

California Safe to Drink Workgroup CHARTER

Mission

To improve the timely and transparent dissemination of drinking water source and treated water quality monitoring and assessment information by designing and developing a comprehensive public web portal and to increase coordination and cooperation of drinking water monitoring, assessment, and information sharing among local, state, and federal agencies, and non-governmental organizations.

Need for the Safe to Drink Workgroup

As stated in the California Water Quality Monitoring Counsel's (CWQMC) December 2008 recommendations report to the secretaries of CalEPA and the Natural Resources Agency, a key component of the CWQMC vision for enhancing California systems of water quality monitoring, assessment and reporting is the development of expert stakeholder workgroups that develop a set of Internet portals that connect decision-makers and the public with water quality and related ecosystem health information. The California Safe to Drink Workgroup (CSDW) has been called action for this purpose with respect to the question of whether water is safe to drink. The process of portal development will provide a platform for improved coordination of source and treated drinking water monitoring, assessment, and reporting.

Scope and Objectives

The CSDW will develop and maintain an Internet web portal for dissemination of drinking water quality information that includes both source water and treated drinking water quality. The CSDW will explore existing technology to enhance drinking water related data and assessment information sharing throughout California and ensure that the drinking water information is accurate, reliable, and sustainable as a public resource of water quality monitoring information in California. The "Safe to Drink" web portal enhances California's system of presenting water quality monitoring, assessment and reporting information to decision makers and the public in a timely and user-friendly manner that is also easy to understand. The CSDW will also review existing drinking water related monitoring and assessment efforts and will make recommendations to improve those efforts to improve efficiency and effectiveness. Objectives for the CSDW are listed below:

Objectives

- Develop a comprehensive public safe drinking water information dissemination web portal for the State of California;
- Effectively evaluate, coordinate, and resolve monitoring, assessment, and information access problems, working to achieve only that degree of standardization necessary to meet users' needs;
- Utilize existing technology to enhance data sharing efforts through a distributed data management system; regional data centers; and/or a California statewide exchange system;

- Agree upon a level of monitoring, assessment, data management, and reporting standardization necessary to meet the needs of the information users;
- Provide definitions of technical terms;
- Provide relevant drinking water quality data and assessment information to agency staff and decision makers at the federal, state, and local levels, and to the public including water quality at the tap, the quality of surface water and groundwater sources as they relate to the drinking water beneficial use, and the efforts of many agencies and organizations to bring safe drinking water to the consumer
- Agree among partner agencies on data sharing;
- Compile information on existing water quality monitoring and assessment programs and activities as they apply to drinking water supply;
- Evaluate existing monitoring, assessment and reporting efforts and encourage increased coordination to improve efficiency and effectiveness;
- Clearly communicate who is responsible for the safety of drinking water and water quality programs and assessments;
- Include background information on applicable laws, regulations, standards, policies, guidelines, regulatory activities, enforcement activities and research that are appropriate to the concept of Safe to Drink;
- Reach out to the public, decision makers and government agencies to help disseminate safe drinking water and water quality monitoring and assessment information; and
- Support the implementation of improvement strategies or programs that are developed by the CSDW.

Background and Description

In 2006, the California legislature mandated coordination of water quality monitoring and assessment activities among organizations, both inside and outside California government, and delivery of this information to decision makers and the public via the internet.

In 2007, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed by the Secretaries of the California Environmental Protection Agency (Cal/EPA) and the California Natural Resources Agency to establish the California Water Quality Monitoring Council (CWQMC). The MOU was mandated by CA Senate Bill 1070 (Kehoe, 2006) and requires the boards, departments and offices within the California Environmental Protection Agency (Cal/EPA) and the California Natural Resources Agency to integrate and coordinate their water quality and related ecosystem monitoring, assessment, and reporting.

CA Senate Bill 1070 (Water Code Sections 13167 and 13181) and the MOU require that the CWQMC develop specific recommendations to improve the coordination and cost-effectiveness of water quality and ecosystem monitoring and assessment, enhance the integration of monitoring data across departments and agencies, and increase public accessibility to monitoring data and assessment information. While the CWQMC may

recommend new monitoring or management initiatives, it will build on existing effort to the greatest extent possible. The CWQMC brings together water quality information from a variety of organizations with special expertise in drinking water related water quality monitoring and assessment, coordinated through the CSDW.

The CSDW will provide the mechanism for coordination and cooperation among local, state and federal agencies and non-governmental organizations involved in monitoring, assessment and reporting of drinking water from its source to the customer.

Membership and Representation

The CSDW membership is intended to represent a variety of water quality interests related to drinking water. Representatives of governmental agencies with authority or responsibility for regulation of drinking water or the management of water resources that are or may be used for drinking purposes, organizations involved in active drinking water monitoring, assessment, and management programs, public interest groups, and local water agencies are welcome to participate on the CSDW.

NGOs or other non-profit organizations that have an interest in presenting key information regarding safe drinking water and water quality in California are encouraged to participate. Meetings will be open, informal and consensus driven.