



California Water Quality Monitoring Council



Matthew Rodriguez
Secretary for
Environmental Protection

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Edmund G. Brown Jr.
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John Laird
Secretary for
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Mr. Matthew Rodriguez
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WATER QUALITY MONITORING COUNCIL – TRIENNIAL AUDIT REPORT

Dear Secretary Rodriguez,

The Water Quality Monitoring Council was created by SB 1070 in 2007. The legislation proposed a concept that State Agencies and Departments could work together to more efficiently develop and analyze water quality data. The concept has been a success. Since its inception in 2007, the California Water Quality Monitoring Council has made substantial progress improving the efficiency and effectiveness of California's system of water quality and associated ecosystem monitoring, assessment and reporting. Implementing our 2008 initial recommendations and December 2010 *Comprehensive Monitoring Program Strategy*, the Monitoring Council has formed eight interagency workgroups that foster collaboration among the myriad governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations that monitor and assess the condition of California's water resources. These workgroups have created six My Water Quality internet portals (www.MyWaterQuality.ca.gov) to bring the resulting data and information to decision makers and the public in a manner that directly addresses their questions. The Monitoring Council's workgroups have developed defensible protocols to standardize water resource mapping, classification, monitoring, and assessment and tools for data management and visualization that allow data from multiple sources to be combined to address key management questions. These accomplishments are even more remarkable considering that they were made largely through voluntary efforts.

But the Monitoring Council and its workgroups can do more. Success over the past few years has shown that the Council's approach works to open up the silos of information within governmental programs and organizations, enhancing our state's ability to address the effects of drought, climate change, wildland fires, ocean acidification, and sea level rise on the quality of California's water

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resources in a substantially more effective manner. It will allow governmental organizations to see beyond the bean counts in their performance reporting – are California’s water resources becoming cleaner and healthier? Full implementation will require a culture shift that integrates the Monitoring Council’s *Strategy* into the very fabric of how our public agencies do business.

To accomplish these goals, the Monitoring Council will need to take the next step. To that end each of our existing workgroups will be preparing a business plan to determine what is needed to make the workgroups sustainable. Increased support could allow California’s system for monitoring, assessment and reporting to provide the predictive data needed to better inform adaptive management of our water resources.

SB 1070, specifically California Water Code Section 13181(h), and the Memorandum of Understanding between the California Environmental Protection and Natural Resources Agencies require the Secretary for Environmental Protection, in consultation with the Secretary for Natural Resources, to conduct a triennial audit of the effectiveness of the *Comprehensive Monitoring Program Strategy*. As a first step in the audit process, you asked that the Monitoring Council conduct a self-audit. The result of that self-evaluation is enclosed.

The Monitoring Council’s self-evaluation report concludes that without explicit management support and dedicated funding, the current level of effort cannot be sustained and the letter and intent of SB 1070 cannot be fulfilled. External supporting actions are needed to enable continued progress. To both verify and bolster the strength of our analysis, the Monitoring Council urges you to augment our first triennial self-audit through a formal third-party external review.

Based on our self-evaluation, the Monitoring Council makes the following recommendations:

To the Secretaries of the California Environmental Protection and Natural Resources Agencies – Encourage the directors of your departments, boards, and commissions to support implementation of the Monitoring Council’s *Strategy*. To be able us to sustain and grow our successful efforts, specifically request that they:

- a) Have their staff participate in the Monitoring Council’s collaborative workgroups;
- b) Allow staff time, not just to attend Monitoring Council workgroup meetings, but to perform the legwork needed to integrate their monitoring programs with those of other governmental and non-governmental organizations and to make the resulting data and information accessible through the My Water Quality portals;
- c) Utilize the many tools developed by the Monitoring Council’s workgroups to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their department’s/program’s monitoring, assessment, data management, and reporting efforts; and
- d) Add web services and other mechanisms to make their water quality and ecosystem health data and assessment information more accessible to other agencies and organizations.

These changes will allow data from multiple programs to be integrated to support broader assessments of the state’s water quality and aquatic ecosystem health, thereby more effectively addressing management questions about our water resources.

To the California Legislature – To enable continued progress, the Monitoring Council and its workgroups need a dedicated source of funding and staff positions specifically tasked with coordinating water quality and associated ecosystem monitoring, assessment, and reporting

efforts for the departments, boards, and commissions within the California Environmental Protection and Natural Resources Agencies. Funding and positions are needed to:

- a) Participate in the coordination activities of the Monitoring Council's workgroups;
- b) Implement technology solutions to open up the environmental data systems within these agencies so that the data can be readily accessed by other governmental and non-governmental organizations; and
- c) Develop and maintain the My Water Quality internet portals that provide water quality and aquatic ecosystem health data and information to decision makers and the public.

Members of the Monitoring Council, its Executive Director, and Assistant Director are available to brief agency and departmental executives and managers, members of the legislature, and appropriate legislative committees.

Sincerely,



Jonathan Bishop, Chief Deputy Director
State Water Resources Control Board
Monitoring Council Co-Chair
Representing Cal/EPA



Stephani Spaar, Chief, Office of Water Quality
Division of Environmental Services
Department of Water Resources
Monitoring Council Co-Chair Alternate
Representing the Natural Resources Agency

Enclosure

cc: John Laird, Secretary for Natural Resources, California Natural Resources Agency
Members of the California Water Quality Monitoring Council