



California Water Quality Monitoring Council



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DRAFT INTERIM SCIENCE ACTION AGENDA

Dear Dr. Hoenicke,

Thank you for the opportunities both to provide input to the development of the Delta Science Program's Interim Science Action Agenda (ISAA) and to provide our comments on the September 9, 2014 draft report. The Delta Science Program and the Water Quality Monitoring Council share parallel missions to foster the coordination of water quality and aquatic ecosystem monitoring, assessment/synthesis, and the delivery of scientific information to inform the decisions of water resource managers. We believe that the Delta Council's Science Action Agenda could easily take advantage of the foundational structure of collaborative interagency workgroups, each addressing high-level management questions, created pursuant to the Monitoring Council's [Comprehensive Monitoring Program Strategy for California](#). By building on the Monitoring Council's efforts, the ISAA could lead to increased management support for those efforts and broader participation by relevant agencies and organizations. We offer the following general and specific comments on the Agenda.

General Findings:

The process used to acquire information with which the draft Interim Science Action Agenda was developed appeared to be constrained by the template format used by the interview team. It was often unclear how to address science actions that cut across the somewhat artificial boundaries of the template. These constraints may have prevented certain relevant information from being captured. Our specific comments below are intended to enrich the ISAA with the Monitoring Council's foundational efforts.

Specific Comments:

Page v, Table 1 – Action Areas 14 and 15 should address chemical data as well as biological and physical data, harmonizing with the federal Clean Water Act focus on the chemical, physical and biological integrity of the nation’s waters. This comment also applies on *page 14 in lines 2 and 3, 13 and 14, and 17 and 18.*

Pages 6 and 7, Action Area 4, “Understand the conservation needs of native species” – The Monitoring Council’s [California Estuary Monitoring Workgroup \(CEMW\)](#) has recently joined forces with the San Francisco Estuary Partnership (SFEP) to produce a 2015 State of the Estuary Report, which intends to provide a well-reasoned synthesis of the ecological health of the Bay-Delta System. The structure of CEMW’s [California Estuaries Portal](#) was based on SFEP’s [2011 State of the Bay Report](#). CEMW’s role is to provide key ecological health indicators specifically from the Delta to complement SFEP’s already established San Francisco Bay indicators. The Workgroup has begun determining what suite of indicators and benchmarks can be produced for the 2015 State of the Estuary report and future installments. This collaborative effort will inform Action Area 4 and could be mentioned here.

Page 7, Action Area 5, “Understand the effects of habitat restoration and other management actions to address environmental stressors” – The Monitoring Council’s California [Wetland Monitoring Workgroup \(CWMW\)](#) has been working for several years to standardize the manner in which wetlands are identified, mapped, monitored and assessed and how the resulting data are reported. Based on the U.S. EPA’s [1-2-3 Framework](#), such standardization allows data from disparate monitoring programs to be combined so as to draw landscape scale information on the location, extent, and condition of California’s wetland habitats. CWMW has summarized these methods and tools in their [Tenets of a State Wetland and Riparian Area Monitoring Program](#) (April 2010), which include standardized wetland definition, classification and mapping protocols ([California Aquatic Resource Inventory](#)), [Wetland Status and Trends Assessment Plan](#), [California Rapid Assessment Method](#) or CRAM for assessing the condition of wetlands, and [EcoAtlas](#), a web-based set of tools for accessing, visualizing, and summarizing information about the distribution, abundance, diversity, location and condition of California’s wetlands, streams and riparian areas. The Landscape Profile Tool of EcoAtlas enables users to summarize existing information into standardized reports for any user-defined area of the State. The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy, State Water Resources Control Board, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, California Coastal Conservancy, San Francisco Bay Joint Venture and Central Valley Joint Venture are all looking to use these tools to answer the question “Where are our wetlands and how are they doing,” but also to track the progress of a variety of wetland restoration projects. The recently updated [Five Year Coordinated Work Plan for Wetlands Conservation Program Development](#), submitted to U.S. EPA in March 2014 will help to coordinate further development and implementation of these standardized methods and tools. All of these efforts should greatly help to inform Action Area 5 and could be mentioned in this section of the report.

Pages 11 and 12, Action Area 10, “Improve understanding of the sources and drivers of contaminants (i.e., selenium, pesticides, and mercury) in the Bay-Delta system and their effects on people and the ecosystem” – Actions by Monitoring Council workgroups, including the [Bioaccumulation Oversight Group](#) and [Healthy Streams Partnership](#), to document and bring together data on pollutants in water and contaminants in fish tissue and information regarding their effects on human health and aquatic life are relevant to this Action Area. Their data and assessment information are reported through the [Safe-to-Eat Fish and Shellfish Portal](#) and the [Healthy Streams Portal](#). These collaborative actions could form the foundation of efforts under

Action Area 10 and may be appropriate here. Because contaminants in addition to selenium, pesticides and mercury will be assessed under this Action Area, “i.e.” in the title should be replaced with “e.g.”

