federal agencies with authority or responsibility for wetland planning, regulation, management, monitoring, or assessment, as well as non-governmental science support organizations, shall participate on the Workgroup. Non-governmental organizations or other non-profit organizations that have key statewide or regional wetland or riparian data sets and/or active wetland assessment, restoration, and management programs are encouraged to participate on the CWMW.

The CWMW, at its discretion, may form standing or ad hoc committees to focus on specific technical or programmatic areas. These committees will provide a mechanism for more detailed and intensive participation and discussion. Each committee shall select a chair who will serve as a liaison and report to the CWMW.

Individuals/organizations with relevant expertise may serve on the committees, regardless of whether or not they are CWMW members.

Meetings will be open, informal and consensus driven. The CWMW is led by three chairs, one each from a state and federal agency and one from a non-governmental science support organization. The CWMW may form a steering committee to provide guidance to the CWMW Co-Chairs on governance or other administrative issues.

Specific detail on the function and procedures of the CWMW are outlined in the accompanying asset inventory and service portfolio, which is incorporated into this charter by reference.

Scope and Objectives

The CWMW will provide recommendations on comprehensive, watershed-based, and cross-programmatic monitoring, assessment, and reporting with associated linkages to resource management and regulatory programs involving wetlands and riparian areas. Objectives for the CWMW are listed below:

Objectives

Support the Goals of the Water Quality Monitoring Council

- Support implementation and ongoing coordination of the State Wetland Conservation Plan developed in accordance with USEPA standards.
- Identify new and emerging technical and programmatic needs related to wetland and riparian protection, restoration, and management.
- Support agency programs that protect, restore, and manage wetland and riparian areas in California as specified by the objectives that follow.

Development, Enhancement and Maintenance of Tools

- Develop wetland and riparian area monitoring and assessment tools that support the mandates of CWMW member agencies.
- Provide ongoing support and refinement of tools developed through CWMW.
- Coordinate and advise on development and support for data platforms for wetland monitoring programs and activities.

Support Implementation of WRAMP and associated toolkit

- Work with federal, state, and local agencies to track net change in wetland area and condition over time.
- Support development of regional monitoring programs for wetlands.
- Develop, recommend, and provide guidance for implementation of wetland tools and methods and advise on data sharing among CWMW partners.
- Pursue stable support and funding for continued program implementation.

Outreach and Partnership

- Communicate wetland, stream and riparian monitoring and assessment information to agency staff and decision makers at the federal, state, and local levels.
- Conduct training and provide technical support for partner agencies on use of WRAMP and associated toolkit
- Reach out to agencies and programs not currently using WRAMP and associate tools to provide information that will improve land use planning decisions that protect aquatic resources.
- Conduct outreach to tribes, community groups and other underrepresented groups to provide information and understand their needs for wetland and riparian areas, and support the Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion goals of the Monitoring Council.