



California Water Quality Monitoring Council



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Members of the California Wetland Monitoring Workgroup (CWMW)

SUBJECT: IMPLEMENTATION OF STATE WETLAND AND RIPARIAN AREA MONITORING PROGRAM (WRAMP)

On February 10, 2010, the California Water Quality Monitoring Council approved in concept the Tenets of a State Wetland and Riparian Area Monitoring Program (WRAMP) prepared by the California Wetland Monitoring Workgroup (CWMW).

The goal of WRAMP is to track trends in wetland extent and condition in order to assess the performance of wetland, stream, and riparian protection policies, programs, and projects. The primary strategy is to implement standardized assessment methods and data management through all of the State's wetland, stream, and riparian monitoring efforts in ways that improve them while minimizing new costs and maximizing public access to assessment information. The WRAMP is intended to serve all State agencies and support the State Water Resources Control Board's new Wetland and Riparian Area Protection Policy. Implementation of WRAMP will require that all programs and projects within Cal EPA and the Natural Resources Agency affecting the distribution, abundance, or condition of wetlands, streams, or riparian areas commit to the following:

1. Coordinate wetland monitoring and assessment activities through the CWMW;
2. Endorse development of regional wetland and riparian monitoring to answer fundamental questions about wetland extent and condition within each region of the State;
3. Use a standardized wetland classification system, currently being developed;
4. Use standardized mapping & condition assessment tools, some of which currently exist and others which are currently being developed;
5. Cooperate on data management by submitting or requiring data to be submitted via the Aquatic Ecosystem Health portals of the Monitoring Council;
6. Encourage regions to develop innovative strategies for implementation of the WRAMP;
7. Pursue opportunities to leverage existing funding and other resources to support regional monitoring and data management.

Every wetland agency and program should find ways to incorporate the statewide WRAMP strategy into their programs, beginning with the following actions:

- Identify agency representatives to participate on existing Level 1(mapping) and Level 2 (rapid condition assessment) Committees of the CWMW (if not already represented);
 - CDFG to coordinate implementation of Level 1 activities;
 - SWRCB to coordinate implementation of Level 2 activities;

California Environmental Protection and Natural Resources Agencies

- Participate in regional teams and other technical groups of the CWMW, as appropriate;
- Support coordinated wetland, stream, and riparian definitions, mapping, classification, and assessment as recommended by the CWMW;
- Coordinate activities through CWMW and its technical workgroups, as appropriate
- Make data available and require data submittals to the Aquatic Ecosystem Health portals of the Monitoring Council.

Initial efforts should focus on implementation through the Department of Fish and Game's Lake and Streambed Alteration Program and through the State and Regional Water Quality Control Board's Clean Water Act Section 401 and Porter Cologne Waste Discharge Requirements authorities.

In addition, all major State and federal programs and projects should implement Level 1 and 2 methodologies as recommended by the WRAMP. This includes major infrastructure and energy projects.

The CWMW will continue to function as the coordinating body for wetland, stream, and riparian monitoring, assessment, and data management and will provide broad oversight and direction.

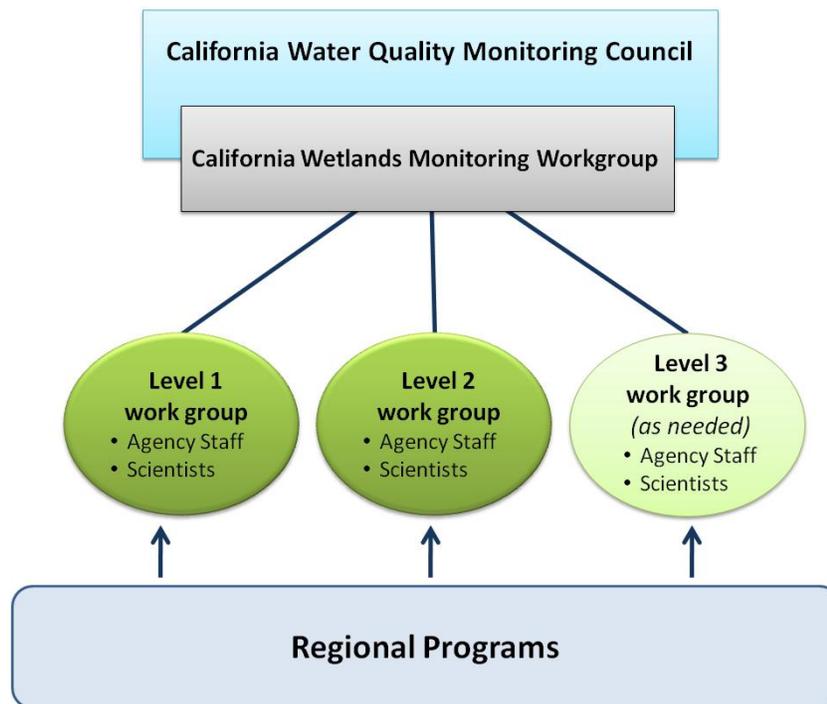


Figure 1: Organizational structure for implementation of the Wetland and Riparian Monitoring Program

The CWMW should facilitate communication among the regions and the statewide program as well as communication among partner agencies.

Regional Programs serve as the primary focus for implementing the WRAMP and providing a forum for local coordination. Regional programs should involve cooperating federal, state, and local agencies that have primary responsibility for protecting and managing wetlands, streams, and riparian areas within a region. Technical project leads, scientists, and members of local non-governmental organizations may also participate in the regional programs. These programs should provide local quality control, training, and assessment audits. They may also identify areas for future technical or program development and may produce products that can be reviewed and vetted through the CWMW for potential statewide adoption.

Level 1, 2, and 3 Workgroups - These workgroups coordinate consistent statewide mapping and assessment. They should be led by senior technical agency staff directly involved in statewide or inter-regional implementation of wetland, stream, and riparian policies and programs. The workgroups may also include environmental scientists from academia, not-for-profit science organizations, and the private sector with appropriate expertise across regions. The workgroups will receive input and suggestions from the regional programs and will ultimately recommend changes to Level 1, 2, and 3 methodologies, training, quality control, and data management. The workgroups will support agency programs by identifying opportunities and constraints for implementing WRAMP and will serve as a forum for identifying common priorities for future technical or policy development activities within their focal areas.

An initial opportunity to implement the above process will be through development of the State's Wetland Status and Trends program, which is intended to provide a process to better track wetland gains and losses across all agency programs. This effort will use the Level 1 Workgroup to design the program, develop standard operating procedures and quality control measures, and a training program. Initial pilot implementation will occur in San Diego Region through joint funding by the Natural Resources Agency and the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board and will augment the National Wetland Condition Assessment of 2011. This effort will serve to demonstrate implementation of the Status and Trends program in a manner that can be emulated in other regions of the State.

We recommend that all CWMW representatives facilitate necessary internal agency briefings with management to support implementation of WRAMP and the implementation approach outlined in this memo.

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cc: All Organizations within Cal/EPA and the Natural Resources Agency