



**California Wetland Monitoring Workgroup
CHARTER
Adopted on August 5, 2014**

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 . The workgroup will strive to accomplish this mission through review of technical and policy aspects of wetland monitoring tool development, implementation and use of data to improve wetland management in California and through setting a common vision for achieving these goals.

Need for the CWMW

The need for comprehensive wetlands monitoring and assessment is 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.

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.

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.



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 (WRAMP) (http://www.mywaterquality.ca.gov/monitoring_council/wetland_workgroup/docs/2010/tenetsprogram.pdf) 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 now 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 organizations², shall participate on the Workgroup. NGOs 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 lead by three chairs, one each from a state and federal agency and one from a non-governmental science support organization.

² Currently, three such organizations are CWMW members, Southern California Coastal Water Research Project (SCCWRP), Moss Landing Marine Labs (MLML), and San Francisco Estuary Institute-Aquatic Science Center (SFEI-ASC).



Specific detail on the function and procedures of the CWMW are outlined in the accompanying Roles and Responsibilities document, 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 agency programs that protect, restore, and manage wetland and riparian areas in California.
- Support implementation and ongoing coordination of the State Wetland Conservation Plan developed in accordance with USEPA standards.
- Serve the ongoing purposes of the California Water Quality Monitoring Council through working within our Mission Statement.
- Promote implementation and continued refinement of the WRAMP.
- Identify new and emerging technical and programmatic needs related to wetland and riparian protection, restoration, and management that appropriately support the mandates of the CWMW member programs.
- Compile information on existing wetland monitoring programs and activities and make that information available through the California Wetlands Portal and EcoAtlas.
- Communicate wetland, stream and riparian monitoring and assessment information to agency staff and decision makers at the federal, state, and local levels.
- Develop, recommend, and provide guidance for implementation of approaches to improve data sharing among CWMW partners.
- Reach out to the public, local agencies, and government to provide information that will improve land use planning decisions that protect aquatic resources.
- Support the implementation of WRAMP and other CWMW initiatives by helping to pursue stable funding for continued program implementation.