Pages 13 and 14, Action Area 13, “Build tools and resources (i.e., project tracking and coordinated monitoring) for adaptive management in the Delta” – In addition to example 2 in the table following line 16 on page 13, a number of Monitoring Council related efforts fit well within this Action Area and could provide a foundation for Action Area 13. These include collaborative efforts to coordinate monitoring and assessment and to develop standardized methods and tools by the [Monitoring Council's eight interagency workgroups](#), the [My Water Quality web portals](#) that bring question-based information to decision makers and the public, the wetland monitoring, assessment and reporting tools discussed under Action Area 5 above, and the standard operating procedures and methods of the Water Boards' Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program (SWAMP). The Monitoring Council's strategy reports, [A Comprehensive Monitoring Program Strategy for California](#) (December 2010) and [Maximizing the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Water Quality Data Collection and Dissemination](#) (December 2008) should be referenced within this Action Area, including performance measures and rating benchmarks, contained within these reports, with which to measure the strengths of monitoring programs.

Page 14, Action Area 14, “Improve data and information accessibility and exchange (biological and physical data)” – Monitoring Council workgroup efforts to bring data and information together through the [My Water Quality portals](#) and workgroup data aggregation tools such as [EcoAtlas](#) (discussed under Action Area 5 above) could also be mentioned within this Action Area.

Pages 14 and 15, Action Area 15, “Improve and promote coordinated monitoring and assessment through, 1) incorporating modern science tools and methods while maintaining long-term data sets; and 2) establishing standard/common methodologies for collecting data (biological and physical)” – The Monitoring Council strategy documents, [A Comprehensive Monitoring Program Strategy for California](#) (December 2010) and [Maximizing the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Water Quality Data Collection and Dissemination](#) (December 2008), and the resulting workgroup actions play a key foundational role here and may be cited in the examples for this Action Area. The foundational role of the Monitoring Council to foster interagency collaboration in monitoring, assessment and reporting could be better captured within the ISAA and particularly in Action Area 15. See Unique Number IDs 38 and 39 in the Full ISAA Table.

Page 16, Action Area 17, “Build the science capacity, infrastructure and institutional support needed for the science community to be nimble and responsive to new demands, including non-routine and opportunistic science needs (i.e., special monitoring, study needs, and synthesis)” – Once again, the Monitoring Council's two strategy documents (discussed above) and actions of its eight interagency workgroups play a foundational role in building forums for collaborative data aggregation and synthesis, reported through the [My Water Quality portals](#).

Pages 17 and 18, Source Documents – We recommend adding the following documents to this list, as they present foundational resources for the ISAA:

- California Water Quality Monitoring Council. 2010. *A Comprehensive Monitoring Program Strategy for California: Recommendations of the California Water Quality Monitoring Council*, submitted to Linda S. Adams, Secretary for Environmental Protection and Lester Snow, Secretary for Natural Resources.

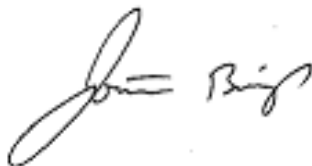
http://www.mywaterquality.ca.gov/monitoring_council/docs/comp_strategy_all.pdf.

23 December 2010.

- California Water Quality Monitoring Council. 2008. *Maximizing the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Water Quality Data Collection and Dissemination and Ensuring that Collected Data are Maintained and Available for Use by Decision-makers and the Public: Recommendations of the California Water Quality Monitoring Council*, submitted to Linda S. Adams, Secretary for Environmental Protection and Mike Chrisman, Secretary for Resources.
http://www.mywaterquality.ca.gov/monitoring_council/docs/sb_1070_full_report_final.pdf.
1 December 2008.
- California Wetland Monitoring Workgroup. 2010. *Tenets of a State Wetland and Riparian Monitoring Program (WRAMP)*.
http://www.mywaterquality.ca.gov/monitoring_council/wetland_workgroup/docs/2010/tenetsprogram.pdf. April 2010.

Again, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Interim Science Action Agenda and hope that a partnership between the efforts described therein and those of the Monitoring Council will enhance the success of both. If you have questions regarding the above comments, please contact Monitoring Council Executive Director Jon Marshack at (916) 341-5514, jon.marshack@waterboards.ca.gov or Monitoring Council Assistant Director Kristopher Jones at (916) 376-9756, kristopher.jones@water.ca.gov.

Sincerely,



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Representing Cal/EPA



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cc: Members of the California Water Quality Monitoring Council
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