

MEMO

FROM: California Ocean Science Trust

TO: Water Quality Monitoring Council

DATE: 5 December 2013

WQMC Triennial Audit - Self Evaluation of an Ocean-Themed Workgroup

At their August 28, 2013 meeting, the California Water Quality Monitoring Council discussed the need to develop the first Triennial Audit of implementing the Monitoring Council's comprehensive monitoring program strategy, as required by SB 1070 [Water Code §13181(h)]. The Monitoring Council has asked that in place of a 2013 annual progress report, each workgroup provide their portion of the Triennial Audit, reviewing the progress of the workgroup in implementing the Monitoring Council's strategy.

To that end, we provide below brief information describing recent formative steps to advance the development of an ocean and coastal-themed workgroup and an associated My Water Quality portal. Led by the Ocean Science Trust with the support of the Ocean Protection Council, a small scoping group has been convened to develop a roadmap that provides guidance on the focus and direction for a future full Monitoring Council workgroup. Thus, rather than assess progress relative to the performance measures and benchmarks laid out by the Monitoring Council, we intend to use those measures and indicators in the upcoming months to guide the scoping group's discussions and products.

We are excited by the level of participation and engagement in this initial roadmap study. The Ocean Science Trust has been successful in attracting funding to support these efforts and we have agreed upon an approach to develop the roadmap that will serve all interests.

We all very much look forward to identifying and building the foundation for an ocean and coastal workgroup while also scoping the concept of an ocean and coastal portal.

My Water Quality Ocean Portal:

Developing a Roadmap

The California Water Quality Monitoring Council was established by the Secretaries of the California Environmental Protection Agency and the California Natural Resources Agency to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of existing water quality and associated ecosystem monitoring and assessment, and to ensure that collected data are maintained and available for use by decision-makers and the public.

The Need

A first step by the Monitoring Council was the creation of an online platform for intuitive, streamlined access to water quality information - called My Water Quality - within the Monitoring Council website. The Monitoring Council has identified ocean and coastal waters as a key theme area for development within this website. However, the potential scope of an ocean theme area is enormous and it is currently unclear how to prioritize questions or areas of focus. In addition, there is a broad array of existing data and data systems, which present a correspondingly large number of different strategic and technical options for an ocean-themed portal. Despite these challenges, this new ocean theme provides an exciting and valuable opportunity to bridge the classic domain divide between water quality and ocean resource management. Realizing this opportunity will require a thoughtful and inclusive process.

The Approach

The California Ocean Science Trust will oversee a partnerships-based and collaborative process to develop a My Water Quality Ocean Portal Roadmap. This roadmap will provide a strategy and options for a phased process to develop an ocean-focused resource within the state's existing My Water Quality website. It will also highlight opportunities to leverage existing technical assets in a first version of a portal on the My Water Quality site.

A small scoping group will collaborate to identify:

1. Focal areas or questions within the ocean realm that bridge the water quality and marine resource monitoring communities, will provide useful information for a broad audience, and build upon existing projects and programs; and
2. Cost-effective development options that effectively leverage existing investments in web-based platforms and data sharing tools.

The process to develop the roadmap will set the stage for an enduring collaboration among data providers and users in the ocean realm, across multiple regulatory and management dialogues.

The Outcomes

The roadmap will chart a clear path forward towards an achievable, cost-effective content and technical development strategy for an ocean-themed component of the My Water Quality website. With the roadmap in hand, initial steps will be underway, led by an inclusive and engaged Monitoring Council Workgroup, to advance development of this portal.